

Berkswich CofE (VC) Primary School

Cedar Way, Walton-on-the-Hill, Stafford, Staffordshire ST17 0LU

Inspection dates

15–16 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She is unwavering and uncompromising in her determination to provide the best possible learning experiences for pupils. Consequently, all aspects of the school have dramatically improved since the last inspection.
- Leaders, including governors, share a clear, ambitious vision for the school, based on very high aspirations and expectations. The school ethos, 'We believe, we achieve, we care', reflects the strong commitment to the Christian principles which are at the heart of the school.
- Leaders have recruited a talented team of staff who, without exception, know their pupils as individuals and constantly set challenges to deepen pupils' learning through rich and stimulating activities. However, the school recognises that the consistency of outstanding teaching across the school could be increased further.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are courteous, considerate and mature, both in their attitudes to each other and in their approach to learning.
- Children get off to a flying start in the early years. They have exciting and stimulating learning opportunities, and they acquire skills and develop understanding across all areas of learning at a rapid pace.
- Pupils take great pride in their school and they enjoy the opportunities that they have to take on additional responsibilities.
- There is a strong focus on providing memorable and meaningful learning experiences. The engaging and creative curriculum engrosses pupils. Pupils' interests and imagination are captured, and they work hard with resilience and tenacity.
- Teachers strive to challenge pupils and provide opportunities for them to extend and deepen their thinking. Reasoning and justification are an integral aspect of the learning experience.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. They appreciate the changes that have taken place, which they believe have led to vast improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Pupils thrive because they are exceptionally well cared for in a nurturing and encouraging learning environment. They are able to take responsibility for their learning, and know that they will be well supported by the adults in school.
- The strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development that is threaded through all aspects of school life ensures that pupils are very well prepared for the next stages in their educational journey.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Look for further opportunities to share and consistently adopt the outstanding practice that exists within the school, so that all pupils are given the best possible learning experiences across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher has pursued the highest quality of education for pupils tirelessly and resiliently. Her diligence, commitment and clear vision have galvanised all staff and governors to share in this mission for excellence. She leads a dedicated and highly effective staff team. The headteacher engenders very high levels of respect and approval from staff, pupils and parents. Staff morale and relationships within the school are exceptionally positive. One member of staff said: 'I have gained so much knowledge working with such inspirational staff and I feel lucky to have been so well-supported by the leadership team in my journey so far. I feel honoured to be part of "Team Berkswich".'
- The headteacher and staff team have ensured that improvements are fully embedded and long lasting. Commendably, they are never complacent and continually analyse the school's effectiveness accurately to determine what works well and where there is room for further improvement. Leaders use this information to forge precise improvement plans, which are implemented rigorously.
- Leaders have unwaveringly focused on doing what is right for the pupils, and the personal development of each pupil is firmly at the heart of the school's work. The school values of 'respect, teamwork, integrity, self-motivation, responsibility, quality, organisation, inclusivity, accuracy and faith' strongly underpin everything that the school does. Pupils know these values. They are keen to talk about them and explain their importance.
- The headteacher is sharply focused on developing leadership within the school. She is adept at identifying talent and allowing staff to flourish. As a result, leaders at all levels contribute to the school's strategic direction. Leaders have been an essential part of improving the quality of teaching, often providing valuable feedback and support to help colleagues to improve. Coaching techniques have successfully created a culture of reflection and openness to recommendations. Consequently, the quality of teaching over time is outstanding and has led to outstanding outcomes for pupils.
- Teachers in the early stages of their careers are well supported by leaders, who provide guidance which enables the teachers to plan, teach and assess pupils' progress and performance very effectively.
- Developments in assessment have been carefully and thoughtfully undertaken. The robust tracking systems are used systematically by staff to bring about rapid progress for individuals and groups of pupils. Leaders' analysis of performance information is meticulous and extensive. This enables them to swiftly intervene, when necessary, to ensure that no pupil is left behind and that the most able pupils are achieving as well as they should.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive and convey a real sense of appreciation for all that the school does to make their children feel happy and successful. They are aware of the changes that have taken place since the last inspection and believe that the quality of teaching and leadership is vastly improved. One parent said: 'The staff have created a desire to learn.'

