

Talbot First School

Church Lane, Kingstone, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire ST14 8QJ

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1 are low. While standards are now improving, gaps remain in pupils' knowledge and skills.
- Pupils do not make consistently strong progress across the school from their starting points. Consequently, pupils do not achieve their full potential.
- Although improving, teaching is still variable across the school. In mathematics, misconceptions are not dealt with quickly enough. Basic skills in spelling, punctuation and handwriting often go unchecked. Teachers' expectations are not high enough, and this slows pupils' progress.
- The quality of phonics teaching is variable. As a result, the number of pupils reaching the expected standard by the end of Year 1 is below national figures.
- Until recently, Governors were too trusting of the information they had been given. They did not probe, challenge or check it sufficiently well. As a result, weaknesses in provision, outcomes and the quality of teaching and learning were not addressed quickly enough.
- The curriculum offered to pupils, including those in the early years, is limited and requires improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has taken rapid action to halt the decline and address the failings in the school. She has a clear understanding of the key issues facing the school and is working with drive and determination to improve things.
- Progress in reading and mathematics is improving. Some pupils are now working at greater depth.
- Pupils are well behaved and kept safe at school. They show respect and concern for others and work well together.
- Middle leaders have clear action plans in place. They are beginning to address the weaknesses in their subject areas.
- Pupils want to learn and attend school regularly. Attendance is above national averages.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve
 - plan and set work that matches the varying needs and abilities of all pupils and challenges them to make good progress from their starting points
 - successfully build on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding in a wide range of subjects but particularly in reading, writing and mathematics
 - quickly and routinely tackle pupils' misconceptions and basic errors so that they are not repeated
 - further develop their subject knowledge particularly in teaching phonics and mathematics.
- Raise the achievement of pupils by ensuring that:
 - more pupils reach the levels of which they are capable given their starting points and that a higher number reaching greater depth
 - more pupils reach the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1
 - outcomes in writing and mathematics improve so that they are closer to national averages.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that governors rigorously hold leaders to account for pupil outcomes and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - developing the strategic role of the new headteacher to ensure that school development planning is robust and used to drive school improvement
 - developing a rich, engaging curriculum, which meets the needs of all pupils and enables them to develop skills, knowledge and understanding across a wide range of subjects.
- Improve the provision in early years by
 - ensuring that children in Reception have more regular opportunities to use the full range of resources available in order to explore and initiate learning for themselves
 - ensuring that adults use every opportunity to challenge and extend children's thinking and reasoning.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management can promote the improvements needed.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The new headteacher has worked tirelessly to get an accurate view of the school since her appointment in September 2017. Supported by the local authority and working with governors and middle leaders, she is taking steps to improve teaching and pupils' outcomes. Actions taken by leaders are beginning to have an impact on teaching and learning. However, due to staff changes these are not yet consistent across the school. This is limiting the improvements in pupils' outcomes.
- The headteacher is ambitious for the pupils and staff and knows that they can achieve much more. She has actively sought external support to help prioritise the areas of improvement. These areas are now reflected in the current school development plan. However, a clear strategic view is not yet fully developed. Concise success criteria and measureable outcomes are not identified for each area so that progress can be effectively tracked.
- The headteacher has begun to bring about improvements in teaching. She has introduced a robust cycle of performance management. The headteacher is providing support and guidance to help improve teaching practice. She has worked alongside teachers to implement new policies and procedures. She is clear about what comprises high standards. However, consistently good teaching is not yet secure across the school.
- Leaders are working hard to ensure greater consistency across the school. Middle leaders are based at the other school in the federation. They are now able to check standards and support teachers in this school. They have observed teaching and looked at pupils' books. The local authority is supporting them to put in place newly formed action plans to improve teaching and learning in English and mathematics. The plans focus on the right areas, but it is too early to see the impact of these actions.
- Professional development opportunities are being identified. Training is being provided for all staff to further develop their skills and knowledge particularly in English and mathematics. Staff are now beginning to share ideas and resources across the federation.
- The curriculum is limited and requires improvement. A long-term curriculum plan is in place, which is matched with the national curriculum. However, books of current pupils show that there is not enough curriculum coverage of subjects other than English and mathematics. Teaching of other subjects such as science is patchy. As a result, pupils do not fully develop their knowledge and skills across a wide range of subjects.
- Some of the additional funding for vulnerable pupils was not used correctly, nor its impact monitored closely. The headteacher is now ensuring that it is spent appropriately. This means that provision for vulnerable pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is improving. Pupils get more timely support matched to their needs. This is helping them make faster progress.
- Specific funds for school physical education (PE) and sport are put to good use. Pupils benefit from a range of after-school clubs. Funding also enables pupils to access different sporting venues and outdoor activity centres. This improves their physical

skills and abilities.

