

# Springfield Academy

Salters Lane South, Darlington, County Durham DL1 2AN

## Inspection dates

17–18 July 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</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	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have not been effective in bringing about the necessary improvements.
- The recently appointed principal and his leadership team have not yet had enough time to remedy weaknesses in teaching, particularly in mathematics, so that it is consistently good.
- By the end of Year 6, standards of attainment are below average, particularly in reading and mathematics. Pupils do not make good progress from their starting points.
- After a good start, older pupils' achievement in reading is sometimes held back because they are not challenged to read, understand and talk about a text in enough depth. This is preventing them from achieving higher levels.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high. There is not enough challenge for the most able pupils. Too few pupils reach the higher standards.
- Governors have not held leaders to account for ensuring that the pupil premium funding is used to good effect. Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve well.
- The skills and expertise of new subject leaders are still developing. Their actions to improve their areas of responsibility have not yet resulted in the necessary improvements in teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils' knowledge and skills in subjects beyond English and mathematics are underdeveloped.

### The school has the following strengths

- The principal is passionate about ensuring that pupils achieve the best outcomes. He has an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and a clear vision for bringing about improvement.
- Pupils behave well. They are eager to learn and show respect for each other and adults.
- Care and welfare of pupils and their families are effective. Staff are vigilant in keeping pupils safe. Pupils feel safe.
- As a result of good leadership, early years provision has improved and is effective. Children's learning gets off to a good start. They are well prepared for key stage 1.
- Teaching of phonics is effective. Younger pupils make good progress in developing their skills.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress. Support provided is valued highly by parents and carers.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in key stages 1 and 2 so that it is consistently good or better in order to raise pupils' standards of attainment by:
  - raising expectations of what pupils, particularly the most able, can achieve
  - improving teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics
  - ensuring that assessment is used to plan learning in mathematics so that work is pitched at the right level and pupils are given work that deepens their understanding
  - planning reading lessons that develop pupils' reading skills so that they can read, understand and talk about a text in depth.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - swiftly addressing the weaknesses in teaching in key stages 1 and 2
  - ensuring that support staff are effectively deployed
  - evaluating the impact of the school's strategies to support disadvantaged pupils
  - developing the skills and expertise of subject leaders so they can take effective action to improve their areas of responsibility
  - monitoring the school's curriculum so that pupils' skills and knowledge are developed across all subjects
  - further reducing persistent absence.

An external review of the use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The new principal has quickly 'grasped the nettle' and evaluated the school's effectiveness with precision. He has established a positive climate for learning and gained the trust and respect of pupils, staff and parents, who welcome the changes that have been introduced to make the school a cohesive community. As one parent put it, 'Children love being part of the Springfield family.'
- A lack of strategic focus has hampered pupils' achievement. Strategies to ensure that teaching is consistently good have not been effective in all parts of the school. While some improvements, for example in early years, are already having a positive impact, too many weaknesses in the quality of teaching remain to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they could.
- Some of the systems and processes to check the quality of teaching and to measure rates of pupils' progress have only recently been introduced and are not fully embedded. Some less experienced subject leaders, while keen and enthusiastic, are still getting to grips with their roles and responsibilities and require further professional development to gain the skills and expertise needed to be fully effective in improving their areas of responsibility.
- The school's tracking system of pupils' progress and attainment is now being used to better effect. A sharp focus on helping pupils to catch up in Year 6 has been successful in improving current outcomes in mathematics and writing. However, there still remains too much slippage due to weaker teaching in other parts of the school.
- The pupil premium funding provides additional learning support and extra-curricular activities for disadvantaged pupils so they enjoy equal opportunities alongside their peers. Their varying rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics, however, reflect the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Leaders and governors have not evaluated the impact of this funding well enough. The impact of the deployment of additional support staff to help disadvantaged pupils catch up, for example, lacks clarity.
- The school has a thematic approach to teaching the curriculum. A focus on improving pupils' basic skills in mathematics and English means that the quality of teaching of some other curriculum subjects is patchy. Pupils' knowledge and skills in some subjects such as geography and history have not been effectively developed to ensure that they have a secure understanding of the subject.
- The leadership of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is good. Leaders track their progress carefully and check that funding is used effectively so that pupils are well supported to make good progress and so that their welfare and academic needs are met. The school is an effective broker in providing external specialist support for those pupils who have a high level of need and this is readily acknowledged by parents. As one parent put it, 'The school does a lot of extra work to meet the needs of my child. Any changes to care plans are sorted out very quickly.'
- The spiritual and moral development of pupils is effectively promoted through assemblies and lessons. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 recently had a visit from Durham