- The rich and exciting curriculum has a notable impact on pupils' motivation and enthusiasm, their thirst for learning and their outstanding personal skills. The extensive range of trips and visitors to school provide further stimulation and enrichment. Trips have included visits to the National Space Centre in Leicester and the seaside.
- Pupils are extremely well prepared for life in modern Britain. There is a wide range of learning experiences which provide opportunities to extend pupils' understanding of British values and current issues. For example, in Year 6, pupils are confidently able to identify what they believe to be the best sources of energy. They can give well-reasoned arguments for using renewable energy sources, such as solar power, rather than fossil fuels.
- The school has very few pupils who are eligible for support through pupil premium funding. The strategic use of resources financed by additional funding means that these pupils are well catered for and make strong progress in all subjects. Pupils who need additional support to manage their emotions are effectively supported by trained staff to ensure their readiness for learning.
- Leaders ensure that funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used very effectively. They constantly review and evaluate the effectiveness of their actions. Teachers are updated regularly about the different needs of pupils, which ensures high standards of achievement for these pupils.
- The primary physical education and sports funding is also used effectively to enhance the school's existing strong provision. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a variety of sporting events and competitions against other local schools. The school has also established close working links with local sports clubs to extend sporting provision. For example, pupils receive tennis coaching at the local tennis club from a professional tennis coach. They participate in these sessions with enthusiasm and energy, and are developing ball and racquet skills with increasing coordination.
- The school is outward-looking and senior leaders constantly seek to keep staff up to date and their ideas fresh through research and external expertise. The school also makes a positive contribution to the wider education system. For example, the headteacher has facilitated leadership training and qualifications on behalf of the National College of Teaching and Leadership.
- The school has a productive relationship with the local authority, which has provided useful support, particularly to improve standards of teaching and learning in the early years. The local authority has recently re-categorised the school, such that it is now judged to be in their highest category, reflecting the school's strong performance in the review process. The report, rightly, states: 'Pupils excel because staff now have in-depth subject knowledge, due primarily to the exemplary continuing professional development offered on a day-to-day basis by the deputy headteacher.'

Governance of the school

- There have been substantial changes within the governing body since the last inspection. The governing body is now fully active in holding senior leaders to account for performance and pupil outcomes. Members of the governing body have a wealth of relevant skills and experience which enable them to provide appropriate professional support and challenge. Governors have very clear roles, responsibilities, systems and procedures, which ensure they are highly knowledgeable about the school.

- Governors share the leaders' drive for excellence and are focused on the strategic direction of the school. They discharge their statutory duties effectively, including checking finances and the impact of additional funding. They have recently undertaken a review of safeguarding procedures to assure themselves that all procedures comply with statutory requirements and are effective.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher ensures that there is a culture of safeguarding that takes into account current issues and the risks posed to pupils. Staff receive regular training updates and pupils have numerous opportunities to learn about safety in the curriculum. This includes how to keep themselves safe when using computers, tablets and mobile devices.
- There is a thorough system in place to check staff qualifications and their suitability to work with children. Systems to record this information are thorough and meticulously organised. All information is kept up to date.
- Staff know how to react if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare. Leaders respond appropriately to concerns raised and they work closely with other agencies, where necessary, to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Detailed records are kept diligently.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Staff unreservedly share the headteacher's determination that every pupil should achieve their best. Consequently, teachers hold the highest expectations and aspirations for pupils. They know how individual pupils learn best, and tailor planning to meet the needs of pupils exceptionally well. Staff are unanimous that the school has rapidly improved since the last inspection.
- Improvement strategies have focused unwaveringly on driving up standards in teaching, learning and assessment. This has resulted in outstanding outcomes for pupils across the school. The exceptionally high quality of work in pupils' books, at both key stages, combined with their excellent progress, shows the impact of outstanding teaching and learning over time. In some classes, there is still scope to improve teaching further to match the outstanding practice that more commonly exists across the school. However, assessment information and evidence in pupils' books demonstrate that, even in these classes, high rates of progress are achieved over time.
- Teachers deliver lessons that capture the interest and imagination of pupils. Pupils are ambitious for themselves and want to succeed. Consequently, they are highly motivated and show focus, concentration and resilience. Pupils rightly say that learning is fun and appropriately challenging. They like opportunities to think deeply and discover new things for themselves.
- As a result of extensive training, teachers have an excellent understanding of the subjects that they teach. They are forensic in unpicking the composite skills, knowledge and understanding that need to be taught and learned. For example, in a key stage 2 class, the pupils were planning to write a piece of persuasive writing. In

order for pupils to be thoroughly prepared, the teacher delivered a lesson focusing on persuasive language. Pupils identified how they could maximise the effectiveness of persuasion through the use of personal pronouns, alliteration, groups of three words, repetition, emotive language, exaggeration, rhetorical questions, facts and statistics. The quality of persuasive language generated by the pupils was extremely impressive.

