

Seven Fields Primary School

Leigh Road, Penhill, Swindon, Wiltshire SN2 5DE

Inspection dates

14–15 May 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Over time, including since the previous inspection, leaders' work has not improved teaching and learning sufficiently or raised pupils' achievement.
- Middle leaders are not having enough impact on improving the quality of education provided by the school.
- Too few pupils make the progress of which they are capable. The progress of different groups of pupils in reading and mathematics is below the national average by the time they leave the school.
- Attendance is lower than the national average for all groups of pupils. Half of all persistently absent pupils are disadvantaged.
- Provision in the early years requires improvement because of a recent decline in strategic oversight. This has had a negative impact on the promotion of language acquisition and the development of writing.
- The quality of teaching is too variable because teachers have not received the support and professional development they required to ensure that pupils make progress.
- The quality of teaching in phonics is inconsistent due to a lack of oversight by leaders.
- Pupils' behaviour does not support positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are not sufficiently interested in their work or challenged by it.
- Exclusions have been higher than the national average over time. They are currently high because of the implementation of a new behaviour policy.
- Additional funding is not used effectively to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- There are too many incidents of bullying. Many pupils do not behave well.

The school has the following strengths

- Some aspects of the curriculum are developing positively. Leaders are ensuring that pupils are acquiring suitable knowledge and skills across some non-core subjects.
- Sport premium funding is used effectively to increase pupils' participation in sports activities
- Leaders are fostering more positive relationships with parents and carers, staff and other stakeholders.

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?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the new headteacher receives the necessary support to discharge his responsibilities effectively
 - middle leaders, including the special educational needs and phonics coordinators, are provided with the time, training and support required to carry out their roles successfully
 - middle leaders develop strategic oversight of their areas of responsibility so that they can evaluate provision and impact more effectively
 - additional funding, particularly the pupil premium, is spent effectively, evaluated for impact and leads to higher achievement for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND
 - curriculum planning for reading and mathematics throughout the school pays closer attention to the requirements of success in these subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement by ensuring that:
 - all staff have the necessary expertise and subject knowledge to plan effective teaching and assess pupils' progress accurately
 - all staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and what they can achieve
 - pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning because they are interested in, and stimulated by, the tasks they are set
 - pupils across the ability range are challenged and encouraged to think more deeply
 - pupils know how to improve their work and are encouraged to do so
 - all pupils take pride in the presentation and quality of their work
 - all staff are provided with the necessary training to teach phonics effectively.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - staff systematically analyse patterns of attendance, exclusion, behaviour and bullying to identify the most effective strategies to overcome weaknesses
 - staff continue to act to reduce absence, particularly for those disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent
 - staff, pupils and parents work together to foster a culture in which pupils develop greater self-esteem, higher aspirations and mutual respect
 - all staff consistently apply the new behaviour policy to tackle offensive language and

reduce the number of incidents of poor behaviour and bullying.

