

# Knutsford School

Balmoral Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD24 7ER

## Inspection dates

26–27 April 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- School leaders recognise that pupils' progress, including that of disadvantaged pupils, has not been sustained. They agree that the school no longer retains the outstanding judgement given in 2007.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics varies. The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not make as much progress as they could.
- Teachers do not routinely use assessment information to plan learning that meets the needs of groups of pupils precisely, particularly in mathematics.
- Middle leaders do not check carefully enough the progress pupils make in subjects across the curriculum.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have not made as much progress as they should.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 was significantly below the national average.
- Teaching does not ensure that pupils know precisely how to improve their work. Pupils often repeat mistakes or do not make as much progress as they should.
- Teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics, is not secure. They do not adapt their teaching well enough or move the learning on when pupils are ready for further challenge.
- The quality of pupils' presentation of work is inconsistent across year groups.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors are taking appropriate action to improve. They are supporting staff to bring about the changes needed.
- Pupils achieve well in reading. In 2016, the proportion who reached the higher standard was well above the national average at key stages 1 and 2.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally well provided for.
- Pupils are safe and well cared for in this happy school. They have good relationships with each other and adults. Pupils work diligently and well.
- Leaders provide a broad curriculum for pupils. Pupils experience a wide and varied range of additional activities to build their skills.
- Children start well in the early years classes. They settle quickly and learn in a well-organised and stimulating environment.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - providing adults with the appropriate curriculum subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics
  - equipping teachers with the strategies to use assessment information well and so provide pupils of all abilities with challenging and stimulating activities, particularly in mathematics and science
  - teachers routinely insisting upon, and modelling, the best presentation in mathematics so that pupils demonstrate consistent pride in their work
  - teachers providing pupils with timely and accurate feedback that helps move learning forward and gives pupils sufficient information so that they know what to do to improve their work further.
- Improve pupils' outcomes in mathematics by:
  - ensuring that the proportion of pupils who make good or better progress from their starting points in mathematics improves rapidly and is at least in line with other pupils nationally by the end of key stage 2, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - ensuring that more most-able pupils and disadvantaged most-able pupils reach the higher standard in mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- Improve leadership and management further by:
  - subject leaders effectively checking the progress pupils make across the curriculum.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Since the previous full inspection in 2007, there have been a number of changes of headteacher. The current headteacher judged standards not to be high enough and continues to bring about necessary improvements. She leads with skill and resolve. Supported well by other leaders, she has successfully established a collegiate culture where staff have the confidence to try new ideas and can develop their skills further.
- The headteacher manages adults' performance well. She has correctly challenged poor practice in leadership and teaching. Targets are closely aligned to priorities in the school improvement plan and staff receive appropriate training and support to develop their skills and subject knowledge further.
- Leaders have accurately identified strengths and weaknesses in the school's performance. They have brokered extensive support from the local authority to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics. Consequently, pupils' progress is improving, although it is not yet consistently good for all groups of pupils across the school.
- Staff are proud to work at the school and say that they feel supported by school leaders. Adults work well together to provide pupils with equal opportunities to complete activities across all classes in the year group. Staff follow school policies and procedures willingly and consistently.
- Leaders and teachers are increasingly effective in ensuring that assessment information is accurate for reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders hold regular meetings with teachers to review the progress pupils make and decide on further support pupils require so that no pupil falls behind.
- The new leadership of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong. Over this year, pupils' needs have been identified early, with relevant support quickly put in place for those who need it. Support staff who work with these pupils receive regular training which enables them to offer precise, effective support. Staff put their recent mathematical training into practice swiftly and pupils in receipt of this additional support are starting to make better progress as a result.
- Leaders ensure that additional funds such as the pupil premium and funds for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are thoughtfully allocated so that pupils receive extra support in class, as a group or on a one-to-one basis. Currently, leaders' monitoring is demonstrating that pupils who benefit from this support are making better progress than seen previously.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils are kind and tolerant of each other's differences. Older pupils are provided with additional responsibilities, which they enjoy. The school's additional work in the community and for charity events supports pupils' sense of contribution and citizenship. Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The additional physical education (PE) and sports funding is used well to increase the number of sporting activities on offer to pupils. Those responsible for leadership of PE have credible plans and targets to increase the effectiveness of the spending of these