- There is a clear focus on learning and a consistent approach has been established, drawing on best practice within the school. Pupils are guided carefully to know precisely what they need to do to achieve their own personal targets, and can suggest ways to improve their work.
- Even at a young age, pupils are encouraged to be reflective. Teachers are skilful at questioning pupils. They ask searching questions which demand that pupils expand and justify their answers. Collaboration and discussion are an accustomed feature of lessons. Leaders say that this empowers pupils to push their own and each other's learning forward.
- Clear and established routines ensure that lessons run smoothly, with little time slippage during transitions between different classroom activities. This makes the most of learning time. Classrooms are vibrant and well organised, with a calm and purposeful atmosphere.
- Assessment information is used particularly well, enabling highly effective targeting of teaching assistants to support and challenge pupils of all abilities. As a result, all groups of pupils, including the most able, make particularly strong progress over time.
- The teaching of early reading skills is rigorous. The excellent teaching of phonics has ensured that the numbers of pupils achieving the expected standard by the end of Year 1 is well above the national average. Pupils quickly progress to become fluent and confident readers. They enjoy talking about their favourite authors. They read regularly in school and at home. Consequently, by the end of Year 6, pupils reach exceptionally high standards in reading which compare very well with national figures and, for most pupils, are well above age-related expectations.
- The teaching of writing has been a particular focus for the school, and this attention has been highly successful in raising standards. Pupils are taught to write while constantly holding the reader in mind. They make careful decisions about vocabulary choices, grammatical features and sentence construction in order to make the reader feel how they, as the writer, intended. Teachers challenge pupils and expect pupils to be able to justify the choices that they have made. Pupils are adept at explaining. Handwriting is a strength of the school. Across the school and all ability groups, handwriting is consistently neat, correctly formed and joined. Pupils show enormous pride in their presentation. Leaders and staff have developed a bespoke approach to spelling which uses an investigative approach to identify spelling patterns and rules. This has also made a significant contribution to the overall standards of writing.
- Highly effective mathematics teaching has a very clear emphasis on developing skills of reasoning. The frequency of opportunities to learn through challenging, open-ended problem-solving has deepened pupils' thinking skills and improved their mathematical skills and understanding. This has helped to extend pupils' achievement in mathematics.
- The wider curriculum is taught very well, and pupils are encouraged to use the skills learned in English and mathematics within the context of other subjects. Evidence in

pupils' books demonstrates that these skills are executed to the same quality, even when applied in other subjects. Links are made between subjects. For example, pupils in key stage 2 had been learning about contour lines in geography. Building on that learning, the art lesson focused on sketching a hand with wrinkles that formed contours. Pupils demonstrated high levels of concentration and tenacity, and produced sensitive and delicate work, using tone to create dimension very successfully.

- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well, because all staff understand their particular needs and provide timely support accordingly.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Lessons deliberately provide opportunities for pupils to develop the school's 10 values (respect, teamwork, integrity, self-motivation, responsibility, quality, organisation, inclusivity, accuracy and faith). As a result, pupils develop these attitudes and skills exceptionally well.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary. They rise to the challenge of the high expectations placed on them. Accordingly, they are self-assured learners with high aspirations and a commitment to achieving the best that they can.
- All year groups are represented on the school council. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and they have organised charity events, sporting events, a talent contest, an Easter parade and a Remembrance Day event at a local senior citizens home.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They understand and can maturely discuss the dangers of cyber bullying. They know about the importance of healthy eating, exercise and hygiene. Older pupils recognise the potential impact of life choices.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in the school. They believe that the new gates and fencing help to keep them safe. They say that they are not aware of any bullying, but are confident that staff would deal with it, should it occur.
- Pupils respond with enthusiasm and clear enjoyment in assemblies. They are highly attentive and responsive. There is an atmosphere of warmth and unity. Staff set the tone through modelling their expectations. A highlight is the singing. The youngest pupils enjoy the opportunity to use actions when singing. Some pupils harmonise, giving the singing depth and colour.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils conduct themselves exceptionally well in lessons and around school. Movement in corridors is orderly. Pupils demonstrate respect and consideration towards each other. They are courteous and friendly, for example holding doors open for visitors and greeting them politely. One parent helper commented on the excellent management of

behaviour by the staff and the positive response from pupils.