- The majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school. They said that their child is happy at school, well looked after and safe. One or two parents commented that the school need improving in some areas. Several parents remarked on the drive and determination of the new headteacher to do the best for the children. They commented that she is approachable and making a difference.
- The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills is actively encouraged across the school. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to visit the theatre. They provide mince pies and cups of tea at Christmas for members of the local community. Pupils vote in school council elections and understand what fairness and tolerance mean. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- The school has received useful support and challenge from Staffordshire local authority. It has a good understanding of the school and has provided advice and guidance particularly for new leaders and governors. This is supporting school improvement.

Governance of the school

- Over time, governors have not challenged leaders enough. They relied on the information received from leaders too readily. Too often, they accepted leaders' reasons for the school's underperformance. This meant that they did not have a clear understanding of the areas that needed improving. This is now improving. Governors are asking more questions and checking the information that they receive.
- The governing body is supportive of the school. Governors are working closely with the local authority to further develop their role. They make regular visits to the school so that they can find out about teaching and learning. They visit classrooms and talk to pupils. New governors access induction training so that they are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- Governors understand their responsibilities for keeping children safe at school. Governor minutes show that they discuss safeguarding at every meeting. They make sure that the appropriate checks are carried out when recruiting new staff. Governors attend training to ensure that their knowledge about safeguarding is up to date.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher is the designated safeguarding lead. She has ensured that there is a trained member of staff who can deputise for her if she is not available. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place. The new headteacher has developed and strengthened these. All staff have received training about the risks children can face. They know what to do if they have a concern about a child.
- Links with other agencies such as the local support team, social services and healthcare staff are effective. This ensures that children and families get help when they need it.

- Appropriate risk assessments are carried out and staff are vigilant. Checks are carried out on volunteers and visitors to the school. These are recorded correctly in the single central register.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies across the school. Recent changes in staffing have caused some disruption to teaching. The headteacher and middle leaders are working with current staff to ensure greater consistency.
- Too often, the work that staff ask pupils to complete is not well matched to their abilities. Expectations are too low given the starting points for the majority of pupils. Simple mistakes in spelling, handwriting and punctuation are not routinely picked up. Pupils are not consistently challenged to refine and improve their work. Consequently, many pupils do not produce the work of which they are capable. The new headteacher is supporting staff to expect more from all pupils.
- Some adults lack confidence in teaching phonics. They do not model accurately and their subject knowledge is not secure. This, together with the lack of a structured, cohesive approach, is preventing the majority of pupils from reaching the expected standard by the end of Year 1.
- Not all teachers are confident with the demands of the current mathematics curriculum. They do not explain clearly enough or show pupils what they need to do to be successful. This means that some pupils are unsure what to do. Teachers do not deal with pupils' mistakes and misconceptions quickly enough. As a result, pupils continue to make the same errors over and over again. This continues to slow progress in mathematics.
- The lack of a coherent approach to the teaching of mathematics has resulted in many pupils having gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Pupils did not have the opportunity to use and apply their skills. They did not secure their understanding before moving onto something new. Better planning more recently is beginning to address this issue.
- The teaching of reading is improving. Pupils enjoy reading. They talk about what they are reading and can use expression to bring their reading alive. Following training, a new approach to guided reading is being used across the school. This is providing more regular opportunities for pupils to read. Teachers ensure that pupils build on prior learning. Specific reading skills are taught explicitly. However, it is too early to fully measure the impact of this new approach.
- Teachers support pupils to develop their vocabulary across the curriculum. They use questions to check what pupils already know and encourage them to find alternative words to express themselves. For example, in Reception while discussing the word 'adventure', a pupil explained that it means to go exploring. As a result of discussions like this, pupils are articulate and can clearly express themselves.
- Relationships in classrooms are warm and positive. Adults encourage and reward pupils appropriately. A new approach to feedback is being developed, which focuses on pupils being clear about what to do next to improve their own work. It is still too early to see

the full impact of this, but pupils want to learn and try to do their best. Even when they are unsure what to do, pupils persevere and try to figure things out for themselves.

- Additional adults ensure that all pupils are included successfully. They support, encourage and challenge in equal measure. They adapt instructions so that pupils who have additional needs can be successful. Classrooms are inclusive.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and articulate. They listen carefully to each other and respect the opinions of others. In group work, they are able to take turns and share the workload equally. They offer support and encouragement to each other. For example, during the inspection, pupils praised the efforts of others who had been struggling with a piece of work.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy taking on responsibilities for ringing the bell, handing round the fruit or organising the equipment at breaktimes. They regularly check the rotas to see whether it is their turn and know what is expected of them.
- Pupils have a well-developed understanding of how to stay safe. When going to lunch, the youngest children knew the importance of holding an adult's hand. They check that the road is clear before crossing to the village hall. Pupils know not to share personal information online. They would tell an adult if they saw something that worried them on their computer or tablet.
- Pupils know what to eat to stay healthy. They know that water and milk are the best drinks for their bodies. They enjoy a range of activities inside and outside school. Pupils understand the importance of exercise and enjoy using the range of equipment on offer at lunchtimes. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the after-school yoga and archery clubs. 'I love relaxing and chilling after school in yoga,' commented a Year 4 pupil.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The great majority of pupils have a very positive attitude towards their learning. They want to do their best.
- Pupils are polite and show good manners. They hold doors open for each other and show respect to adults and visitors. Pupils take turns, share equipment and help each other. In the Nursery, the youngest children helped find the end of the roll of sticky tape so that a child could finish making their envelope.
- Pupils know about the different forms of bullying but are quite sure that it does not happen in their school. School councillors told the inspector that people do sometimes fall out with each other but were confident that this is not bullying. A councillor commented, 'Soon afterwards, they make up and always say sorry. We all get on. We are like a family.'

