

Rowley Park Primary Academy

Highfield Grove, Rowley Park, Stafford, Staffordshire ST17 9RF

Inspection dates

25–26 April 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders, governors and trustees are highly ambitious for the school. They are strongly committed to helping all pupils become 'the best they can be'.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership. Along with her school leadership team, she has brought about considerable improvements in teaching, pupils' achievements and behaviour.
- The local governing body and the trust board provide school leaders with a balance of highly effective support and challenge that has helped to bring about rapid improvement.
- Outcomes are swiftly improving and pupils in all year groups are now making good progress, especially in reading and writing. Developments in mathematics mean that more pupils are working at the standard expected for their age.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils show that they are rapidly catching up with others, although there are still some gaps in attainment, particularly for older boys.
- Children in the early years make strong progress from their starting points. They thrive as a result of the very high-quality teaching and the wide range of opportunities their teachers provide.
- Pupils are safe and well cared for. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- Since becoming an academy, there have been many changes in teaching staff. As a result of effective training, high expectations and rigorous performance management, teaching is good across the school.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge and enthusiasm engage pupils' interests and promote learning. Pupils develop the skills to work independently.
- A rich and creative curriculum effectively supports pupils' learning by providing a broad range of relevant and purposeful activities.
- Pupils' behaviour is of a high standard. They are confident and are proud of their achievements and their school.
- Assessment is used effectively to track pupils' progress in English and mathematics.
- In a minority of lessons, teaching is not matched closely enough to the pupils' needs or time is not used effectively. As a result pupils may not make as much progress as they could. Occasionally, teaching assistants provide pupils with help too readily.
- Despite leaders' best efforts to improve attendance, the number of pupils who are absent or who miss school regularly remains too high.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should further strengthen outcomes for all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, by ensuring that:
 - teaching is consistently well matched to the needs of pupils and maximises learning
 - support provided by teaching assistants encourages pupils to think hard and try to work things out for themselves
 - assessment in all subjects is developed to match the good practice seen in English and mathematics.
- Improve attendance for all pupils by ensuring good attendance remains a priority and that approaches used to promote good attendance are understood and followed by parents.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders, governors and trustees are very ambitious for the school and are highly committed to improving the life chances of all pupils. As a result of their drive and determination, the school is now a positive, happy place where pupils are able to learn and develop in confidence. Pupils are given many opportunities to achieve their potential and attain the trust's goal that they become 'the best they can be'.
- The work of the trust has been highly effective in helping to secure improvements in all aspects of the school's work. School leaders and governors have the capacity to build upon these improvements and develop the school even further.
- The majority of leaders and teaching staff have joined the school in the last three years. During this time, the headteacher and senior leaders have introduced new and very effective systems and processes to all areas of school life, and as a result, all aspects of the school have rapidly improved.
- The headteacher and senior leaders set high expectations for all staff. Everyone has a shared understanding of the elements which should be part of all lessons and the amount of progress pupils are expected to make. Staff are well supported through a regular development programme and speak very positively about the opportunities to 'work and grow together'. Those teachers who have a subject or area leadership responsibility fulfil their role knowledgeably and with enthusiasm. Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development within their areas of responsibility and have robust plans to further strengthen pupils' outcomes. The performance of staff is very effectively managed and staff are justly proud to be part of Rowley Park Primary Academy.
- The rich and varied curriculum is key to the effectiveness of the whole school. School leaders have introduced an exciting curriculum designed to meet the needs of the pupils by ensuring activities are purposeful and based on their interests. Pupils understand not only what they are learning but why. Termly cross-curricular 'challenges' ensure coverage of the national curriculum but also recognise additional aspects of learning, such as enterprise skills and creativity. There is clear year-on-year progression in the development of each subject area. The quality of the curriculum has a positive impact on levels of pupil engagement, developing resilience, self-reflection and reasoning skills as well as raising the level of pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils attend a wide range of extra-curricular activities at lunchtime and after school, including a variety of sports, board games, choir, arts, gardening and an online mathematics club. Such activities enrich learning and increase pupils' enjoyment and motivation. School leaders monitor attendance at these activities and encourage disadvantaged pupils to take part in the exciting additional opportunities that are provided.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to the work of the school and the elements thread across the curriculum. Pupils develop an acceptance and understanding about diversity within the community and take part in events to support charities. They learn about democracy and the importance of having their views heard. Pupils feel valued and know that their views will be listened to. This

