

Squirrel Hayes First School

Springfield Road, Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST8 7DF

Inspection dates

25–26 September 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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher leads with determination and passion. Governors and staff share her high expectations and, as a result, standards have risen to be broadly in line with those found nationally at the end of key stage 1.
- Governors know the school well and provide good challenge and support for school leaders.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make progress that is in line with other pupils nationally.
- Teaching is good because teachers plan interesting activities, and expectations of pupils are clear. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Children make a strong start in Nursery and Reception because staff create a safe and nurturing environment. Activities are interesting and support children to make good progress.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It promotes pupils' understanding of British values well.
- Pupils behave well and show respect for one another.
- All staff are committed to the safety and welfare of pupils. They encourage pupils to do their best and not give up when they make mistakes. Consequently, pupils feel secure and happy at school.
- Parents and carers are happy with the school. They are confident that their children are learning and making progress.
- Recently appointed middle leaders are developing their skills and beginning to have an impact on the quality of teaching.
- In some lessons, adults do not ask questions that deepen pupils' understanding and do not plan activities to challenge the most able pupils. This limits the progress these pupils make.
- Pupils use exciting vocabulary, which makes their writing interesting. However, weak handwriting, spelling and punctuation sometimes reduce the quality of pupils' writing.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the good quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that tasks match the abilities of the most able pupils, including those supported by the pupil premium funding, so they make the progress of which they are capable
 - developing the quality of questioning to extend pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding
 - improving pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation skills.
- Build on the good quality of leadership and management by developing the leadership skills and knowledge of those new to leadership posts, and those aspiring to them.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors have high expectations of staff and pupils and have worked together well to develop an aspirational culture. As a result, standards in reading and teaching in the early years have improved.
- Thorough systems are in place to check what is working well and what needs further development. Consequently, leaders and governors have a clear view of how well the school is performing. Leaders' improvement plans identify appropriate priorities based on their regular monitoring of the school's work.
- Leaders took effective action following the previous inspection and developed 'flight plans', which help leaders and teachers ensure that pupils, including those who join the school at different times during the school year, make good progress.
- Staff appreciate the opportunities for professional development that leaders provide. High-quality staff training has contributed to raising the achievement of pupils, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Leaders accurately identify pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Good use of external expertise is made, which enables pupils with specific needs to overcome barriers to their learning. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding well. Disadvantaged pupils receive tailored support, for example through small group teaching and access to additional mathematics resources. Programmes to improve pupils' confidence and well-being ensure that they are ready for learning. However, in some year groups there is a lack of challenge for some disadvantaged pupils in lessons. Consequently, not enough disadvantaged pupils are working at the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The physical education and sport premium funding is used effectively. As a result, the number of pupils involved in regular sports exercise outside lessons has increased. Pupils talk confidently about the benefits of a healthy diet and exercise.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is enhanced by a range of exciting visits, which enable pupils to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills and knowledge across the curriculum. As a result, pupils make good progress.
- Teaching actively promotes fundamental British values. Staff encourage pupils to show tolerance and respect to people from all backgrounds. Pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of democracy and have opportunities to experience this for themselves, for example through the elected school council. This teaching prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders incorporate pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development into the curriculum. Visits to places of historical and cultural interest promote pupils' social and cultural understanding well. Pupils learn about different faiths and people whose lifestyles are different from their own. They enjoy opportunities to take responsibility, for example as 'buddies' at lunchtime. The emphasis on positive attitudes and resilience contributes effectively to pupils' social development.
- Partnership with parents is strong. There are good opportunities for parents to help

their children to learn, for example by using the curriculum maps on the school website. School staff also provide good support for parents to get additional help from external agencies when it is needed. The work of the school is valued by almost all parents.

