

Western Springs Primary School

School Road, Rugeley, Staffordshire WS15 2PD

Inspection dates

5–6 June 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	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and those responsible for governance have not ensured that pupils are kept safe. Systems and procedures for safeguarding and behaviour are not secure. Leadership capacity for improvement is limited.
- Leaders have not been held to account adequately. The impact of interventions and additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is not evaluated effectively.
- The standard of education provided is inadequate. Leaders have not effectively checked the quality of teaching. Pupils do not make sufficient progress in writing and mathematics. Too many classes have temporary teachers.
- Current pupils are not making sufficient progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not supported effectively. There is no qualified SEN coordinator in school.
- Teachers do not use assessment information effectively to plan learning that builds on pupils' prior knowledge.
- Pupils do not receive adequate support to improve their reading when they fall behind. A love of reading has not been established.
- Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Teachers and support staff have not received the support and training they need to develop their practice. Opportunities for teachers to learn from other professionals have been limited.
- Work in pupils' books is too often incomplete, missing or untidy. Teachers do not always insist on high standards of presentation. There is no coherent strategy for the teaching of writing.
- Pupils' behaviour is not consistently well managed. Expectations for behaviour are not clear. The level of staff supervision at breaktimes and lunchtimes is inadequate, and routines are not effective. Too many pupils are absent from school too often.
- Children in the early years do not achieve as well as they should. They are not supported effectively to develop their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Children's learning is not assessed effectively.
- The curriculum is not planned coherently so that pupils build on their prior learning, particularly in mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- Members of the recently established interim executive board (IEB) bring much-needed expertise to secure rapid improvement. Staff morale is improving as leadership improves.
- The acting headteacher is strengthening partnerships with parents and carers, and support from local schools is now embraced.

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?

- As a matter of urgency, leaders and those responsible for governance should make sure that pupils are kept safe by ensuring that:
 - the recently revised safeguarding policy is implemented effectively
 - pre-employment checks are carried out and recorded accurately
 - adequate supervision is put in place at breaktimes and lunchtimes
 - systems and procedures for safeguarding are strengthened, including recording incidents and analysing records to spot trends and patterns.
- Strengthen leadership to bring about rapid improvement by ensuring that:
 - comprehensive and intensive support is provided for current leaders
 - the implementation of initiatives and policies is monitored and impact evaluated effectively, particularly in relation to the impact of pupil premium funding and other additional funding
 - the curriculum is reviewed so that learning is sequenced more logically, builds on pupils' prior learning and supports pupils' progression more effectively, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers are recruited to fill vacancies as a matter of urgency
 - all teachers receive focused and effective professional development to improve their practice
 - all teachers have consistently high expectations and an accurate understanding of what pupils could and should be achieving for their age in reading, writing and mathematics
 - assessment information is used more effectively by teachers to inform pupils' next steps
 - teaching assistants receive support and training to provide more consistently effective support for pupils' learning
 - a love of reading is promoted across the school
 - staff monitor pupils' progress in reading more closely and intervene promptly when it is clear that pupils are falling behind
 - a coherent strategy for the teaching of writing is implemented, ensuring that pupils have consistent and frequent opportunities to write at length across the curriculum

- the teaching of mathematics follows a logical sequence, building on pupils' prior learning and making sure that pupils have frequent opportunities to practise and apply their skills in problem-solving and reasoning activities.
- Improve provision and outcomes in the early years by ensuring that:
 - adults receive targeted training to support children's learning more effectively, particularly children's speaking, listening, reading and writing skills
 - all activities are based on secure assessments of children's development and next steps.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - clear behaviour systems and procedures are established across the school and staff receive support to implement these effectively
 - attendance improves to be consistently in line with the national average
 - relationships with parents are strengthened across the school so that parents can work more effectively in partnership with the school to improve pupils' behaviour, attendance and achievement.
- Improve provision for pupils with SEND by ensuring that:
 - immediate intensive support and capacity are provided to identify pupils' needs accurately and put in place effective systems, structures and provision
 - the school has an appropriately qualified member of staff to lead and manage SEND provision effectively
 - training and support are provided for teachers and support staff to address the needs of pupils with SEND more effectively.

Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) may not be appointed.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The school is facing challenging circumstances. The substantive headteacher has been absent from school since the end of January 2019. In her absence, the assistant headteacher is acting headteacher and her class has been covered by supply teachers. There is a temporary teacher in the mixed Year 1 and Year 2 class. At the time of the inspection, two teachers were off school or on a part-time phased return after a lengthy absence. Out of five classes in total, only one class had a permanent teacher.
- Following a dramatic dip in attainment at the end of key stage 2 in 2017, the local authority commissioned a series of quality assurance reviews in the school. These showed that, across a number of aspects of the school, basic systems and procedures were not in place or were inadequate. Governors had not ensured that leaders were held to account for the impact of their work. The local authority did not intervene quickly enough. Following initial conversations with the headteacher and governors in October 2017, a formal warning notice was issued in February 2019 and the IEB put in place in June 2019. In the intervening period, the school has declined further, rather than improving.
- Since the end of January 2019, the acting headteacher has made a concerted effort to rectify the multiple shortcomings across the school. Training is now being provided for staff, relationships with parents are improving and the school is now embracing support from the local authority and other schools. However, despite current leaders' best efforts, it was not possible by the time of the inspection to see the impact of these very recent changes on pupils' achievement.
- The quality of teaching overall is weak. This is because many of the classes do not have a permanent teacher. Some classes have been covered by a succession of supply teachers. In these classes, the standard of pupils' work has declined further over the past year. Leaders have not implemented school-wide strategies for the teaching of writing and mathematics. There is no clear planning for opportunities for writing in the wider curriculum.
- Effective systems and procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision and the impact of interventions have not been in place for some years. For example, performance management procedures are not fit for purpose. Teachers and other staff have not received the support and training they need to develop their practice. Leaders have not fostered positive relationships with other local schools, an important source of professional support for teachers. Teachers and support staff have not benefited from sharing their practice and learning from others.
- Outcomes for pupils at key stage 1 have been broadly in line with the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics over recent years. However, despite a slight improvement in 2018, pupils' attainment by the end of key stage 2 has been stubbornly below the national averages in writing and mathematics at both the expected standard for their age and the higher standard. As pupils have not made sufficient progress for a number of years, there are considerable gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills that will take time to address.

- Pupils have not been well supported to develop positive attitudes to learning or to take a pride in their work.
- Pupils learn about different religions and have time each day to reflect on their learning and behaviour, thinking specifically about what has gone well during the day and what they could do better the next day. They also benefit from high-quality specialist music teaching. In these lessons, pupils' natural enthusiasm for learning shines out. However, this is not the case in other lessons. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is not adequately supported.
- Pupils enjoy residential visits and day trips, which enhance the curriculum. For example, pupils visited a farm and designed their own farm using their mathematical skills. However, leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is well planned or implemented. For example, in mathematics, work in pupils' books show that there is little coherence to the sequence of pupils' learning. Leaders are committed to reviewing the curriculum, but this work has not yet begun in earnest.
- Partnerships with parents are mixed. Many parents are content that their children are happy in school. However, since the last inspection, some parents have raised concerns about the safety of pupils, the number of supply teachers and the management of behaviour. They say that, in the past, they did not receive enough information from the school. However, parents say that this is now starting to improve. They appreciate the fact that the acting headteacher is available to speak to them at the gate most mornings as they drop off their children at school.

Governance of the school

- Until recently, governors have not held leaders to account sufficiently for the impact of their work. Standards of behaviour and pupils' achievement since the last inspection have declined significantly. Governors did not challenge leaders robustly until a new chair of governors was elected at the end of the autumn term in 2018. On 5 June 2019, the local authority replaced the governing body with an IEB. This intervention should have been established much sooner to prevent the school declining further.
- The recently appointed members of the IEB are committed and dedicated, with appropriate levels of professional knowledge, skills and expertise to help the school move forward, particularly as two of the IEB members are headteachers of good or outstanding schools from the local area.
- IEB members are already planning reciprocal visits to their home schools. They are keen to establish stronger links with other schools, building on the recent work of the acting headteacher to work more closely with other schools.
- It is clear that the IEB members understand the severity of the situation at the school. Despite their obvious commitment and capacity for improvement, the school has not yet benefited from this and, currently, leadership capacity is extremely limited.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- In the past, leaders and those responsible for governance did not ensure that pre-employment checks were compliant with current legislation. Identity checks had not

been carried out for some staff and information was missing. The acting headteacher commissioned an external audit of pre-employment procedures and leaders are working through the list of requirements to ensure that records are compliant as soon as possible.