positive culture supports their learning very well.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress from their starting points. Their specific needs are addressed in a variety of ways including effective support in class, additional interventions and access to support for their emotional or mental health needs. Leaders use funding effectively to address identified needs, including through the use of external agencies.
- School leaders use pupil premium funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. Approaches include support in class and small group input, provision of tablet devices to Year 5 and Year 6 pupils, as well as strategies to improve attendance and working directly with families. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are making at least good progress and diminishing the difference between their attainment and that of other pupils.
- Leaders use the physical education (PE) and sports premium funding for primary schools very well. Pupils now take part in more physical activities, including inter-school competitions, and have access to additional resources, especially at lunchtime. More than half the pupils now regularly attend an out-of-hours sports club and pupils report an increased level of enjoyment in PE. The quality of PE teaching across the school, including the use of technology, has improved as a result of additional staff training.
- The majority of parents are very happy with the school and the progress their children are making. They recognise the changes that have taken place in the last three years and the improvements made. Leaders and governors continue to seek ways to improve communication with parents and have set up a parent voice forum. They have instigated changes in school as a result of this parental input. For example, homework linked to the termly curriculum 'challenges' now has a menu-style approach encouraging pupil choice and creativity. This has improved both the quantity and quality of the homework completed.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Governors are very knowledgeable about the school, they are well informed and bring a range of experience and expertise to their roles. The governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and know how well pupils are progressing. They are clear about the areas for improvement within the school development plan and know what actions are needed in order for the plan to have sustained impact. They have a strong focus on ensuring pupils are kept safe as well as improving outcomes for all pupils. Governors are proud of the school and the developments which have taken place since the school re-opened as an academy.
- Governors provide a good balance of support and challenge to the school leadership team. They use information gathered through visits to school, as well as from reports provided by leaders, to ask challenging questions in order to bring about rapid improvements.
- During the current academic year, the local governing body has been given increased autonomy by the trust as a result of the school becoming increasingly successful. Governors have managed this transition well and value the advice and guidance which the trust provides. As a result, the governors, who are ably led by the chair and vice-chair, are confident in carrying out their roles and responsibilities in order to fulfil their

statutory duties.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff have had appropriate child protection and 'Prevent' training and they are clear about what they should do if they have any concerns. The safeguarding team maintains the required confidential records. Information is shared and followed up with relevant external agencies as necessary. Governors regularly monitor and review safeguarding procedures.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school and know who to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. This includes keeping safe online. Pupils are confident that any issues raised will be quickly resolved.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching across the school is good. This is because the headteacher has worked with her team to ensure everyone has high expectations, access to effective training and the opportunity to work with other schools in the trust to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching to make sure that teachers know what they must do to be more effective. They are aware that occasionally there are inconsistencies in the approaches teachers use and leaders are working to address these.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and ensure that classrooms are calm and positive environments in which to learn. As a result, pupils stay focused on their work almost all of the time. They are engaged and keen to complete their work to a good standard. Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and consequently they teach concepts securely. They work together, sharing their expertise, to plan interesting and exciting units of work to engage pupils in learning. Teachers are well motivated and their enthusiasm rubs off on the pupils.
- Phonics skills are taught consistently and effectively from the early years to the end of key stage 1. As a result, more pupils are attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check. Pupils across the school generally read well, with confidence and a growing fluency. Pupils are able to apply their phonics skills to read new and unfamiliar words.
- Pupils' books reflect the good progress that they are making, especially in writing. Teachers clearly model expectations and use a range of techniques to help pupils improve their work. Over a series of lessons, pupils build their skills to be able to complete a challenge task. For example, Year 4 pupils were developing vocabulary skills in order to write an effective description of the setting in their class novel and Year 3 pupils shared ideas to improve their work. This resulted in 'I saw a dinosaur' becoming 'before my eyes, a huge, brown brachiosaurus appeared'. There is clear evidence that this approach is improving the quality of all pupils' work.
- Mathematics lessons provide pupils with the opportunity to use and apply their

mathematics skills in a wide range of contexts. Teachers plan activities to help pupils move from the use of practical equipment to a more abstract approach. Mathematics books show the majority of pupils are now making good progress in this subject.