funds.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced, with many additional trips and after-school clubs to enhance pupils' experience. The effective use of the 'Knutsford University' provides pupils in key stage 2 with a wealth of opportunities to learn different and interesting skills over a four-week period. Pupils take part in activities such as cookery, yoga and art. Pupils and parents spoke enthusiastically about this aspect of the school's work.
- Although all subjects are taught, adults do not adapt the curriculum as well as they should to accommodate the range of pupils' abilities in a class. In many classes, pupils carry out the same activities in science and history, irrespective of their individual learning needs. Middle leaders do not systematically check the progress pupils make across all subjects.
- Parents are very positive about the school and the work leaders do to keep their children happy, safe and well cared for. Parents spoken to during the inspection were positive about how happy their children were. One parent said, 'My son is happy and enjoys school. He loves reading.'

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors perform their statutory duties effectively and are ably led by the experienced chair of the governing body. They have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are committed to providing a good-quality education for all pupils.
- Minutes of meetings show that governors spend time considering the important issues of pupils' achievement and how to improve the school. Governors challenge and question leaders well so that they are satisfied that there is a focus on the school improvement plans.
- Governors visit the school regularly to assure themselves of the quality of behaviour and the education provided. Due to the fact that pupils are so overwhelmingly positive about their school and have such a positive approach to their learning, governors have previously had an overgenerous view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Governors are increasingly effective in evaluating the impact of the pupil premium spending on the progress these pupils make. They have a clear understanding of the barriers for learning and are ensuring that leaders target the additional funds well.
- The governing body sets appropriate performance management targets for the headteacher, with guidance from the local authority. These targets are appropriately aligned to the school's priorities.
- The school's website is kept up to date with all relevant information so that parents can access any information required

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that statutory child protection training and policies are in place. All staff are alert to their responsibilities to safeguard pupils. Adults receive regular useful updates from the headteacher, who is responsible for this aspect of the school's work.
- Child protection records are kept appropriately and demonstrate that leaders follow through concerns to ensure that pupils at risk are cared for well.
- Governors broker the support of the local authority to carry out monitoring to assure themselves that school leaders carry out the necessary checks on adults when they begin their employment.
- Pupils told inspectors that they were very happy and felt safe in their school. They know who to speak to if they have concerns and are confident that they would be listened to. Pupils told inspectors about lessons they receive on mindfulness, which help them feel safe in school.
- Pupils know what bullying is and the negative effect that it can have on others. Although there is occasional bullying at school, the pupils spoken with were confident that adults deal swiftly and well with any concerns that are raised.
- Nearly all the parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that the school keeps their children safe and well cared for.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies across year groups and subjects. Teachers do not use the assessment information well enough to plan learning that is linked to what pupils already know and can do. Teaching places too much emphasis on the activities that pupils complete, rather than on what they will learn from completing a task.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics is inconsistent across some year groups and within classes. Often the work is too easy or too hard and expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. At times, most-able pupils complete work that does not require a more complex approach or skill, particularly in lower key stage 2.
- Teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics varies. Where teachers' subject knowledge is good and teaching is well matched to abilities, pupils produce work of an appropriate standard. In Year 1, for example, pupils are making good progress in their mathematics because the teachers provide them with precise and accurate explanations. However, in other classes, teachers' explanations are not clear and do not support the learning of lower-attaining pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities well enough.
- The quality of feedback teachers provide varies. Where teachers intervene and provide precise direction, pupils respond quickly and improve their skills. In Year 2, for example, pupils receive timely and accurate guidance during handwriting lessons. Pupils respond well and know what to do to improve their work. This practice is not consistent across subjects. In many books, pupils remain unclear how to improve their work further because they receive unclear or, at times, inaccurate advice. So they

often repeat mistakes or do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable.

