

Damson Wood Nursery and Infant School

Stockwell Rise, Solihull, West Midlands B92 9LX

Inspection dates

09–10 July 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has transformed the school since 2016. Teaching, outcomes and behaviour have all improved under her effective and confident leadership.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school is honest and accurate. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses and have put in place well-targeted action plans focused on improvement.
- Governors are well informed. They provide good levels of challenge and support, which contribute to school improvement.
- The Central Schools Trust (CST), of which the school is a member, carefully monitors the school's performance and has provided significant coaching and training for leaders and staff.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils develop their knowledge and skills in different subjects through interesting themes.
- Teachers across the school support pupils in making good progress. Carefully tailored support is in place for disadvantaged pupils, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Teachers plan learning that builds on what pupils already know and can do. They develop pupils' language skills well.
- Phonic teaching is effective. Results in the Year 1 phonics screening check have risen consistently over the last three years and are now above average.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture within the school. Staff know that safeguarding is 'everyone's responsibility' and know what action to take if they have any concerns.
- Leaders follow up any absences robustly. As a result, attendance has improved. However, the number of pupils persistently absent remains above the national average.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and play happily together at breaktimes. They are polite, friendly and helpful. Older pupils readily take on additional responsibilities to help others.
- Most pupils make good progress as they move through the school and attain the expected standards by the end of Year 2. However, some disadvantaged pupils do not reach age-related standards in writing in key stage 1.
- Children in the early years get off to a strong start. Girls make particularly strong progress and reach age-related expectations. However, boys do less well in reading and writing.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the attainment of boys in the early years so that they achieve as well as girls in reading and writing.
- Improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils in writing in key stage 1 so that they achieve in line with other pupils nationally.
- Further build on the good work already in place to improve attendance in order to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has been a force for improvement since she took up her post in June 2016. The impact of the previous special measures judgement in 2014 had a significant negative impact on the school. Numbers on roll fell dramatically and staff morale was low. Together with her leadership team and governors, the headteacher has stabilised the school and regained the confidence of staff and parents. New appointments and the addition of provision for two-year-olds have helped strengthen all aspects of the school's work.
- Leaders have established a hard-working and effective staff team. Staff value the support and training they receive from senior leaders and feel well supported with the behaviour management of pupils. Staff morale is now high. All staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire agree that the school is well led and managed. Staff appreciate being consulted about changes made.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is honest and accurate. It is based on a clear analysis of a wide range of evidence. This evidence is used to construct detailed action plans to tackle areas of weakness. These plans are consistently reviewed and evaluated well to ensure that they have the impact that leaders intend.
- Leaders monitor classroom practice regularly in a collaborative and supportive way. Additional training is provided to help staff improve their skills. Leaders make effective use of assessment to track pupils' progress. They respond swiftly to any potential underachievement by individual pupils.
- Subject leaders make a good contribution to the quality of teaching and pupil achievement. Helpful coaching and training have enabled them to undertake their roles effectively. They lead training in their respective subject areas and have introduced approaches to teaching that are being applied consistently across the school. These include promoting a love of reading, using pictorial representations to aid writing, and developing pupil's problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics.
- The curriculum is based around interesting learning themes. Skilful links are made to build on pupils' experiences. For example, when learning about the Great Fire of London, pupils in Year 2 made houses in design technology. Then, in order to embed their history knowledge and make learning memorable, they burned them during Forest School teaching. Work in Year 1 science books is highly impressive. Pupils learn classification, prediction and investigation skills and complete work to a very high standard. Artwork, technology and physical education (PE) skills are also well covered.
- The curriculum is enriched by a range of extra-curricular activities, including visits, visitors and clubs. Pupils say that they enjoy activities such as basketball and cheerleading. These aid pupils' enjoyment of school.
- Leaders and governors target additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND appropriately. Early identification enables leaders to provide additional support and tailored interventions to strengthen the achievement of these pupils, while also sharply focusing on their well-being. Funding has had a greater impact on disadvantaged pupils' reading and mathematics than on their writing, where they do

not achieve as well as other pupils nationally.