- A feature of the school's curriculum is the regular opportunity for small groups of pupils to work independently from the rest of the class. This is referred to as being 'in the pit' as pupils know that they may not always get the correct answer first time and that they may have to persevere to succeed. Pupils understand and respond very positively to this approach which aims to develop their ability to be self-motivated and self-reliant across a range of subjects. While all pupils have the opportunity to work independently, it is having a particularly strong impact on those pupils who are most-able. During the inspection, several examples of pupils working 'in the pit' were seen, including Year 2 pupils who, having practised addition calculations, made a video to explain to classmates how to use column addition and Year 6 pupils who were being challenged to work collaboratively to solve a mathematics problem.
- Teachers regularly provide pupils with feedback on their work through the use of 'gap tasks'. This is helping pupils to review and improve their work across a range of subjects.
- In a minority of lessons, teaching is not matched closely enough to the pupils' needs or time is not used effectively. For example, pupils may be asked to complete work they can already do with ease before tackling more challenging tasks. As a result pupils may not make as much progress as they could in those lessons. Teaching assistants often provide pupils with effective support but on occasions they provide too much input and this restricts pupils' learning.
- The school has developed an assessment system which effectively tracks the progress pupils are making in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders plan to expand this approach to other subject areas. The accuracy of the system is checked when teachers within school, and from across the trust, meet to compare outcomes and standards.
- Individual pupils' progress is discussed at termly meetings. If a pupil is identified as being at risk of not making enough progress, leaders identify specific actions to be taken. Progress is carefully monitored by senior leaders and input is adapted to match each pupil's needs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are confident learners and pupils in all year groups demonstrate highly positive attitudes to learning. This has a strong impact on the progress that they make. Pupils take a pride in their work, their school and themselves. Pupils are caring and considerate to each other. They are respectful to adults and each other, responding quickly to teachers' requests.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils understand what bullying is and the various forms it may take but say that incidents of bullying are rare. Strong relationships exist between pupils and adults and amongst the

pupils themselves. Pupils know that their views will be listened to and they are confident that any concerns will be dealt with appropriately by an adult.

- As pupils get older, there are increasing opportunities for them to become more independent and to take responsibility for others. For example, some pupils represent their class on the school council while others are team or sports captains or lead assemblies. School council representatives, who are elected by members of their class, have recently been influential in developing the activities and clubs available for pupils at lunchtime.
- The school's nurturing environment promotes all aspects of pupils' welfare and celebrating success is a key strand of the school's work. Throughout the school, there are displays supporting pupils' learning and celebrating their achievements. Pupils value, and talk enthusiastically about, the various awards which recognise good work, or positive attitudes such as weekly merit awards, 'pupil of the term' or 'star writer'. During the year, every pupil is featured on the 'pride' wall; other pupils show interest and respect for the information on display.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Behaviour in classrooms and around school is of a consistently high standard with almost all pupils being keen to learn. As a result pupils are making good progress.
- The school's behaviour policy is effective and focuses on motivating the pupils to behave well. Pupils and staff understand the policy and apply it consistently. Staff actively model the behaviour that they expect from the pupils and this supports the strong relationships between adults and pupils. As a group of Year 4 pupils said, 'there is an expectation of impeccable behaviour in this school'.
- Since the school re-opened as an academy, instances of poor behaviour and the number of exclusions have reduced considerably and records show that these are now rare.
- Overall attendance remains below the national average and the number of pupils who regularly miss school remains too high. Leaders track attendance carefully and promptly follow up any absence. They are alert to the possibility of children going missing from education. Leaders are actively working with parents to promote attendance and raise awareness of the importance of ensuring that their children come to school regularly and on time. New incentives linked to good attendance, such as class rewards and prizes for good attendance, are showing signs of having a positive impact. Improving attendance, especially for disadvantaged pupils, remains a priority for the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The pupils currently in school are making good progress from a wide range of starting points. More pupils, including those who are most-able and disadvantaged, are making swift progress and consequently pupils are catching up with their peers nationally.
- Work seen during the inspection, including in books and lessons, shows that the