- The headteacher and governors have rightly recognised the need to extend the leadership roles of other staff. Newly appointed leaders are motivated and ambitious for pupils' learning, but need additional training to increase their impact.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school well and make regular visits to see the school's work for themselves. For example, the chair of governors leads the school improvement group that checks on pupils' achievement.
- Governors provide effective challenge and hold leaders to account well.
- Governors know how leaders use additional funding. In particular, they check how the pupil premium funding is used and monitor its impact on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils
- Governors use their training well, so they have an up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding and health and safety matters.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff know pupils well and ensure that the school is a safe environment. Parents agree that their children are well looked after at school.
- Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training and have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues, including radicalisation and extremism. As a result, staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping pupils safe.
- Staff are vigilant and records show that they report any concerns promptly in line with the school's safeguarding policy. Leaders consistently follow up concerns about pupils' safety and welfare. They work effectively with external agencies to provide appropriate help and support for pupils and their families.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that they have an adult they can talk to if they are worried or upset. They are confident that any concerns they raise will be resolved quickly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan exciting tasks that build on pupils' existing knowledge and understanding. Consequently, pupils listen carefully and participate in activities with enthusiasm. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, pupils enjoyed writing a mystery story. They were skilled at using descriptive language to set the scene, drawing on their knowledge of stories they had already read. As a result, pupils achieve well.
- Teachers quickly identify pupils who need extra help. Adults give these pupils carefully

tailored support, which has a positive impact on pupils' confidence and encourages them to keep on trying when they find things difficult. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points.

- Similarly, carefully planned approaches support disadvantaged pupils in overcoming barriers to their learning. These help address any gaps in knowledge and skills pupils have and meet their social and emotional needs well. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make progress that is similar to other pupils nationally.
- The teaching of reading and phonics is effective. Pupils use their knowledge of letter sounds with increasing confidence to decode words. Pupils enjoy reading and can talk about their favourite authors.
- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge in mathematics to model learning and provide clear explanations for pupils. As a result, pupils understand how to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to solve problems successfully. This enables pupils to make good progress from their starting points.
- As a result of teachers' high expectations, pupils writing includes increasingly complex structures and language. However, in some pupils' work, teachers do not consistently address weak spelling of basic words, untidy handwriting and mistakes in punctuation.
- Work in pupils' books shows that they make good progress across the school. However, in some lessons, teachers do not give the most able pupils enough opportunities to deepen their learning and apply their knowledge and skills to new situations. As a result, some of these pupils do not reach the high standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make effective use of questioning in lessons to check pupils' learning. However, they do not consistently ask questions that deepen pupils' understanding or challenge their thinking. This slows the progress of some pupils, particularly the most able.

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 share their views in a thoughtful and respectful way. In lessons, they listen carefully to the ideas of others.
- Staff know pupils and their families well and take good care to meet the social and emotional needs of vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils' emotional and physical well-being is supported well throughout the school. Pupils are taught to take responsibility for their learning and to be resilient and, as a result, they are happy in school.
- Pupils know how to manage risk. They talk confidently about how to cross roads safely, stranger danger and how to stay safe online.
- Pupils learn about the different types of bullying. They say that bullying rarely happens in school, but they are confident that, should it occur, a teacher would deal with it