- Pupils are keen to come to school and attend school regularly. The attendance of each individual child is carefully tracked. Well-managed systems are in place to challenge any absence or late arrival at school. As a result, attendance is in line with national averages and the number of late arrivals to school has reduced.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The number of pupils in each year group is very small and varies considerably from year to year, making it difficult to identify specific trends and variations in performance and outcomes. For example in 2017, one pupil represented a quarter of the Year 2 cohort.
- The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been below national for the last three years. By the end of Year 2, however, most pupils have caught up and meet the standard.
- Pupils' progress across key stage 1 is too slow with the result that standards at the end of Year 2 are below those of other pupils nationally. Pupils are not sufficiently challenged to reach the standards, particularly in writing, of which they are capable. This is now improving. Work in the books of current Year 1 pupils demonstrates that they can use a joined style of handwriting and use punctuation such as capital letters and full stops more accurately.
- Outcomes in mathematics have fallen over the last three years. This is because work planned for them did not build on prior learning. Pupils did not have the chance to apply their skills to solving problems. As a result, many pupils have gaps in their mathematical knowledge and understanding. Teachers are now planning work more carefully to fill the gaps and ensure a secure understanding before they move on to something new.
- Some pupils make slow progress in their reading. Although they are keen to read, some pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and read regularly. Consequently, they lack fluency and the ability to fully understand what they are reading. This prevents these pupils from reaching higher levels.
- In the past two years, no pupils have reached greater depth in reading, writing or mathematics. Outcomes for current pupils are stronger. Current school assessment data shows pupils in three out of four year groups attaining at greater depth.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are now making better progress. This is a result of receiving earlier help and more appropriate support. One parent particularly commented on the help her child is receiving now and the regular reviews, which help her understand her child's difficulties.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Current teaching across the early years is improving, but there is a lack of a coherent, engaging curriculum to underpin all learning.
- The range and quality of activities that children access when working without an adult are inconsistent. The learning environment, particularly in the Nursery, is engaging and

enables children to be independent. For example, children sit at the writing table designing cards for their friends. They choose the paper, pens and sticky tape they want to use. However, children in Reception do not have enough opportunities to choose resources and activities inside and outside the classroom. This limits the progress they make in developing greater independence.

- Adults interact with children and know when to intervene. They ask questions to check what the child is doing or to help them complete an activity. However, not all adults' interactions are effective in challenging children's thinking. Opportunities to extend children's learning are missed. As a result, children do not make connections and build on what they already know as quickly as they might.
- Children join the school with skills and knowledge at the expected level for their age. At the end of Reception, the majority of children reach a good level of development.
- Children behave and play well together. Routines are well established and children know what is expected. They understand about taking turns, sharing and listening to adults. Children respond well to caring adults because relationships are strong. As a result, children develop confidence in expressing themselves.
- Adults know how to keep children safe at school. Leaders ensure that all welfare requirements are met. Parents are positive about their child's experiences in the early years.

School details

Unique reference number	124093
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10045490

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	43
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steven Peach
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Wright
Telephone number	01889 500273
Website	www.talbot.staffs.sch.uk/
Email address	office@talbot.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 September 2013

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than average.
- It is part of The Woodlands Federation with St. Peter's Church of England First School, Marchington. These two schools share an executive headteacher and have a joint governing body.
- Most pupils are White British, and all pupils speak English as a first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is significantly below average. In recent years, the school has received very little and sometimes no additional funding.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is broadly average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with the executive headteacher and other key leaders. The lead inspector spoke with seven members of the governing body including the chair and vice-chair of governors. The lead inspector discussed the school with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector made visits to classrooms on both days of the inspection. Many of these visits were with the executive headteacher.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide selection of pupils' books from different curriculum areas.
- Pupils were spoken to formally and informally. A group of pupils accompanied the inspector on a learning walk around the school. Pupils read to the inspector. The inspector observed behaviour in classrooms, in corridors, at lunchtime and outside on the playground.
- The inspector talked to parents before school on both days of the inspection. The inspector also considered the 17 responses on Ofsted's website, Parent View, and 17 responses to the free text service.
- The inspector noted the two responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Various school documents were scrutinised including the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan, records of monitoring, reports to governors and minutes of meetings. Information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety were also analysed and discussed with leaders.
- Documents relating to safeguarding were checked, and the inspector looked at published information on the school's website.

Inspection team

Nicola Harwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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