

The Valley Primary School

School Drive, Oakamoor, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST10 3DQ

Inspection dates

13–14 June 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders share an ambitious vision for The Valley Primary School. Together, with effective governance from trustees, they are bringing about improvement in pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have introduced new systems to track pupils' progress. Teachers use this information well to plan lessons and monitor pupils' progress.
- The number of pupils on roll is rising because leaders are working well to develop the Nursery provision. Children get off to a great start and make good progress.
- Pupils are nurtured and cared for well. Pupils show respect and are most courteous. Pupils are kept safe and feel safe.
- Progress for current pupils is good because they are being taught well. Teachers' assessments are accurate. Improving weaker aspects of pupils' skills in editing writing, handwriting and presentation of work require more attention from staff and leaders.
- Reading skills and a love of reading are taught well from the beginning. As a result, pupils are making good progress in their phonics skills.
- Teachers' and teaching assistants' expectations of pupils' presentation of their work, including handwriting, are not high in all subjects.
- The broad curriculum, including forest school, engages all pupils well.
- New subject leaders across the multi-academy trust are beginning to play a role in monitoring teaching and learning. Some subject leaders are less experienced in providing staff with precise feedback on what is going well and what needs to improve.
- Carefully planned programmes of support are in place for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. As a result, they are making good progress from their starting points.
- Support for children of armed forces families (service children) is good. They settle quickly into school life. Additional funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils, resulting in them making good progress.
- Parents value the care and education their children receive.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, by:
 - helping pupils develop and use their editing skills in writing, both in English and in other subjects
 - improving expectations of pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work.
- Improve still further leadership and management, by:
 - developing leaders' skills in providing effective feedback to teachers and teaching assistants to help them improve their work
 - sharing the best practice of subject leadership across the multi academy trust.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since moving from a federation of three schools to a founding member of The Moorlands Primary Federation, the school leader, based in the school, is well supported by the executive principal and principal, who visit the school regularly. The three leaders work well together and this has led to improvements in the achievements of pupils. Leaders show a strong capacity to continue improving.
- Leaders are aspirational; they know the school well. They have created a supportive environment for pupils, where they can thrive and develop. The school is an integral part of the local community. It is a place where pupils are happy, feel safe and achieve well.
- Leaders' evaluations of the strengths of the school are accurate. New systems to track the pupils' progress are used effectively by all staff in school. Leaders use assessment information in regular pupil-progress meetings, resulting in adaptations to programmes for individual pupils and groups of pupils.
- Teachers across the multi-academy federation compare and check their judgements. This is helping colleagues share best practice and provide teachers with feedback on their assessment judgements.
- Subject leaders across the federation share the executive principal's vision of a commitment to high achievement for all pupils. These leaders, some new to their roles, have a secure understanding of the strengths of the school. However, some aspects of their work are not yet fully developed, in particular the feedback teachers and teaching assistants receive following observations or learning walks. Feedback to staff is not always precise enough to help individual teachers and teaching assistants know what they need to improve on and how these improvements will be monitored over time.
- Responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire indicate that staff feel well supported and are proud to work at the school. Effective professional development is linked to performance management for teaching staff. This enables teachers to improve their practice. Teaching assistants are provided with training, enabling them to meet the specific needs of pupils they support.
- Additional funding for service children is used effectively through academic support and personalised programmes to support their individual needs.
- The progress of the small number of disadvantaged pupils is monitored carefully by leaders. Teachers identify barriers to learning and good use is made of the additional funding to meet the needs of these pupils. This is resulting in disadvantaged pupils making as much progress as other pupils in the school.
- The curriculum is well designed, with a broad range of subjects and experiences. For example, in key stage 2 pupils engage in a four-year cycle of curriculum provision. This allows pupils to use their literacy skills across a range of subjects including history, geography and science. Good use is made of links with the local secondary school through specialist language teachers. Physical education and sport are an integral part of the school's curriculum. Pupils value the opportunities to engage in a wide range of sporting and extra-curricular experiences. Forest school further enhances learning

opportunities and broadens the curriculum extremely well through the outside classroom in the yurt. Pupils learn to make fires in the fire pit and explore the school's woodlands. Learning experiences are memorable and exciting.

- The federation of schools works well together to extend curriculum opportunities for pupils. Pupils spoke about their enjoyment of visiting other schools and the joint educational visits with other schools.
- The school leader strongly leads and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning. Pupils have many opportunities to demonstrate leadership skills through support for younger children, leadership roles in class and around school. The active school council organises events for the pupils and wider community. Through the teaching of religious education, topic work and collective worship pupils learn about other cultures. They show respect and tolerance of others. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school's partnership with parents and the community is very strong. Parents have a really positive view of the school. 'What really stands out is [the] caring approach of staff', 'opportunities to learn beyond the classroom are fantastic' and 'I feel every child is known and supported as an individual' were typical of the glowing praise for the school in the free-text responses from parents.