quickly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and consistently model good manners. As a result, pupils are polite, friendly and help one another.
- Pupils are keen to learn. They listen attentively to adults and generally concentrate well in lessons. They usually respond to adults' instructions quickly. As a result, learning continues with little disruption.
- Pupils behave well at breaktimes and lunchtime. The dining hall is calm and orderly. Pupils take turns to share play equipment and enjoy a wide range of lunchtime clubs and activities.
- Staff are rigorous in following up any absence to ensure that pupils are safe. Leaders have rightly focused on improving the attendance of those pupils who do not attend regularly enough. They have introduced a range of rewards for good attendance and use different coloured bands when reporting attendance to parents. As a result of leaders' proactive approach, attendance rates have risen and fewer pupils are regularly absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over time, pupils make good progress from their starting points. A significant number of pupils who entered key stage 1 below expected levels made strong progress to reach age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that current pupils in all year groups are making similarly strong progress. Almost all parents responding to Parent View agree that their children are taught well and make good progress.
- Leaders rightly identified that in 2017, at the end of key stage 1, pupils did not make as much progress in mathematics as in reading and writing. They took effective action to change the way mathematics was taught and provided additional training for staff. As a result, standards in mathematics rose in 2018 and the proportion working at greater depth was higher than the national average.
- The school's assessment information shows that across the school most disadvantaged pupils are making progress similar to other pupils nationally. On occasions, however, pupils are given work that is too easy. Consequently, too few of the most able disadvantaged pupils are being challenged to work at greater depth.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities achieve well in relation to their starting points because of the carefully targeted support they receive.
- Over the last three years, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been in line with that found nationally. The teaching of phonics is effective and enables pupils to make good progress.
- Pupils make good progress in reading because it is taught well. Pupils enjoy reading,

and, as they move into key stage 2, the majority of pupils read with confidence and expression.

- Pupils write with a good sense of their audience and purpose and use increasingly complex vocabulary as they move through the school. However, weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and handwriting detract from the quality of their writing.
- The school's assessment information indicates that the majority of pupils are making good progress. However, a detailed scrutiny of pupils' books shows that at times, the work of some most-able pupils does not build on what teachers know pupils can already do. As a result, these pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- Pupils' good progress as they move through key stage 2 prepares them well for middle school.

Early years provision

Good

- Children join the early years with knowledge, skills and understanding that are below those typical for their age, particularly in the communication and language area of learning. Children make good progress in both Nursery and Reception because teaching is good. As a result, children are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Children settle quickly in the early years because routines are well established. Children are kept safe and are well cared for. Relationships between adults and children are strong. As a result, children are happy, eager to learn and behave well.
- Adults plan activities in the early years classroom and in the outdoor learning area carefully to develop children's skills and help them to learn through play. They identify individual children's needs and provide extra support so that all children, including disadvantaged children, and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are helped to make good progress.
- Basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics are taught well. Adults rightly focus on helping children to develop their language and communication skills by modelling speaking in full sentences. During the inspection, adults extended children's mathematical language by explaining terms such as 'above', 'higher' and 'under' when they were building a tower outside. However, teachers do not consistently provide work that is challenging enough for the most able children.
- Parents value opportunities to be involved with their children's learning, particularly through workshops, which are well attended.
- Leadership of the early years is good. The early years leader has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in provision and is taking effective action to improve children's outcomes. Accurate assessments enable her to track children's progress closely and identify gaps in their learning. As a result, children achieve well.

School details

Unique reference number	124062
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10045518

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

Type of school	First
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Payne
Headteacher	Erica Pickford
Telephone number	01782 973 820
Website	www.squirrelhayes.staffs.sch.uk
Email address	office@squirrelhayes.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 April–1 May 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Reception and Nursery children are taught in one class and there is one class in each year group in Year 1 to Year 4.
- Nursery children join the school in the term after they are three years old and attend in the mornings.
- There is afternoon provision for pre-school children and a before- and after-school club on site, run by a private provider. This is inspected separately.
- Almost all pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is high.
- Since the last inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed.

- Three new teachers have joined the school in the past year.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in all classrooms. Some observations took place accompanied by the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about their reading. They scrutinised many examples of pupils' work and met with a group of pupils.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including: leaders' information on how well the school is doing, school development plans, information about pupils' attainment and progress, minutes of governing body meetings, records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, and those on the school's website.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons, during breaks and at lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and a governor.
- Inspectors took account of the 12 responses to the online questionnaire for staff.
- The lead inspector spoke to a local authority representative on the telephone.
- An inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors also took account of 11 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and looked at the free-text comments submitted by parents.

Inspection team

Helen Morrison, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Julie Bourdon-Pierre

Ofsted Inspector

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