- The presentation of pupils' work in mathematics is not as good as that found in English. Adults do not routinely insist on precise presentation or model how they require pupils' work to be presented. Consequently, pupils do not demonstrate their achievements as well as they could. Often, the mathematical work pupils produce when studying geometry and shapes is inaccurate or poorly presented.
- Pupils write well. They are careful and produce work that follows the criteria provided in lessons. Younger pupils enjoy writing, especially stories. However, pupils' workbooks in key stage 2 demonstrate that, over time, most-able pupils are not provided with precise enough feedback and challenge to improve their writing further.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in subjects such as science and history varies across the school. Most-able and lower-attaining pupils are often provided with the same worksheets, which limits the opportunity for pupils to analyse, explain and draw conclusions or fully demonstrate their fascination for learning.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Adults provide systematic teaching to younger pupils so that they learn their sounds rapidly and well. Adults listen to pupils read regularly in school and provide age-appropriate books so that pupils develop their love of reading. Pupils who read to inspectors demonstrated age-appropriate skills. Older pupils confidently explain their choice of books and speak knowledgeably about the content.
- Time in lessons is used well. Adults follow the school's chosen curriculum and policies, even when these are not as effective as they could be in raising attainment. The vast majority of pupils complete work diligently and follow instruction willingly. Pupils make the most of the activities they are given.
- Support staff are used increasingly well to have a positive impact on the progress pupils make. Teachers ensure that teaching assistants are well deployed and have a positive impact on helping pupils make progress during lessons. This is particularly the case in key stage 1.

## 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 exceptionally proud of their school and are very keen to learn. They have highly positive attitudes to learning and make the most of the learning activities they are given. Pupils are confident, articulate and very involved in the life of the school.
- Key stage 2 pupils speak confidently and well about the 'Knutsford University' provision. Pupils learn a skill over four weeks from a range of topics, such as cookery, curling and golf. They work together across year groups, and pupils told inspectors that they enjoy working with younger and older pupils alike. As a result of the many unique and interesting activities the pupils experience, they can speak knowledgeably about a range of subjects and have a very mature understanding of their own skills and abilities.
- Pupils receive excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Older pupils run

a stationery shop for pupils to purchase small items to use in school. A large proportion of the money is used for charity, so that pupils have a sense of contributing to a wider society.

- This year, pupils are receiving additional lessons on personal health and well-being. Many pupils told inspectors how much they enjoy these lessons.
- Older pupils befriend and support younger pupils through peer mentoring. Consequently, friendships are highly evident and breaktimes and lunchtimes are friendly and happy occasions.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and well mannered and respond well to instructions and the well-established routines.
- There is a sense of order and calmness around the school. Pupils conduct themselves well, listening to adults' instructions and following school rules willingly.
- Pupils attend school well and attendance is in line with national averages. School leaders check pupils who are routinely absent, and inspectors found that no group is disadvantaged by poor attendance.
- Where pupils' behaviour does not meet adults' high expectations, it is because the learning is not as well matched to their capabilities. At times, work for most-able pupils is too easy or dull, and for the less able pupils, work is not precise enough so they lose focus and begin to chatter. This behaviour often goes unchecked and pupils' presentation of their work does not remain at a consistently high standard.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Children start in Reception with skills and abilities that are mostly typical for their age. The proportion of children who leave Reception reaching a good level of development has been above national averages for the previous three years. Many children attain well and are prepared appropriately for Year 1.
- In 2016, pupils' progress in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was significantly below the national average for most groups of pupils, in particular disadvantaged pupils, middle-ability pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Inspection evidence from pupils' mathematics workbooks shows that these groups of pupils currently on roll are making improved, but inconsistent, progress in mathematics, due to the varied quality of teaching they receive.
- In 2016, at the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined was below the national average. This was because not enough pupils reached the standard expected for their age in mathematics and writing. Pupils' workbooks currently demonstrate that disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not receive learning activities that meet their needs sufficiently well in order to make accelerated progress.
- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1

remains a strength of the school since the previous inspection. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who left Year 2 achieving the required standard in all three subjects was above that found nationally. However, in 2016, girls and lower-attaining pupils did not make as much progress from their starting points in writing and mathematics.