- Improve provision in the early years by ensuring that:
 - leaders develop strategic oversight of provision, plan accordingly and improve ongoing assessment of prime learning areas
 - all staff in the nursery and pre-school develop the expertise to enable children to acquire language more rapidly and effectively
 - children in Reception make progress in writing that more closely matches the progress they make in other areas of learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to suffer from leadership instability. Staffing issues, financial constraints and difficulties in recruiting a substantive headteacher have prevented the school from moving forward at a quicker pace.
- Leadership over the last two years has failed to halt a decline in standards. Pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics by the time they leave the school is well below average.
- Over time, leaders across the school have not demonstrated the capacity to develop strategic oversight of different areas of the school's work. This is because they took on too many other responsibilities, including class teaching. Consequently, too many leaders have been in the position of having to 'fire fight' this year, simply to enable the school to function.
- The new headteacher had only been in post for 15 days at the time of the inspection. Although he has had little time to show impact, the headteacher has galvanised and re-energised staff. They are supportive of the changes he has started to make. He is working effectively with the acting deputy headteacher to identify weaknesses, to develop strategic plans and to secure external support to drive improvement. These leaders are clear about the school's weaknesses and are committed to meeting the challenge that lies ahead of them. Their self-evaluation is accurate and objective. What they have not been able to do yet is to demonstrate the capacity to bring about the improvements needed.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils with SEND is not used effectively to raise their achievement. Although an external review of the use of pupil premium has taken place, leaders have not acted on its findings with enough urgency. Leaders have not evaluated precisely which strategies are effective, and which are not, to inform future planning.
- Leadership of special educational needs provision has been weak over time because the special educational needs coordinator has not had the capacity to develop strategic oversight. The provision in place to meet pupils' needs has not been sufficiently evaluated for effectiveness. Staff are not clear about the progress being made by pupils.
- Curriculum planning in reading and mathematics is not enabling pupils across the ability range to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for success in these subjects. This partly accounts for why pupils' achievement in these subjects is too low by the time they leave the school.
- However, leaders have made some progress in developing a broader non-core curriculum, linking subjects such as science, history, geography and art through common topics. Pupils' learning is consolidated in these areas because leaders have identified where knowledge can be reinforced and deepened. However, religious education is not given enough prominence in the curriculum.
- Over time, middle leaders have not felt empowered to take ownership of their work. They were not sufficiently held to account for the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils. Consequently, there has been a lack of strategic middle leadership over time, including since the previous inspection.

- Middle leaders have welcomed the new headteacher's approach to nurturing the growth of leadership throughout the school. They now feel inspired and positive because they are trusted to make strategic decisions and use their initiative. In a short space of time, they have started to take advantage of training to improve their professional development. However, they do not yet have the necessary expertise and have not had the chance to demonstrate impact.
- Senior leaders make no excuses for underperformance, despite the school's challenging context. The school is in an area of high deprivation and a significant proportion of pupils are disadvantaged. Nevertheless, the headteacher has high expectations of staff and pupils, and others in the school are beginning to adopt these expectations. Staff are principled and act with integrity because they want the best for pupils.
- Sport premium funding is well used to support pupils' increased participation in sporting activities and physical exercise. Well-established plans have been in place for some time. These are carefully evaluated to ensure that funding is used in the most effective way.
- Leaders are nurturing positive relationships with different stakeholders, including parents and staff. Most parents who responded to a school survey issued by leaders last week, and to the online survey Parent View, are satisfied with most areas of the school's work. Some parents commented that they think the school is improving because of recent changes.

Governance of the school

- Following the departure of the previous substantive headteacher in March 2018, all members of the board of trustees resigned. Although four trustees were appointed by the regional schools commissioner to strengthen governance following these resignations, there has not been a full board of trustees until now. This has hampered trustees' efforts to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement over the course of the year.
- The founding trustees have made important changes since the previous inspection that have helped to create the conditions for improvement going forward, although this is yet to happen. For example, they have appointed the new headteacher, improved the school's finances, taken difficult staffing decisions and helped to secure much-needed external support.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Designated safeguarding leaders know their responsibilities well. They ensure that all staff are appropriately trained in child protection and know the procedures to follow should they have concerns about a child. Staff are vigilant and know the importance of sharing any concerns. Leaders monitor concerns effectively using an online system that organises individual cases, provides chronologies of events and records staff actions at each stage. The organisation of information enables leaders to identify patterns and make connections across different aspects of a child's school experience.
- Staff are proactive in their efforts to work with parents and families. This interaction has a positive impact on many of the issues that staff deal with, some of which occur

in school and some at home. Designated leaders take full advantage of external support to meet pupils' needs.

- Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils are up to date, comprehensive and thorough. Staff responsible for the oversight of the single central record take this responsibility seriously. They update it regularly and review it alongside an external consultant on a regular basis.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching is inadequate because it is too variable across the school. Although there are pockets of strong practice, where it is weak it is because teachers do not have adequate subject knowledge, effective behaviour management techniques or high expectations.
- Staff do not demand enough of pupils across the ability range. Staff are not ambitious enough in their expectations of pupils' behaviour and what they can achieve. Pupils are not set work that challenges them and deepens their thinking. Often, they are bored, and this leads to off-task behaviour.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are not good enough because they are not sufficiently engaged in the work they have been set. Although they are generally compliant in lessons and follow teachers' instructions, pupils are not stimulated, and they lack intellectual curiosity. They are too easily distracted by each other or visitors.
- The feedback that staff provide to pupils to help them improve their work is variable in its impact. Pupils often continue in successive pieces of work to make the same mistakes
- The use of systematic and ongoing assessment to track pupils' progress, identify gaps in their knowledge and adapt teaching to meet their needs is not well established across the school. Too few staff have an accurate, precise understanding of how to consolidate and extend pupils' learning as they move up through the key stages.
- The effectiveness of teaching assistants is variable across the school. Some staff work well with pupils with specific needs to move them forward in their learning. They ask useful open questions and work through the steps of a process to enable pupils to find answers for themselves. However, other staff, particularly in early years, lack expertise in areas such as phonics.
- Teachers endeavour to create positive relationships with pupils. As a result, classrooms are safe spaces for pupils, where they can answer questions, share views and participate in discussions.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Some pupils in the school lack self-assurance and the ability to manage different or unfamiliar social situations. This is because they have difficulty in managing their

behaviour and emotions and they are not able to communicate appropriately with other people. Staff attempt to overcome these issues reactively, with variable success. However, the culture of the school has not, over time, instilled sufficiently high aspirations, mutual respect and self-esteem in pupils.

- Pupils and parents report that there is too much bullying in the school. Staff have worked with pupils to ensure that they understand what bullying is. Nevertheless, school records show that there have been a lot of bullying incidents, many of which are related to unacceptable physical and verbal behaviour.
- Some staff have received specialist training to meet the pastoral needs of pupils. For example, a designated member of staff helps pupils to reflect on and moderate their behaviour. Some teaching assistants have been trained as emotional literacy support assistants.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- The school's records indicate that there are too many incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils report that bad or offensive language is prevalent.
- In order to tackle poor behaviour and raise expectations, the headteacher has introduced a new behaviour management policy. It is based on clear rewards and sanctions for pupils so that they know the boundaries. This new policy is beginning to have an impact, but it is too early to say whether it will have the desired effect.
- In previous years, exclusions have been above the national average because leaders did not tackle persistent poor behaviour effectively.
- Absence has been above the national average over time. It is still too high overall and for all groups of pupils. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has fallen since last year but is still above the national average. Over half of persistently absent pupils are disadvantaged. Staff are proactive in applying different strategies to improve attendance, such as giving rewards and working with parents, but this work is not having enough impact.
- Leaders do not have enough strategic oversight of attendance, exclusions and bullying. They are not systematically analysing records to identify patterns and trends that would help them to devise successful strategies.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- The progress of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, in reading and mathematics by the time they left the school fell from being well above average in 2016 to well below average in 2018. Pupils' attainment was also well below average in 2018.
- Current pupils of different abilities and backgrounds are not making enough progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. For example, pupils in Year 6 are not being given enough opportunities to develop problem-solving and reasoning skills. Consequently, they are not being prepared to meet the demands of a challenging

curriculum.