- Until recently, staff have not received the required safeguarding training. The acting headteacher has ensured that staff training has been delivered or is scheduled to happen soon. The safeguarding policy has also been revised and is now fit for purpose.
- Pupils are not supervised adequately at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Safeguarding records are not fit for purpose. When staff submit a concern about a pupil, the forms are not kept in date order and no analysis of records is carried out, so leaders are unable to identify patterns or trends and put in place timely interventions or support.
- Case files do not have chronological records. There are no records of follow-up actions or referrals to additional support or external agencies. As a result of inadequate record-keeping and lack of analysis of available information, leaders do not have adequate oversight of individual cases, which means that some vulnerable children could be at risk.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Over recent years, there has been a high number of temporary teachers in the school. This has compromised the standard of education provided. The work in pupils' books shows that pupils who have had many different teachers have made little progress and, in some cases, the standard of their work has declined. This is most notable in pupils' writing where incomplete, unfinished and untidy work has gone unchecked. Leaders have not ensured that all teachers have high enough expectations. Pupils are confused by the frequent changes of staff.
- Teachers have not benefited from professional dialogue with other teachers because there has been limited engagement with other schools. As a result, teachers feel there has been a lack of investment in them as professionals. Teachers say that, recently, morale has improved because they can see that this is changing.
- Teachers do not assess pupils' learning effectively. Until very recently, they have not had the opportunity to test out their judgements against those of other teachers. As a result, teachers have not had high enough expectations of what pupils should be achieving. More recently, teachers have visited other schools to see for themselves what pupils in other schools are achieving. This has improved teachers' expectations but, as many staff are temporary teachers, this has not yet had a sustained impact on improving pupils' work.
- Planning for classwork often fails to use information about what pupils know and can do from previous assessments and so work is often poorly matched to pupils' needs.
- In mathematics, pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and apply their skills through reasoning and problem-solving activities. Teachers do not provide pupils with concrete resources to help them understand mathematical concepts more easily.
- Pupils with SEND are not well supported. Their needs are not assessed accurately, and the support provided is not sufficiently tailored to their needs. In lessons, teaching

assistants are not deployed effectively by teachers. Like teachers, support staff have not received effective training to develop their skills. As a result, they do not intervene swiftly enough or assertively enough to help pupils refocus when they are becoming distracted. They do not ask carefully targeted questions to prompt pupils' thinking.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- The school runs very few after-school clubs and opportunities for pupils to engage in constructive activity at lunchtime are limited. At breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils' welfare is not adequately supported because there are too few members of staff on duty on the playground. Leaders do not analyse accident records to establish any patterns or trends. As a result, pupils are not effectively protected from risks.
- Some older pupils help to supervise younger pupils on the playground. They say they are proud to act as positive role models. Other pupils act as school councillors.
- In the breakfast club, pupils enjoy a healthy breakfast and a friendly chat with staff. Pupils help to clear up after breakfast, then carry out helpful chores, such as watering the vegetable plot. However, very few pupils currently attend each morning. Leaders are considering offering subsidised places, for example for disadvantaged pupils, so that many more pupils can benefit from this positive start to the day.
- Pupils enjoy regular sessions with an external organisation to develop confidence and resilience through team building and practical problem-solving activities. For many pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, these activities help them to focus and concentrate in lessons.
- Pupils' welfare is supported by running a daily mile around the school grounds. They understand how this helps them to stay healthy physically and emotionally.
- Pupils learn how to stay safe online through assemblies and special events such as Internet Safety Day. The school subscribes to an information service, which parents and pupils can access from home to help them understand online risks and how to keep safe. Staff warn parents promptly of any new risks, such as social media crazes or inappropriate mobile phone apps. Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- At transition points during the school day, particularly after lunch, some pupils can become restless and disruptive. Pupils have not been supported effectively to regulate their own behaviour. Pupils say that, sometimes, pupils can be unkind to one another. They say that bullying happens, and it is sometimes sorted out effectively by staff but not always.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour are not consistent and, in some classes, routines are ineffective or not well established.