Governance of the school

- Trustees are effective in holding leaders to account. They have a strong vision for the federation of schools. They are striving to improve outcomes through the sharing of good practice among the federation of schools through newly appointed curriculum leaders.
- Trustees have a good knowledge and understanding of what is going well in the school and what the school is working hard to improve. They are strategic in their work, developing consistent systems across the federation of schools. For example, the assessment systems provide trustees with up-to-date information on the progress of groups of pupils in school.
- Trustees are knowledgeable about the impact of additional funding, including pupil premium spending. They monitor the progress of pupils carefully. Financial decisions are taken with care.
- Training for trustees is effective; for example, in finance and safeguarding, which includes raising awareness of the dangers of radicalisation, bullying and homophobic behaviours. Consequently, trustees understand their strategic role in leadership.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Throughout the school there is a strong culture of keeping children safe. Leaders and staff are vigilant in all aspects of their care and protection of pupils. The site is a safe, secure environment for pupils. Parents and pupils have many opportunities to share any concerns they may have with staff.

- The school leader has a thorough understanding of her role as the designated safeguarding lead in school. She ensures that staff training is up to date. Staff know what to do if they have a concern. Record-keeping is detailed and thorough. Procedures for safer recruitment are followed by senior leaders. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good because teachers plan lessons that engage and stimulate pupils. Teachers are skilful when questioning pupils: they challenge them to think further and ask questions for themselves. As a result, pupils are inquisitive and motivated learners.
- Teachers are aware of the need to challenge all pupils in the two mixed-age classes. Teachers and teaching assistants carefully modify learning to meet the needs of all learners. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well catered for. Programmes are personalised to meet their individual needs both in lessons and through one-to-one support. Consequently, all pupils achieve well.
- Phonics and reading are well taught, so pupils read with fluency and confidence. Pupils enjoy listening to teachers read as well as reading regularly to staff and their peers. For example, in key stage 2, when reading a Harry Potter novel, pupils read fluently and confidently to the class. Pupils were enthusiastic when sharing their views on how Harry Potter was feeling in the story. The most able pupils were challenged. For example, they were given the opportunity to discuss how Harry Potter was feeling when compared with Dudley Dursley, another character in book. Pupils demonstrated good comprehension skills along with sensitivity when comparing and contrasting how the two characters may view events in the story.
- Pupils have many opportunities to write at length in different subjects linked to the topics they study. Writing is improving. Pupils have opportunities to use their wide vocabulary well in their written work. Pupils draft their writing but opportunities to check whether the work makes sense are sometimes missed. Adults do not consistently support pupils to make the best use of their editing skills.
- While some pupils present their work with great care, teachers' and teaching assistants' expectations of pupils' written work are not always high enough. Staff are not routinely picking up on standards of presentation and handwriting. As a result, some pupils do not present their work clearly. Some have poor handwriting and poor presentation of formal calculations in mathematics.
- Teaching is enhanced through the educational visits and visitors. For example, a visit from a local poet from the Peak District really captured pupils' imaginations. As a result of this activity, pupils became confident when writing poems. They used metaphors, personification and other poetry conventions to a high standard. Pupils have many opportunities to perform poetry within school, at remembrance events and in inter-school competitions across the multi-academy federation.
- All parents who responded to Parent View said their children are taught well and receive an appropriate amount of homework for their age.

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, independent learners who have a thirst for learning. The school motto of 'love to learn, learn to love' is evident throughout the school. Pupils are polite and courteous when listening to the ideas of others.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online. They feel safe in school. Pupils say that bullying isn't a feature of their school but if it did happen they are confident the school leader would take a very firm approach.
- Displays around school celebrate community events and competitions. Pupils value the opportunity to form sports teams with other schools in the federation. They said, 'If we don't have enough pupils to make up a team, we join with another school.' They spoke with pleasure about making new friends in other schools which they said helps to prepare them well for their move to secondary school.
- The before- and after-school provision provides a positive start and end to each day, with pupils of all ages socialising and playing well together.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They are particularly proud of the forest school area in school because they are able to welcome pupils from every school in the federation to share this with them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is improving and is now closer to the national average. The school is working hard to improve attendance for those who do not attend school regularly.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons. They understand the expectations of behaviour at playtimes and lunchtimes. Pupils have a strong sense of fairness and equality.
- The school leader sets high expectations for behaviour in and around school.
- The school is a calm, well-ordered environment. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others and they look after each other. They value the opportunity to play organised sports games with older and younger pupils at lunchtime.
- Parents have very positive views of behaviour. A parental comment which resonated with the pupils' views of high expectations of everyone in school was, 'What really stands out for me is the caring approach the staff have and how they set boundaries in a really positive way.'

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Current pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. Pupils in school are now well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Work in books and the school's own assessment information shows that the majority of pupils are working within age-related expectations. While pupils in Year 6 are making good progress in writing, there remains a relative weakness in the opportunities for other pupils in key stage 2 to regularly edit and improve their writing.