- The additional funding for PE and sports is spent well. Leaders have purchased new equipment, employed playworkers at lunchtimes and ensured that pupils can participate in a wide range of sports to promote their health and fitness.
- The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Leaders develop effectively pupils' knowledge and understanding of other faiths and backgrounds. When asked by inspectors if it was ok to be a different religion, pupils answered emphatically, 'Absolutely'. Pupils know and can recite the 'Sparks' values, which underpin the school's ethos of being: safe, proud, ambitious, ready, kind and successful. Pupils are encouraged to respect differences and make the right choices. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain and the next stage of their education.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. This is because leaders have worked hard to build strong partnerships and listen to parents' views. All parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, say that their children are happy and safe at school. One summed up the views of many by saying, 'The care and dedication of all staff just shines through.'

Governance of the school

- Governors are well informed and understand their responsibilities. They ask incisive questions about different aspects of the school. The chair of governors works in education and, together with other governors, has a good understanding of the context of the school, its strengths and priorities. They are involved in formulating and reviewing the school action plan and focus on identified areas during visits to school.
- Governors meet regularly with leaders to discuss how well pupils learn and to receive detailed reports. They have a good understanding of how additional funding is used and its impact.
- Trust board members have a clear understanding of their legal and strategic responsibilities. They carry these out effectively and use their skills and expertise well to support the school. They are not complacent and they ensure that external consultants and the local authority review and evaluate the school's performance regularly to provide an objective summary of where further improvements are needed. The support provided by the lead school in the trust has been instrumental in training, supporting and developing all leaders and staff.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are well trained and know that 'safeguarding is everyone's responsibility' as this message is strongly promoted by senior leaders. Staff know what action to take if they are concerned about pupils' well-being.
- Record-keeping is thorough. Staff use the school's referral systems effectively and consistently. They fully understand their responsibilities with regard to keeping children safe, and keep up to date with current advice and guidance.
- Leaders have forged strong links with parents and local services so they are able to

provide early help where this may be necessary for the safety or well-being of pupils.

- Teachers ensure that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. Pupils have a good understanding of road safety and the dangers associated with using the internet.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They use this to plan and deliver interesting lessons that meet the differing needs of pupils. Workbooks and learning in Year 1 are of a particularly high standard. Teachers pick up and address misconceptions quickly and make sure that lessons build well on what pupils already know.
- Through high-quality professional development and support from the lead school in the trust, the teaching of phonics, reading and mathematics is a strength. Leaders have addressed weaknesses in teaching and developed aspects that needed improving. As a result, teaching is typically interesting, engages pupils and is fun.
- Reading and phonics are taught well. Pupils at an early stage of their reading make effective use of their phonic knowledge to read unfamiliar words. In lessons, teachers take every opportunity to encourage pupils to use their phonic skills to help them spell words when they are writing. Stories are read daily to pupils at the end of the day to help encourage a love of reading. Older pupils enjoy reading books written by their favourite authors and a wide range of texts are used to support curriculum themes.
- Teachers place a strong focus on developing pupils' language skills in preparation for writing activities. Pupils orally rehearse stories and draw pictures to retell stories as part of the writing process. This builds pupils' confidence. Pupils write for different purposes and in subjects across the curriculum. Adults provide good guidance and support during lessons, especially for lower-ability pupils. However, some disadvantaged pupils do not make the same rates of progress as other pupils nationally and do not therefore reach the standards expected at the end of Year 2 in writing.
- Teachers plan and teach a range of mathematical aspects. A focus on mathematics has led to improved teaching and results in this subject. Teachers make effective use of mathematical resources to help pupils understand new concepts. Increased opportunities for pupils to problem-solve and reason are evident in pupils' books.
- Teaching assistants are skilled and make a considerable contribution to ensuring that pupils make good progress. They are well trained and deployed effectively to work with groups of pupils, including pupils with SEND. This support enables these pupils to achieve well.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' abilities is consistently accurate. They regularly check these with other staff in the local network of schools and with the lead school colleagues. Teachers use their knowledge of what pupils know and can do to plan the next steps in their learning.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Adults help pupils, many of whom arrive at the school mid-year or with little English, to feel secure. Staff act as good role models and promote respect and good manners. As a result, new arrivals settle quickly, learn routines and become confident to answer questions in lessons.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of how to stay safe. Parents and pupils are aware of the school's approach of 'Stop it, I don't like it' to address potential emerging bullying situations. Class anti-bullying ambassadors also help pupils feel confident in reporting issues.
- The values culture within the school helps to prepare pupils for the positive part they play in the wider community. Pupils contribute to fundraising campaigns, such as 'Sign2Sing' and 'Help Harry Help Others'. The personal, social and health education curriculum is also planned to help build pupils' resilience and their physical and emotional well-being.
- Older pupils enjoy and relish the opportunities to take on additional responsibilities. Duties include being anti-bullying ambassadors, school librarians, Eco Warriors, school councillors and English as an additional language ambassadors. This enables pupils to support their peers and demonstrate being reliable and responsible school members.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of keeping themselves healthy. They understand which foods are good for them and the need for regular exercise. The wide range of activities available at lunchtimes strongly promotes pupils' well-being. Play workers interact and engage pupils in different sports, such as basketball, or just check that they are happy reading books, playing with Lego or talking with friends.
- During the second day of the inspection, pupils took part in a transition day. Pupils were excited, confident and well prepared by staff for the new experience. As a result, almost all pupils settled quickly and readily engaged with the tasks prepared by staff.
- Pupils enjoy attending the before- and after-school care clubs. The calm and friendly environment provides pupils with a positive start and end to the school day. Pupils behave well and talk and play together harmoniously. They are well supervised by staff, who know each individual pupil very well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and at breaktimes. They are respectful to adults and other pupils. There is no disruption to learning in lessons and pupils are usually highly focused on the activities set. Pupils socialise well together at playtimes. They line up sensibly in the lunch hall and responsibly clear their trays and cutlery away after they have finished eating.
- The overwhelming majority of staff, pupils and parents feel that pupils behave well in and around school. Pupils have a good understanding of the school's behaviour policy. They are aware of behaviour zone boards and how their names are moved onto a relevant area to depict their behaviour, for example thunderclouds or rainbows. Pupils particularly enjoy the rewards they receive for good work and behaviour.