proportion of pupils working at the standard expected for their age is increasing rapidly in many subjects but particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Outcomes are improving and in the 2016 key stage 2 tests the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard for their age was above that seen nationally in reading and writing. Outcomes in mathematics were lower than expected. School leaders identified the reasons for this underperformance and actions taken to improve mathematics teaching mean that more pupils are now working at the standard expected for their age.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In mathematics, disadvantaged pupils are currently making twice as much progress as all pupils in school. However, while outcomes across the school are improving, there remains some legacy of underperformance, particularly for boys in Year 5 and Year 6.
- The majority of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points. This is due to the effective teaching that they receive in class and through additional support. Leaders monitor pupils' progress carefully and adapt support and intervention according to need.
- The needs of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are now well addressed through the school curriculum and they have regular opportunities to apply and extend their learning. Although very few pupils attained the higher standards at the end of key stage 2 in 2016, internal school information and evidence seen during the inspection show that more pupils are now working at these levels across the school, especially in reading.
- While the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in the phonics screening check in 2016 was below the national average, there has been a year-on-year improvement over the last three years. Phonics teaching is now strong across the school and evidence supports leaders' views that outcomes will continue to improve.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception Year is now close to the national average and has improved considerably over the last few years. Outcomes for disadvantaged children in particular are improving rapidly and additional funding is used very effectively. The difference in outcomes between boys and girls is narrowing when compared to their peers nationally.
- The majority of children enter the early years with skills that are below, and sometimes well below, those that are typical for their age. During their time in the early years, almost all the children make substantial progress. Teachers use assessment accurately to identify those children who need additional help and plan good support for them to ensure that they are able to catch up quickly. Most children leave the early years very well prepared to start Year 1.
- The learning environment in the early years is stimulating and very well organised. Children respond to, and respect, the equipment and facilities. Most children are fully engaged in purposeful activities for the majority of their time. The outdoor areas

provide a wealth of opportunities including role-play, physical activities to develop coordination and balance, and creative, messy activities. This complements the wide range of activities available for children to choose indoors.

- Adults actively encourage conversation, modelling clear speech, prompting children and asking them questions to develop their thinking and deepen their understanding. Technology is used very effectively to record pupils' activities.
- Teachers' monitoring is extremely thorough and children's progress is carefully tracked through the use of learning journals. Teachers and teaching assistants use assessments to accurately identify the experiences children need in order to move their learning forward.
- As with other leaders in the school, the early years leader is confident, knowledgeable and has very high expectations of all staff and children. She is ably supported by a strong team who work well together to enable the children to get the most out of the learning opportunities provided.
- The progress children make in lessons is strong. The curriculum is adapted to suit children's interests. For example in the Reception class a small group of boys were making collages relating to computer games and, as a result of encouragement from an adult, were keen to write about their work. In the Nursery class, adults took every opportunity to effectively support the development of phonics skills. For example, as part of the 'people who help us project', pupils in the role of doctors were writing the names of their patients.
- The children are very well cared for and nurtured so that they feel confident, curious and eager to join in activities. Children's behaviour is excellent and they show respect for each other. They play cooperatively together sharing resources and discussing their activities.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective and children know how to stay safe in the setting. Welfare requirements in the early years are fully met.
- Early years staff are welcoming and encourage regular links with parents. This starts before the children begin school with home visits and is effective in ensuring the children settle quickly.

School details

Unique reference number	140996
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10032561

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	178
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Kate Meecham
Headteacher	Kate Tewley
Telephone number	01785 334144
Website	www.rowleyparkacademy.org.uk/
Email address	headteacher@rowleyparkacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average primary school. It became a sponsored academy in August 2014 and is a member of Victoria Academies Trust.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average.
- The great majority of pupils are White British with a few other pupils coming from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who require support for a special educational need or disability is above the national average while the proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan related to a special educational need or a disability is close to the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school does not fully comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about exam and assessment results, pupil premium or governance structures.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 16 lessons or parts of lessons. A number of these observations were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also made additional short visits to many classrooms to gather evidence on particular aspects of the curriculum or pupils' learning.
- Inspectors met with pupils and listened to some pupils read. They looked at examples of pupils' work in their books and spoke to pupils formally and informally. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime and around the school as well as in lessons.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of Victoria Academies Trust. The lead inspector also met with the chair and vice-chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, the school's recruitment and vetting checks, records relating to safeguarding and attendance, minutes of meetings of the governing body, information relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning, school performance data and the school's website.
- Inspectors considered parents' opinions through scrutinising 47 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 18 free-text responses. Inspectors spoke to parents on the first day of the inspection and also considered outcomes from the school's own surveys of parents.
- Responses to a school-based staff questionnaire carried out during the inspection were considered as part of the inspection.

Inspection team

Catherine Crooks, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gareth Morgan

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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