- Attainment of pupils in key stage 1 has been broadly in line with national averages in reading and mathematics in 2016 and 2017. In 2017, there was a dip in key stage 1 outcomes in writing. For pupils currently in school, work in pupils' books and school information show that pupils are once again making good progress in all subjects, given their starting points. Some pupils make accelerated progress across key stage 1. This reflects the actions taken by the school leader to improve writing, in particular in key stage 1.
- Pupils enjoy reading; many pupils talk enthusiastically about reading for pleasure. They have many opportunities to develop good levels of comprehension. Pupils use an extensive vocabulary when talking about what they have read. Over the past three years the numbers reaching the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check have improved to close to the national average.
- Inspection evidence suggests that the majority of pupils currently in Year 1 are working securely at the required level in phonics. Pupils are adept when using their phonics skills to decode new or tricky words. For example, Year 1 and 2 pupils were able to read words with the 'ph' sound. They confidently read ambitious vocabulary including 'cellophane' and 'autograph'. Pupils respond well to the challenge of explaining the meaning of the words and using them in sentences.
- Currently the most able pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are making good progress because teachers plan work that challenges them; expectations are high. Pupils are provided with work that deepens their skills and knowledge across the curriculum.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive high levels of support, both in class or in one-to-one sessions. As a result of the highly personalised programmes of support, they are making good progress from their starting points.
- The school has a small number of pupils who are disadvantaged. Additional intervention and support for pupils' pastoral and academic needs is resulting in these pupils making good progress.
- There are a number of children from service families. When they join the school, they are quickly and accurately assessed to ensure that the work they do meets their needs and is challenging. Additional funding is used well to ensure that these pupils settle quickly into school.

Early years provision

Good

- Children join Nursery and Reception with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. They make good progress because teaching is good. All staff ensure that teaching is matched effectively to the interests and needs of the children.
- In 2015 and 2016 the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was well above the national average. In 2017, there was a dip in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development. Mobility and children's individual needs were significant factors in this small cohort. Current children are making good progress in

Reception. The school's own information shows that high standards are set to be achieved again in 2018. As a result, children are well prepared for Year 1.

- Children in the early years achieve well because support and teaching are tailored to their individual needs. The teacher provides a good level of challenge to all children, including the most able. For example, when sharing the story 'Handa's surprise' they confidently named the fruit. Children ask questions and think through their ideas. One Nursery child asked what a tangerine is. The others helped to explain what this fruit looks and tastes like.
- In the mixed-age class, the needs of the youngest children are met well. Areas in the classroom for children to learn through play are adapted creatively.
- Children show good skills of independence; they learn by working alongside the older children. For example, in an assembly on Noah's Ark, the youngest children participated equally as well as the key stage 1 pupils. They speak in sentences, following the model of the older children, when explaining their ideas. For example, when thinking through ideas about whether two sharks could be on the ark, they concluded a large tank would be needed.
- Good use is made of forest school and the outdoor learning space to extend children's social, physical and academic learning. Children really utilise the well-maintained school grounds. As a result, they make good progress in their personal, social and physical development.
- Children behave well because all adults are consistent in their approach. Adults are nurturing and calm and all have high expectations of the children. Children listen well; they follow instructions and understand the clearly established routines. The environment is safe. Staff are vigilant and ensure that children are safe at all times.
- Adults care for the children's physical and personal health needs sensitively. They take care to enable the children to develop appropriate independence in their personal care, while maintaining a caring, watchful presence.
- Leadership of the early years is good. Learning journeys contain a wealth of information about what the children know and are able to do. Assessments of children's progress are detailed and accurate. Staff use this information to plan for their next steps in learning. Parents can access the progress their children are making on the electronic platform used by the school.
- The partnership with parents is very effective. The toddler group introduces new children to the school. In 2016, the school introduced a Nursery group to the school. The school is flexible on how part-time hours are organised. Parents were overwhelming positive about the Nursery and Reception provision. They commented particularly about the caring community and family ethos developed by staff.

School details

Unique reference number	141848
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10047350

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Peter Chell
Executive Principal	Mr Jared Eccles
Telephone number	01538 702355
Website	http://www.valley.staffs.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@valley.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes: the first class is for Nursery part time and full-time children; Reception; Year 1; and Year 2; the second class is a key stage 2 class.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- Currently, the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is a quarter of the school population, this is twice the national average.
- The school is an academy convertor and is a founding school of The Moorlands Primary Federation, established in 2015. The executive headteacher visits the school weekly. The school leader manages the school on a daily basis.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage; all speak English as their first language.

- The governors operate a before- and after-school club on the school premises.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in all classes. She saw nine parts of lessons and two class assemblies, the majority of which were observed jointly with the executive headteacher or school leader.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, the school leader, principal, executive principal, other staff with leadership responsibilities from federation schools and trustees of the multi-academy federation.
- The inspector took account of 18 responses to Parent View and the free-text responses. The inspector also spoke to parents at the start of the school day.
- Pupils' views were considered by talking to pupils both formally and informally during the inspection. The 10 pupil responses to the online questionnaire were taken into account.
- The inspector took account of the five staff responses to the online Ofsted staff survey.
- The inspector listened to pupils read, talked to them about their learning and reviewed work in the books across a range of subjects.
- The inspector reviewed a number of documents including those relating to safeguarding and attendance; records relating to behaviour; minutes of trustees' meetings; improvement plans; achievement information and leaders' reports about the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection team

Pamela Matty, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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