- School records show that there have been no permanent exclusions since the school became an academy. Behaviour incidents are recorded fully and appropriate action taken when pupils do not demonstrate acceptable behaviour.
- The environment is a safe and nurturing one. The school has two dedicated rooms to support pupils who have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. The 'Nest' provides a safe space for pupils to calm down if upset, and the 'Nook' is a multi-sensory room for pupils with SEND.
- Leaders have worked successfully to promote the importance of good attendance to parents and carers. As a result, attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. This is as a result of effective strategies, such as rewards for pupils and the commissioning of an external school attendance officer. However, the number of pupils who are persistently absent remains above the national average. Leaders are determined to reduce this.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Children start school in the early years with skills, knowledge and understanding that are often lower than those typical for their age. Due to good teaching and effective leadership, all groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well. In 2017 and 2018, the majority of pupils reached a good level of development.
- Unvalidated data for 2019 Year 1 phonics screening check shows a marked improvement. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard is above the 2018 national average. This is due to improved teaching in this area.
- Since the school became an academy, outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 2 have improved, especially in mathematics. Unvalidated assessment information for 2019 shows that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard and greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics is now in line with the 2018 national averages.
- School information and work in pupils' books show that current pupils are making good progress, especially in Year 1. An extensive sample of pupils' work was examined by inspectors to check that the school's data was reliable. This showed conclusively that pupils' progress is good. Inspection evidence confirms that teachers' assessments are accurate.
- Pupils work in mathematics illustrates that pupils are developing secure skills in number and in shape, space and measure and are consistently able to complete calculations accurately. Their written work is characterised by increasing confidence and complexity, and by their ability to write for different purposes.
- Pupils make good progress in other subjects, such as science. Pupils in Year 1 for instance, learn to make predictions, carry out science experiments and classify different animal groups and plants.
- The most able pupils make good progress because they are challenged well, especially in reading and mathematics. A higher proportion of these pupils now reach greater depth in Year 2.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress as evidenced in their books. Significant improvement was noted over the course of this academic year, particularly in pupils'

writing. This was also the case for pupils who speak English as an additional language. As pupils become more confident in spoken English, their progress sharply increases.

- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics from their starting points. As a result, the majority reach the standard expected. This is because they receive effective additional support and interventions in these areas. However, in the last three years, only half of disadvantaged pupils have reached the expected standards in writing. This is below the national average.

Early years provision

Good

- The leadership of early years is good. End of year assessments are accurate and adults capture a broad range of evidence to validate their judgements of children's abilities. This evidence is presented very clearly in children's learning journals and workbooks. The early years leader tracks the progress of children carefully.
- Children with SEND are identified early and additional support is provided from the outset. This ensures that children get off to a strong start at school and are provided with the support they need.
- Leaders have built strong partnerships with parents and carers. Parents are invited into school for workshops to learn how to help their children with learning at home. Regular school events also enable parents to be involved in school life.
- Induction arrangements are managed carefully so that children settle quickly at school, learn routines and feel safe. Transition arrangements within early years and from Reception class to Year 1 are also well planned to minimise any anxiety for children or their parents.
- The provision for two- and three-year-olds in Woodies childcare is strong. Staff are vigilant, attentive and caring. They are highly skilled at developing children's communication and language through effective questioning and discussion. Very good use is made of both the indoor and outdoor learning areas to develop children's physical and social skills. As a result, children make strong progress in their first year of school.
- Children continue to make good progress in the nursery. Staff continue the strong focus placed on developing children's communication and language skills, personal, social and emotional skills and their physical development. Increased attention is, however, given to the specific areas of learning, and children quickly begin to develop their early reading, writing and mathematical skills successfully. This is because these are taught well and children have lots of opportunities and activities to practise letters, sounds and numbers.
- Effective teaching continues in the Reception class. Children build well on the foundations laid and develop a secure knowledge of phonics through systematic teaching of letters and sounds. This provides a good grounding for their early reading and writing.
- Adults interact well with children in all three classes and teach small groups. However, there are wide gaps in attainment between boys and girls in both Nursery and Reception classes, especially in reading and writing. Over the last three years, girls have achieved better than boys. This is because girls engage more readily with literacy

activities during child-initiated time while some boys spend more time on construction and physical activities. Boys therefore practise their literacy skills less and teachers and leaders have not addressed the balance needed.

- Children behave well in the early years. They are happy, good-natured and settled. They are familiar with routines, follow instructions well and respond swiftly to staff requests. Staff model high expectations of good behaviour, kindness and consideration. Children use these excellent examples to cooperate, share and play well together.
- Children are kept safe and their welfare needs are fully met. Safeguarding arrangements are effective.

School details

Unique reference number	143051
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10088457

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	153
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Lisa Evans
Headteacher	Emily Hughes
Telephone number	0121 705 8652
Website	www.damson-wood.co.uk
Email address	office@damson-wood.solihull.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Damson Wood Nursery and Infant School became a sponsored academy with Central Schools Trust (CST) in August 2016. There is only one other school in the trust, Balsall Common Primary School, which is the lead school for the trust.
- The academy trust board of CST have the overall legal responsibility for governance. They hold financial responsibility and are the strategic managers for the school. The board delegates the operational management of the school to a local governing body which oversees the performance of the school.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized infant school.
- The majority of pupils are of white British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.

- The school manages before- and after-school care.
- Early years provision comprises of 'Woodies' for two-year-olds, nursery for three-year-olds and reception class for four-year-olds. Children join early years at different points.
- The number of pupils on roll has fallen and mobility of pupils has been high in the last three years.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. Paired observations were carried out with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and subject leaders with responsibility for English, mathematics, pupil premium, SEND and early years. Discussions were also held with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also met with four members of the academy trust board.
- Inspectors took account of the 45 responses to Parent View and the 25 free-text responses received from parents during the inspection. The school's own survey of parent views together with comments made by parents as they brought their children to school were also considered.
- Staff views were evaluated through the 16 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire.
- Pupils' views were collected by talking to pupils during the school day and informally at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors listened to a selection of pupils read, talked to them about their learning and reviewed their work in a wide range of their workbooks.
- A number of documents were reviewed, including: the school's own self-evaluation; the school development plan; data on pupils' attainment and progress; minutes of governing body meetings; external school reports; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ellen Taylor

Ofsted Inspector

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