

Poolsbrook Primary Academy

Cottage Close, Poolsbrook, Near Staveley, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S43 3LF

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders of the trust and governors responded slowly to address weaknesses in leadership. As a result, the school's performance declined.
- The acting executive headteacher has identified the weaknesses that have prevented pupils from achieving as they should. However, the changes she has introduced are recent and have not had time to have a significant impact.
- The curriculum is narrow. Leaders have not ensured that pupils gain a wide range of subject-specific knowledge and skills.
- Subject leaders do not have a good enough knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects to be able to drive improvement.
- Assessments made at the end of early years and key stage 1 are not reliable.
- In recent years, many pupils who have left the school at the end of Year 6 have been poorly prepared for learning at their secondary schools.
- Too few pupils reach the expected or higher standards at the end of key stage 2.
- In some classes, expectations for pupils are too low. Where teachers do not challenge poor-quality work, pupils continue to make basic errors.
- Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not make enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- While disadvantaged pupils benefit from strong pastoral care, they do not make enough progress to catch up with other pupils nationally.
- Teaching assistants support pupils' learning well in some lessons, but this is not a consistent feature of teaching.
- Adults in early years do not make the most of opportunities to promote children's writing.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting executive headteacher has brought new ambition and expertise to the school.
- Pupils behave well and attend regularly. They are friendly and respectful.
- Staff in early years successfully help children to grow in confidence and independence.
- Effective teaching in Years 5 and 6 is helping pupils in these years make better progress.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management, by ensuring that:
 - the trust and the local governing body have the skills to hold leaders to account and to drive school improvement
 - subject leaders have the knowledge and leadership skills to bring about better teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility
 - the curriculum is broad, balanced and implemented well, so that pupils gain subject-specific knowledge and skills as they move through the school
 - effective senior and middle leadership results in better pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics
 - the impact of additional support for pupils with SEND is evaluated
 - all of the required information is published on the school's website.
- Improve pupils' progress and raise the quality of teaching, by ensuring that:
 - teachers and teaching assistants benefit from high-quality professional development, particularly in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics
 - teachers raise their expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving across all subjects
 - pupils' understanding and use of spelling, punctuation and grammar strengthen, so that their writing improves
 - teachers use assessment information to plan lessons that meet pupils' needs, including those with SEND
 - teaching assistants consistently provide effective support
 - assessments made of pupils' attainment are accurate.
- Improve the quality of teaching and leadership in early years, by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching and assessment in early years and provide any necessary support
 - high priority is given to promoting children's early writing skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Poolsbrook Primary Academy does not provide an acceptable quality of education. Over time, the trust's leaders and governors have not demonstrated the skills necessary to identify and address weaknesses in leadership and teaching. They allowed the school's performance to decline for too long before intervening.
- The acting executive teacher and the acting head of school work together effectively. In a short time, they have achieved some notable successes. They have quickly gained the confidence of staff and parents and carers. They are developing other leadership roles in the school and introducing a number of initiatives to improve the quality of teaching. However, these developments are at an early stage. Currently, the school's leadership at trust, governor and middle leader level is not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvements.
- Checks on the quality of teaching and of pupils' work in books do not pinpoint the specific features of practice that are leading to underachievement. As a result, teachers and teaching assistants are not benefiting from training that is targeted to address their needs.
- The subject leaders for English and mathematics have only recently been given their responsibilities. They are receiving some support from other schools in the trust to enhance their leadership skills. However, to date, they have had limited opportunities to show the impact of this training. They have not identified the precise weaknesses in teaching and learning that are resulting in poor progress. Consequently, plans for improvement lack a sharp focus to guide their leadership work in English and mathematics.
- The assessments made of pupils' progress in the past have not been accurate. Leaders and governors believed that pupils would achieve much more successfully in the 2018 Year 6 assessments than they did.
- The curriculum is narrow. Key stage 2 pupils are not taught a modern foreign language. Pupils do not learn computer coding. Class timetables show that most time is given to reading, writing and mathematics lessons. However, pupils do not make good progress in these subjects because not all teachers teach these subjects effectively.
- In many year groups, pupils struggle to recall what they have experienced in music, art and design, and design technology. Pupils do cover history and geography in topic work. However, they do not build up knowledge and skills in these subjects progressively as they move through the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development requires improvement. Pupils speak thoughtfully on moral issues and learn about democracy and the importance of the rule of law. They learn about a range of faiths. However, they are less confident when talking about the artistic, musical and cultural opportunities they experience at school.
- Until recently, staff have not benefited from helpful professional development. Consequently, their approaches to teaching reading, writing and mathematics have varied from class to class. There is more consistency now as leaders have introduced a

number of agreed teaching policies. However, leaders have yet to eradicate ineffective teaching.