- Pupils of all ages interact well together. The school has established a 'buddy' system between pupils in Reception and Year 6, providing care and support for the young children and fostering the sense of togetherness across the school. This reflects the school ethos of, 'Together we care'.
- Pupils believe that behaviour has improved over the most recent years. They say that this is because the rewards and sanctions are clear.
- Attendance is above the national average. This is because pupils enjoy coming to school and families understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- High teacher and pupil aspirations, very effective and stimulating teaching and diligent tracking of pupils' progress are successfully combined to ensure that pupils achieve very well. Results in both key stages are well above national standards and are rising. Pupils make strong and sustained progress across the school. Consequently, in all year groups, most pupils are working at the expected level for their age and a large proportion are working at the higher levels.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1 was well above the national average in 2016. However, the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth was below the national average. Inspection evidence from current Year 2 pupils, including assessment data and evidence in pupils' books, shows that the vast majority of pupils are on track to reach expected levels across reading, writing and mathematics. The 2016 weakness in the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth has been robustly addressed, and evidence shows that the proportion of pupils who are on track to achieve greater depth is double the 2016 national average in writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 was also well above the national average and was over three times the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth, nationally, in reading and mathematics. However, in writing, it was lower than the national average. Progress was ranked in the top 10% of schools nationally in reading and mathematics in 2016. It was broadly in line with the national average in writing. Evidence from recent assessments and evidence in pupils' books indicates that this achievement will be maintained in 2017 in reading and mathematics, and will be vastly improved in writing for those pupils achieving greater depth.
- Achievements in the English, spelling, punctuation and grammar test were well above the national average for those pupils achieving the expected standard and those achieving the higher standard. The current progress of pupils in Year 6 indicates accelerated progress. Teachers have received bespoke training in English, spelling, grammar and punctuation to embed the teaching and learning of these aspects of English in their writing lessons. All pupils across the year groups are confident in editing their writing and are able to articulate the grammar choices that they make.
- The vast majority of pupils reached the expected standard in phonics in 2016. Current progress data indicates that this will be maintained or improved in 2017.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive excellent academic and pastoral support. Consequently, they achieve well, both academically and pastorally.
- The most able pupils achieve well. Pupils' books show that teachers routinely challenge the most able and extend their learning very effectively. Hence, a high proportion are currently reaching above the standards expected for their age.
- Achievement in reading is a particular strength. At least half of the pupils achieve above the expected standards by the time they leave the school. There is a strong emphasis on securing reading skills. The richness of the English curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to read a wide range of texts. Pupils enjoy reading and are developing an understanding of language that helps them to improve their writing. As a result, most pupils make accelerated progress in reading and writing.
- Pupils' work in other areas of the curriculum shows that they are making strong progress. Leaders place great emphasis on securing learning in every subject and they endeavour to strengthen pupils' transferable skills from one subject to another.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Leadership of the early years is outstanding. The early years leader has transformed both the curriculum and the teaching and learning to ensure that all pupils make accelerated progress. She has a clear vision which translates into stimulating and challenging activities for all children. She has worked to make the practice across the Nursery and Reception classes more cohesive, which has dramatically improved standards.
- The data on entry to the Nursery class shows that the majority of children enter at or above a level typical for their age. At the end of Reception in 2016, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was well above the national average. Current observations and assessments indicate that this will be increased further in 2017.
- Adults know the children extremely well. They are responsive to their needs and the level of care is high. There is a lovely range of activities which extend and develop skills and understanding across all areas of learning. Rich learning opportunities capture children's interests and they sustain focus, demonstrating creativity and curiosity. During the inspection, children were engrossed in learning about the seaside and under the sea. They played cooperatively and imaginatively in the 'beach shop', sharing resources well. They undertook a barefoot walk through sand, over pebbles, through water and wet leaves, which represented seaweed. Adults supported the children in putting language to this sensory experience. This extended vocabulary and enabled the children to explore words associated with senses and emotions. Very effective use is made of the indoor and outdoor spaces.
- The teaching of phonics is highly effective. Adults plan activities that match children's varying starting points. As a result, children become increasingly confident in blending sounds and breaking down words into their composite letter sounds. They rapidly acquire phonic skills which underpin the progress that they make in reading and writing. The level of children's independence and cooperation demonstrated in the Reception class during inspection was extremely impressive.

- Safeguarding is highly effective. Staff are well trained. Risk assessments and established routines ensure that the children are kept safe.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive and appreciate the strong relationships between themselves, their children and the early years team. One parent, reflecting the views of most, told the inspection team that she was very impressed with how much her children had learned and developed since September in the Nursery class.
- Overall, the highly effective teaching and imaginative and stimulating provision ensure that outcomes for children, personal development and behaviour are outstanding and that children are very well prepared for entry into key stage 1.

School details

Unique reference number	124234
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10032576

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Cope
Headteacher	Samantha Jackson
Telephone number	01785 337360
Website	www.berkswichprimaryschool.co.uk/
Email address	headteacher@berkswich.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 March 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school. There is one class for each year group and a Nursery class.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils who receive support for special educational needs is just below average. There are no pupils currently with an education, health and care plan.
- The great majority of pupils are White British and speak English as their home language.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed activities in all year groups. Observations were undertaken with the headteacher and deputy head.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders and middle leaders. An inspector also met two governors, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector also met with a representative of the local authority. Discussions were held with several pupils.
- Inspectors took into consideration the 107 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. The inspection team met parents when they were dropping off their children at school.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised several documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvements plans, records of data on pupils' performance, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors also analysed minutes of governors' meetings, monitoring records of the schools' work to gauge the school's effectiveness and pupils' work from all classes completed in the current academic year.

Inspection team

Helen Davies, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Chris Minton

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