- In 2016, the proportion of pupils in key stage 2 who reached the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics was at least in line with national averages and well above the national average in reading. The progress these most able pupils made was broadly similar to others nationally, from the same starting points.
- Currently, most-able pupils make the most of the lessons they have, even when they are not challenged or do not receive work that suitably meets their needs. Work in most-able pupils' books demonstrates that they are not provided with enough opportunities to fully demonstrate their skills and abilities so that they can make good or better progress from their high starting points.
- The teaching of reading is a strength of the school. In all key stages, pupils achieve well. This is because adults ensure that pupils read regularly in class and are provided with books and texts that are suitably interesting and challenging for their age.
- Pupils' achievement in other subjects varies. This is because adults do not expect the same high standards in subjects such as science and history. Most-able pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their subject skills in a range of different ways so that they can excel. When they do have the opportunity, they relish the challenge provided.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children start at Knutsford School well. Over the previous three years, the proportion of pupils who have left with a good level of development has been above national averages. There is little difference between the achievement of boys and girls over time. Children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Leadership of the early years is good and is having a positive impact on the progress children make. Through careful and regular monitoring and analysis of children's progress, leaders are using the assessment information well to plan learning activities that are interesting and help children make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders use the additional funding they receive for the very small number of disadvantaged children thoughtfully and well. Funds are effectively used to support children's development in communication and language.
- A number of children start the part-time Nursery class speaking English as an additional language. Adults ensure that the environment is well resourced so that children practise their language skills and make accelerated progress in this area. Consequently, by the time children start in the Reception Year, many have caught up and have English language skills in line with other classmates.
- Records of children's learning are well kept. Children's learning journeys show that all areas of the early years curriculum are covered well. The early years leader monitors the evidence to assure herself that children receive equal access and a good range of opportunities to demonstrate their skills and abilities. Parents receive timely reports of their child's learning and achievements so that they are involved in their child's



learning.

- Children behave well. They develop an enthusiasm for learning and a desire to do well. They understand the school's behaviour code and know that they need to 'stay on the sunshine'. Children understand the rules and routines and follow them as well as they can.
- The teaching of phonics in the early years is strong. Children learn in suitably organised groups, which helps them to develop their early reading skills. Children are well prepared for Year 1, where they continue to develop their reading skills.
- Leaders have already identified that the outdoor area requires further development and have firm plans in place to ensure that improvements happen.
- Although children achieve well in the early years, leaders correctly prioritised developing pupils' writing skills further. Children are now provided with greater opportunity to practise their writing skills and develop good habits in letter formation.

## School details

Unique reference number	117165
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10031409

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	503
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Darren Stretton
Headteacher	Eileen Anderson
Telephone number	01923 466 020
Website	<a href="http://www.knutsford.herts.sch.uk/">www.knutsford.herts.sch.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@knutsford.herts.sch.uk">head@knutsford.herts.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	13–14 November 2007

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is much larger than the average primary school.
- Children attend Nursery on a part-time basis and attend Reception full-time.
- Disadvantaged pupils account for approximately 7% of the school population. This is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are from a minority ethnic group has been rising for the last three years.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The number of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is also lower than the national average.

- The school met the government's floor standards in 2016, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- There have been a significant number of changes to the headship of the school since the previous inspection. The current headteacher took up post in April 2013.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. This included observing learning in all classes, some of which were jointly seen with the headteacher.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils and scrutinised books from a wide range of subjects, to take account of the work that has been done and the progress that groups of pupils make.
- The teaching of phonics was observed. Inspectors listened to a number of pupils from Year 1 and Year 6 read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and representatives of the governing body. Telephone conversations were held with the chair of the governing body and a representative from 'Herts for Learning'.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation about child protection and scrutinised the recruitment checks made by school leaders when employing staff.
- Inspectors evaluated a wide range of documentation to assess the school's performance over time and the school's improvement plans.
- The inspectors spoke informally with some parents to gather their views. Parental views were also considered from 103 online responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Kim Hall, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Caroline Dawes	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Pryor	Ofsted Inspector
David Milligan	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

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