- Reading has not been given enough priority in the school. Pupils' work indicates that they are not exposed to a rich variety of engaging texts. The curriculum does not sufficiently promote children's fiction to inspire a love of reading in pupils.
- Pupils make more progress in writing than reading. They are provided with many opportunities to practise writing for different purposes and audiences, such as letters, diaries, descriptive writing and creative stories. There is also an emphasis in the curriculum on the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar skills. Consequently, over time, pupils' progress in writing by the time they leave the school is in line with the national average.
- The teaching of phonics is variable because there is a lack of strategic leadership. Leaders are unable to say whether recently introduced improvements to the teaching of phonics are being consistently applied across classes.
- Pupils with SEND, however, particularly in the early years, are not making enough progress in learning to decode words and develop reading fluency.
- The presentation of work in pupils' books is variable. Not all pupils take enough pride in their work. They do not set their work out appropriately or take care with their handwriting. Staff across the school do not focus sufficiently on developing pupils' handwriting so that it is controlled and legible.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is not notably different to that of their peers. The presentation and quality of disadvantaged pupils' work are of a similar standard to non-disadvantaged pupils. However, disadvantaged pupils' progress is not good enough because all groups of pupils are underachieving equally.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Until this academic year, leadership of early years had been strong. However, because of staffing changes, whole-school turbulence and current leaders having to take on too many responsibilities, strategic leadership has weakened. This has led to weaknesses emerging in the provision.
- Staff do not accurately assess the prime areas of learning, such as communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development. Assessment is too descriptive and does not sufficiently evaluate children's learning in these areas. This is because staff lack the necessary expertise.
- However, staff do accurately assess specific areas of learning, such as literacy, mathematics and understanding the world. They are able to do this because they have benefited from external support and have participated in moderation activities with colleagues from outside of the school.
- Children's outcomes over time have risen by the time they leave Reception. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the last two years has been close to the national average.
- The children currently in Reception are making strong progress in different areas of learning, except for writing. Children's progress in writing does not match their

progress in other areas.

- Children in the nursery and pre-school do not acquire language as rapidly as they should. It takes too long to teach children to become familiar with new vocabulary. This is partly because support staff do not model and reiterate vocabulary choices often enough. Leaders are aware of this weakness and have started to take action to overcome it.
- Curriculum provision is broad and well considered. Children participate in a range of activities, both in the inside and outside areas, that are linked to stories and themes. They enjoy diverse activities, such as weekly planting in the forest school area, learning Spanish and running outside to bring the 'Gingerbread Man' story to life.
- Indoor and outside areas are well-equipped. Dedicated spaces are resourced to enable children to develop different aspects of their learning, such as role-play and language and communication.
- Staff have established clear routines for children so that they know how they are expected to behave during work and play. Children move confidently around the room as they go from one activity to another. Routines encourage positive attitudes to learning and children play well together.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff have been trained alongside other school staff so that they know the local risks to watch out for and the procedures to follow should they have concerns.

School details

Unique reference number	138005
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10055214

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	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	376
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Peter McGuigan
Headteacher	Damian Booth
Telephone number	01793 723833
Website	www.sevenfieldsprimary.co.uk
Email address	head@sevenfields.swindon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 March 2014

Information about this school

- The school received a short inspection in April 2018. Although the school was judged still to be good, the inspector identified some priorities for improvement.
- In March 2018, the headteacher left the school and was succeeded by the two deputy headteachers who jointly stepped up to share the interim headteacher role. These leaders carried out this role for much of the last academic year. However, one leader has been absent for some of this time.
- Since the time of the previous inspection, trustees have continued to make efforts to recruit a substantive headteacher.
- The current headteacher took up post at the end of the Easter holidays. One of the interim headteachers has resumed her role as acting deputy headteacher.
- This is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is nearly twice the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND who require support is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The school converted to become an academy in 2012. Since this time, a board of trustees has taken responsibility for all aspects of governance. Just prior to the short inspection in April 2018, every trustee on the board resigned. The regional schools commissioner appointed four trustees shortly afterwards, one of whom has since left, to create stability. Further trustees have been appointed to the board during the year.
- The school has a pre-school for pupils aged two to three, and a nursery for pupils aged three to four. There are currently 40 children in the pre-school and 64 in the nursery.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning and behaviour in lessons jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, designated safeguarding staff, trustees and middle leaders including phase leaders and coordinators of special educational needs, phonics, pupil premium and sports premium.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority by telephone.
- A team inspector spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation, progress information, external notes of visit, trustees' minutes, school surveys, curriculum documents, attendance and exclusion records and information relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and observed pupils' conduct around the school during breaktimes.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- The lead inspector took account of eight responses to the online Parent View survey, 26 responses to the pupil survey and 53 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Steve Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jen Edwards	Ofsted Inspector
Faye Heming	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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