Constabulary to learn about hate crimes, helping pupils understand what discrimination means. Pupils have a secure understanding of faith and diversity and recognise the rights of others. Their attitudes reflect the school's ethos to 'embrace difference and harmony by valuing diversity.'

- Pupils' understanding of British values, democracy and the rule of law is seen in the context of the school. The school council reflects the democratic election of representatives and pupils' opinions are valued, and, as a result, mutual respect and tolerance are understood by pupils.
- Pupils benefit from the trust's sporting facilities, including swimming provision from early years. The primary school physical education (PE) and sport funding is used well to provide greater opportunities for pupils to access a wider range of sports. This is reflected in pupils' enthusiasm for PE and sports. This was observed during the inspection when pupils keenly participated in sports day.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors have a good understanding of their role and responsibilities in holding the school to account. They have an overview of the quality of teaching and learning and understand that pupils' standards of attainment and their progress are not yet good enough.
- Governors have not been fully effective in speeding up the rate of improvements in the quality of teaching so that pupils achieve consistently well. With the appointment of a new principal, they have now established a robust relationship where they are willing to challenge school leaders.
- Governors have directed much of the funding to support disadvantaged pupils towards providing additional staffing and on targeted group teaching. The progress of these pupils, however, is not consistently good. Governors have been too slow to hold leaders to account in taking effective action that would swiftly bring about the necessary improvements to ensure that these pupils achieve well and ensure that the funding is well spent.
- Governors are fully conversant with their legal duties for safeguarding, ensuring that staff are recruited with careful consideration. Checks are carried out to ensure that governors and staff are fully up to date with their safeguarding training.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a culture of safety in school and are vigilant in checking that procedures are implemented to protect pupils. All staff understand their obligations for safeguarding, and this is emphasised through the school's work. For example, pupils learned about safety in the local community when work was being carried out to the supply of gas on the local housing estate.
- The school's strategy to make pupils feel safe in all areas of the school has been successful. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and all who responded to the pupil survey support this view. Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online

questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their child is safe in school. The school conducts a range of risk assessments to keep pupils and staff safe.

- All members of staff are checked for their suitability to work with children. Accurate and up-to-date records of these checks are maintained.
- Leaders, teachers and other staff are aware of the school's procedures for safeguarding. They take appropriate action when necessary. They liaise with outside agencies when they have a concern and they work hard to support families in need.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Teaching in key stages 1 and 2 is inconsistent. Too little is expected of pupils and there is insufficient emphasis on providing work that challenges pupils' thinking. Too often, pupils of all abilities are expected to achieve the same outcome.
- The most able pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Teaching is not providing them with the skills and knowledge to accelerate their progress. Teaching is not deepening their understanding in either mathematics or reading. In both key stages 1 and 2, pupils' written work in English lacks the features of writing at a higher standard.
- Not all teachers have secure subject knowledge in mathematics. Professional development to address this has brought about recent improvements in the teaching of this subject. As a result, the pace of pupils' progress is starting to pick up. Teachers' assessment has identified gaps in pupils' calculation skills which are now being addressed. Pupils apply their mathematical skills to number problem-solving questions and show some good reasoning for their solutions. Opportunities for mathematical investigation are more limited and this hinders pupils' progress, particularly of the most able.
- The teaching of phonics has recently been revised and has had a positive impact on the outcomes of the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. Lessons in reading have helped pupils to enjoy books. Teachers miss opportunities for in-depth discussion of texts to help pupils understand the author's intention or help them gain an appreciation of the author's style or a particular genre.
- The teaching of writing in both key stage 1 and key stage 2 has been more successful in helping pupils achieve expected standards. Teachers are effective in choosing interesting topics and subjects for the pupils to write about. Pupils' interest is engaged by the use of film clips to stimulate their writing. As a result, their writing is often lively and they understand the features required to write in a range of styles.
- The teaching of subjects other than English and mathematics does not always engage pupils' interest. Pupils' work in subjects such as history and geography shows that the learning intention and activity are not clearly based on the skills and knowledge pupils need to learn in these subjects or at the appropriate age and stage.
- The teaching and support of disadvantaged pupils lack precision. Work in additional teaching groups and the use of additional staff within class are not sufficiently well planned to ensure that this group of pupils make consistently good progress.
- Pupils who have high levels of SEN and/or disabilities are well integrated into the