- Leaders do not evaluate the impact of additional funding provided for pupils with SEND. They do not check closely on how effectively teachers and teaching assistants support pupils to help them meet their individual targets.
- Leaders have not given enough attention to ensuring that teaching meets the individual needs of pupils with SEND. They do not check how well daily teaching is helping pupils overcome the barriers they have to making good progress.
- Leaders do not evaluate closely the impact of the physical education (PE) and sport premium funding. For example, they use some of the funding to run sports clubs. They do not monitor how often groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged or pupils with SEND, participate in these clubs.
- Leaders and staff know the local community very well. They target much of the pupil premium funding to improving the behaviour and welfare of pupils whose social and emotional needs make them vulnerable. The role of the pastoral care manager and the support provided through the nurture groups have a positive impact on the attendance and well-being of pupils. Leaders have arrangements in place to review pupil premium spending.
- Parents are delighted with the changes the acting executive headteacher has brought to the school. They value the care she shows towards their children and the readiness with which she listens to their concerns.
- Staff who completed their survey are also pleased with the direction the school has taken under the new leadership team. One wrote, 'Lots of changes have been made for the better,' and that, 'the acting executive headteacher treats everyone with respect and gratitude.'
- It is recommended that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- Trustees and governors relied too heavily on reports of the school's effectiveness provided by the previous headteacher and external consultants. Only when the low outcomes for key stage 2 pupils in 2018 were published did they act to stop the steep decline in the school's performance.
- A new chair of the local governing body was appointed in October 2018. He is an experienced governor and, working with the local authority, is ensuring that governors receive training to increase their effectiveness.
- Poolsbrook and another trust school share a joint local governing body. However, this places a high workload and responsibility on the chair and the other four non-teaching members of the joint governing body. The trust is actively pursuing additional governors with experience and expertise to support the chair.
- Trustees and governors have not fulfilled their responsibilities regarding the publication on the school's website of information about the curriculum. There are a number of other omissions, some of them relating to governance.
- A strength of the local governing body is its knowledge of the local community.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong and effective culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff receive regular training and are aware of their responsibilities. Staff make prompt referrals of any concerns using the school's reporting system.
- Key safeguarding staff know the school community very well. They are fully aware of any local issues that could put children at risk of harm.
- There are three designated safeguarding leaders. They work in close partnership with external agencies to provide support for families and pupils, often 'going the extra mile' to ensure that children and families get help from the services they need.
- Parents and pupils appreciate the school's caring ethos. Both groups are confident to share worries or problems with staff. Staff keep a close eye on their pupils and report promptly any concerns that arise. Careful records are kept of all referrals of concern made by staff.
- Leaders conduct all of the required checks to ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching varies considerably across the school. It is not strong enough in too many classes. This, combined with a legacy of poor teaching in the past, means that throughout the school, pupils have gaps in their learning that impede their progress.
- When planning lessons, weaker teachers do not take into account what pupils know and can already do. As a result, the most able pupils are not challenged and the least able struggle on tasks that they do not understand.
- Teaching does not ensure that pupils understand and remember what they have been taught. Explanations of concepts are sometimes unclear and resources that would help pupils to learn more successfully are not available in lessons.
- Often the focus in lessons is to get pupils to complete tasks. Less thought is given to ensuring or checking that pupils are gaining in knowledge and understanding. A consequence of this is that some pupils are unable to answer accurately questions that they have recently completed correctly in lessons.
- Teachers and teaching assistants do not consistently have high enough expectations of their pupils' handwriting and spelling skills or their understanding of grammar and punctuation. Too many pupils continue to produce poor-quality work because adults do not pay enough attention to developing these important aspects of literacy.
- Work set for pupils with SEND is often too difficult for them to complete without intense adult support. This is preventing them from becoming resilient, independent learners. In some instances, pupils struggle to read back a single word that, with adult help, they have written.
- Key stage 1 pupils heard reading could not read fluently. They struggled to blend

together with confidence the sounds that letters represent. Teachers do not change pupils' reading books frequently enough. In some instances, pupils read the same short book for three or four weeks before being given a new one.

- Teaching does not help pupils to develop their learning and understanding in subject areas such as history and geography. Activities often lack depth and challenge.
- Teaching is stronger in upper key stage 2. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 receive work that matches their needs. They have been making good progress since the beginning of the autumn term. However, these pupils also have large gaps in their learning as a result of weak teaching in previous years.
- Teachers manage behaviour well and form good relationships with pupils. Pupils respect their teachers and teaching assistants. They enjoy opportunities to work together in pairs or small groups.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes are generally positive but they can lack confidence when asked about their experiences at school. For example, they have opportunities to contribute to the life of the school, such as through the school council or as 'mini-leaders'. However, pupils have difficulty explaining the purpose and impact of these roles.
- Pupils are friendly and polite in lessons and around the school. They are less assured when asked about their learning and how they could do better.
- When teachers have low expectations, pupils do not take care over their recorded work.
- The school's pastoral team very effectively supports pupils who have problems managing their behaviour or their emotions. Right from Nursery, vulnerable pupils benefit from effective support. There are striking examples of how the school's support, often provided through its nurture provision, has enabled individual pupils to settle and enjoy learning and playing with their classmates.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They report that bullying is not an issue at Poolsbrook.
- Pupils know the risks they may face when online. Visits to the school from groups such as the NSPCC also equip them with knowledge and strategies to keep themselves safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. The average attendance rates reflect the strong work of the pastoral team and the high profile given by senior leaders to regular attendance.

- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils treat adults and each other with respect.
- In lessons, almost all pupils listen carefully, and learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour, even when the work is too easy or too difficult.
- Pupils enjoy playing with their friends at playtimes and lunch breaks. Some pupils do present challenging behaviour, but the staff, including mid-day supervisors, manage any problems effectively. The school's records of behaviour over time show that the number of incidents that have to be recorded is steadily decreasing.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- The attainment and progress of pupils at the end of key stage 2 have declined over the last three years. Pupils are not well prepared for their secondary schools.
- In 2018, progress in reading and mathematics was well below the national average. Only a quarter of pupils attained the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This also was well below the national average.
- In the past three years, no pupils have exceeded the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined. Throughout the school, very few pupils are attaining higher than might be expected for their ages.
- Pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 are making stronger progress this year as result of effective teaching. However, a legacy of weak teaching in the past means that they still have significant gaps in their learning. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are making inadequate progress. Their reading, writing and mathematical skills are weaker than they should be for their ages.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND do not make better progress than their peers, despite additional support.
- Published information about pupils' performance at the end of Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 shows that pupils are typically attaining as well as pupils do nationally. However, when pupils are heard reading aloud or are asked about their learning, these assessments are clearly over generous. Work in pupils' books and the school's most recent assessments show that throughout the school, pupils' knowledge and skills are below those expected for their ages.
- Literacy skills are not developed well across the curriculum. Pupils do not apply what they have learned in English lessons carefully in their topic books. Often what is recorded shows weak spelling, punctuation and grammar skills.
- Discussions with pupils about their work in subjects such as history and geography show that they are not building a store of knowledge in these subjects. This will be a barrier to successful future learning in these areas.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children join the Nursery or Reception classes with skills that are below those typical for their age. Teaching rightly prioritises developing their personal, social and

emotional skills and their speaking skills.

- Assessments made at the end of Reception Year indicate that the proportion of children attaining a good level of development is typically close to the national average. This would represent very strong progress from the low starting points. However, there is plenty of evidence that in reality, the proportion of children well prepared for Year 1 is lower than that published.
- In the past, leaders have not evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of provision in early years. This is something the acting executive headteacher is keen to introduce so that children's progress in early years improves.
- The records kept of children's progress in some areas, for example in physical development, do not give a helpful account of the children's developing skills. Children's writing skills are weak.
- Adults use what they know about children's interests to plan activities that they enjoy. The large outdoor area gives exciting opportunities for learning outside the classroom. However, the value of these activities is at times limited because adults are not always successful in encouraging children to explore and experiment for themselves.
- Adults successfully help the children gain important social skills. They support children to share, to help one another and to take turns. Consequently, children play happily together, as well as on their own.
- Children are closely supervised in safe and secure learning areas. Procedures and routines for keeping children safe are in place. The staff work well with external agencies whose role it is to support children in their early development. Parents who spoke with inspectors agreed that their children are safe and cared for well.
- Partnerships with parents begin before children start school. Staff make home visits to get to know each child. Leaders increasingly invite parents into school to support them in being able to help their children's learning at home.

School details

Unique reference number	143181
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10087396

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Barbara Walsh
Headteacher	Joanne Mappin
Telephone number	01246 472540
Website	www.poolsbrook.academy
Email address	headteacher@poolsbrook.derbyshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Poolsbrook Primary Academy is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The school is sponsored by the Cavendish Learning Trust. The trust delegates some of its responsibilities to the local governing body through its scheme of delegation.
- The local governing body was restructured in October 2018. A new chair was appointed.
- The previous headteacher left her post in October 2018.
- The acting executive headteacher, initially on a part-time basis, began supporting the school in November 2018. She now leads the school with an acting head of school.
- The great majority of pupils at the school are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is above the national average for primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average for primary schools.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector, together with the acting executive headteacher and the acting head of school, observed learning in all classes. Throughout the inspection, the inspector worked alongside the acting executive headteacher and the acting head of school.
- The inspector met with the leaders of English, mathematics and of early years. He also had a telephone conversation with the two external consultants who support the school.
- The inspector looked at a range of workbooks, including for topic work.
- The inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust and with three governors, including the chair of the local governing body.
- There were insufficient responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire, for consideration by the inspector. However, six written comments by parents and the views of 10 staff who completed their survey were taken into account.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including the school's improvement plans. He examined information on pupils' current progress and scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and talked to them about school life. He observed pupils in lessons and around the school.

Inspection team

Anthony O'Malley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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