school and they are often well supported by teaching assistants who have had specialist training. Provision is well organised, with specific programmes of learning mapped out and tracked to ensure that these pupils make good progress. Pupils who have social and emotional needs are effectively supported and managed by staff.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school puts a great deal of emphasis on supporting the most vulnerable pupils and their families and understands their needs. The good communication from the school and accessibility of staff, including the principal, are appreciated by parents.
- The school is a calm and orderly place for pupils to learn. The emphasis on pupils' mental well-being is reflected in their confidence to confide in an adult in school if they are worried about anything.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. They talk about all the things they learn in school, and about safety. Pupils understand how to manage risk and understand the risks of using the internet and social media.

### Behaviour

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are eager to answer the teacher's questions and work well in pairs and groups. Pupils conduct themselves well in and around school and they are polite and show good manners. Pupils and most parents are confident that the school deals effectively with any bad behaviour and bullying.
- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying, including bullying related to race and gender. They say that there is little or no bullying in school and that any misbehaviour is dealt with quickly. Pupils respect the school rules and know there are consequences for bad behaviour.
- Pupils talk matter of factly about respecting people's differences and life choices. One pupil said, 'You should be happy about your difference.' Pupils are confident that school is a safe place to be, where everyone is valued and treated with respect.
- Overall, attendance is broadly average. Most pupils attend school regularly. The school rewards good attendance and actively follows up absenteeism. Improving the attendance of pupils who are most at risk has been a high priority and this has had a positive impact on reducing absences, particularly of disadvantaged pupils. Even so, a small minority of pupils are still absent too often.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Requires improvement**

- In key stages 1 and 2, the rate of pupils' progress, particularly in reading and mathematics, is variable. Progress overall is not good enough and reflects the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in these key stages.
- In mathematics, pupils in key stage 1 make good progress from their previous starting

points. By the end of Year 2, attainment is broadly in line with the national average. However, in key stage 2, pupils do not build well on this good start. Progress in mathematics through key stage 2 is too slow. It has been in the bottom 20% of all schools for two out of the last three years.

- Recent improvements in the teaching of mathematics mean that pupils are now making better progress. Pupils apply their basic skills to mathematical problems and are developing their reasoning skills to give plausible explanations for their answers. However, the most able pupils are not doing as well as they could because, for example, mathematical problems they are given lack challenge.
- In phonics, pupils in key stage 1 show good decoding skills when reading and make plausible spelling attempts in their writing. The improvements in the teaching of phonics have increased the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1, which is now in line with the national average. For the past two years, all pupils have reached the expected standard by the end of Year 2.
- Once pupils have secured their early reading skills to decode unfamiliar words, their progress in reading slows. Pupils say that they enjoy reading, but their knowledge of unfamiliar words and understanding of authors' use of language hamper their ability to discuss texts in any depth. This weakness is reflected in the below-average proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard in reading at the end of both key stages. Most-able pupils in particular do not achieve well in reading.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils do better in writing than in reading and mathematics and, as a result, attainment in writing is closer to the national average. Initiatives to improve the teaching of writing have largely been effective. While pupils apply skills they have learned to improve their spelling and grammar, the independence of pupils to structure and organise their own writing is limited. This continues to hamper pupils' progress in writing, especially the most able.
- Pupils' understanding, skills and knowledge across subjects beyond English and mathematics are limited. Although pupils enjoy some of the enrichment experiences such as trips to the theatre and museums as well as visiting authors, they do not link these activities with learning some subjects such as geography and history, where pupils' knowledge and understanding are often superficial.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar varied progress to their peers. Leaders track how well these pupils are doing in English and mathematics. Where extra teaching time has been sharply focused, this is starting to have an impact, particularly in key stage 1. This year, all disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1. Where additional support is not well planned, progress for this group of pupils remains less than good.
- The achievement of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is good. Work is well planned to meet the needs of these pupils. Those who have specific learning difficulties or medical needs benefit from specialised support and this ensures that they make good progress.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Since the previous inspection, the school has effectively improved provision and outcomes for children in early years. Following staff changes, early years now has stable and effective leadership. Parents express positive views about the school's provision for young children.
- Cohorts vary from year to year, but a high proportion of children enter the school with poor communication and language skills. This year, a significant number of children have SEN and/or disabilities. The proportion of children who achieve the expected outcomes at the end of early years has been increasing in recent years and, in 2017, was broadly in line with the national average. This represents good progress from the children's often below typical starting points.
- Children enter Nursery happy, motivated and eager to learn. Good relationships are soon established. Children quickly adapt to routines and expectations. Children learn to take on age-appropriate responsibility. For example, they are quick to tidy up and put things back in the right place. Children's behaviour throughout early years is good, both in the classroom and the outside area.
- The learning environment both inside and outside is of a high quality. Learning is well planned to be 'seamless' between the classroom and the outside area. The commitment of the staff and the provision of stimulating activities result in children's high levels of engagement.
- Children play well independently and sustain interest and focus. For example, a group of children playing outside were determined to get the water pump working and were not going to give up, filling it with a watering can until it did. Other children were intent on completing a treasure hunt, recording their answers and forming their numbers correctly. Another group of children, dressed as pirates, built a pirate boat from a simple plan they had drawn. They enjoyed the role play of walking the plank, so perfecting their balancing technique.
- Children are taught basic reading and mathematical skills through focused lessons and play activities that support new learning. The effective teaching of phonics means that children make good progress with their reading and learn to decode words when reading simple texts. The quality of children's spoken language varies and some children have specific speech and language difficulties. However, staff frequently use questioning and modelling to help children speak in full sentences.
- The teaching of writing is effective, particularly in developing boys' enthusiasm for reading and writing through a superheroes topic. During the inspection, children were busily talking and writing about various fruit when writing about the book 'Handa's Surprise.' They have a correct pencil grip and carefully form their letters as they write.
- Assessment and planning are used to focus learning on children's next steps in learning. Adult intervention is used well to further learning when children play independently or to direct them to a purposeful activity.
- The school works hard to engage parents and maintain daily contact. Transition is effective and staff establish links with home through the homework books and the children's learning journeys where parents record their comments. The move into key stage 1 is well managed and children are well prepared for their next stage of education.



- Leaders ensure that the welfare and safety of children are given a high priority and that staff are skilled and responsive to children's individual needs. They ensure that good links are fostered with external agencies and specialists to support children who have particular needs. The setting is a safe place for children, and all health and safety requirements are met.

## School details

Unique reference number	138088
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10042178

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	259
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Deborah Wood
Principal	Richard Gartland
Telephone number	01325 254000
Website	<a href="http://www.educationvillage.org.uk">www.educationvillage.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:rgartland@educationvillage.org.uk">rgartland@educationvillage.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	2–3 February 2016

## Information about this school

- Springfield Academy is an average-sized primary school. It is part of the Education Village Trust. The principal was appointed in October 2017.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in all classrooms, and some together with the principal. In addition, inspectors observed the teaching of small groups of pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised some pupils' work and listened to some pupils read. They spoke with a number of pupils about their views of school and their opinions of behaviour and safety. Inspectors considered the 17 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and governors and took into account the 24 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of school documents. These included the school's self-evaluation report, development plan, behaviour and attendance records, governing body documents and documents relating to safeguarding and the monitoring of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors talked to some parents to seek their views about the school. They took into account the 20 responses of parents who submitted their views to the inspection team, as well as the 33 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

## Inspection team

Karen Heath, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Julie McGrane

Ofsted Inspector

Steve Shaw

Her Majesty's Inspector

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