- The behaviour policy has been revised recently and leaders are trying to ensure that it is consistently implemented despite the high number of supply staff. It is too early to see the impact of this on pupils' behaviour.
- In recent years, the number of fixed-term exclusions rose to be well above the national average. However, since January 2019, there have been no fixed-term exclusions. This is as a result of the acting headteacher's determination to ensure that all pupils are welcome and better supported in school.
- Attendance has been below the national average for a number of years. The proportion of pupils who are frequently absent has also been well above the national average. The school has appropriate systems in place to support pupils and parents when attendance drops too low and leaders are now using external agencies more readily to ensure that attendance improves.
- In the past, leaders allowed a small number of pupils who found it hard to concentrate to attend school on a part-time basis, with the agreement of parents. The acting headteacher now rightly insists that all pupils attend school full time and, where necessary, additional support is provided for those pupils who need it.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- By the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics and writing have been below, or well below, the national averages for the past two years.
- In 2017 at the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics combined was exceptionally low. Although this improved considerably in 2018, the school's performance remained well below the national average.
- At both key stage 1 and key stage 2, work in pupils' books shows that current pupils are still not making sufficient progress in writing and mathematics. Very few pupils are working at the standard expected for their age. As a result, they are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- As a result of unstable staffing, progress for many pupils has been erratic over the course of this year. Where classes have had more stable staffing, there is evidence that progress has been steady. However, where classes have had a succession of different teachers, there is evidence in pupils' books that standards have slipped and there is too much incomplete, untidy and substandard work. For example, pupils make frequent errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling in their writing because teachers do not all have consistently high expectations. Without frequent reminders and rigorous follow-up by teachers, pupils do not always produce their best work. As a result, the standard of pupils' written work has declined over this year.
- In 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics screening check improved but remained just below the national average. This was a significant improvement on 2017 when fewer than half of the pupils in Year 1 achieved the expected standard.
- Current pupils' phonics skills vary considerably. The most fluent and confident readers are those pupils who read frequently at home. For weaker readers, especially those who do not read regularly at home, the support provided in school for them to catch

up with their peers is not effective. Pupils' progress in reading is not assessed effectively. Staff do not listen to pupils read or check pupils' reading records often enough. As a result, too many current pupils are not making sufficient progress in reading.

- In mathematics, pupils make inadequate progress, and this has been the case for a number of years. The curriculum is not well planned in mathematics. The lack of accurate assessment information means that teachers are not able to plan lessons effectively, based on pupils' prior knowledge. As many teachers are temporary and they do not get to know the pupils well, gaps in pupils' basic number skills are not being filled.

Early years provision

Inadequate

- Many children enter the Nursery and Reception class with skills well below those typical for their age. Their communication and language skills are often underdeveloped. Despite the fact that leaders are aware of this, they have not ensured that children receive the support they need to develop their language skills quickly. When support has been provided for staff to develop their skills, it has had little impact because of the high number of temporary and supply staff due to staff absence.
- The Nursery has recently been reorganised. There is now a more coherent link between Nursery and the rest of the school because the early years leader from the school now manages the Nursery. Leaders hope this will ensure that children from the Nursery are better prepared to start school.
- Leaders have ensured that the early years welfare requirements are met, including the ratios for children of different ages in the Nursery. Children in the Nursery generally behave well.
- Children in the Nursery are cared for well by adults. There is a good balance of adult-led and free-choice activities. In adult-led activities, some adults engage children in learning through effective questions which prompt children to extend their thinking. However, this is not universally the case. Adults do not always guide children towards more constructive learning activities. There are limited opportunities provided for them to develop their reading, writing or number skills.
- In more formal learning, such as phonics sessions, some children find it hard to focus and concentrate for very long. They become distracted and this disrupts the teaching. Support staff do not intervene effectively to keep children on track. In some cases, teachers' lack of knowledge and skills means that they are not able to address the challenges of a mixed-age class. As a result, younger children are not well supported, and older pupils do not make enough progress in their learning.
- The assessment of children's learning in the early years is not fit for purpose. Records of children's work in learning journeys are not cross-referenced to the early learning goals. As a result, leaders do not have robust evidence on which to base their assessments of children's progress. Adults have limited information on which to plan next steps in children's learning.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception has been well below the national average for at least two years. Inspection

evidence showed that this is likely to be the case again this year. As a result, the majority of pupils are not adequately prepared for the start of Year 1. Additional funding is not used effectively to support disadvantaged children.

- Partnerships with parents are not effective at the moment. Leaders recognise that this needs to improve urgently and they are taking appropriate steps to engage with parents more effectively. There has been some early success and parents are now more positive about communication with school. Attendance at parents' evenings has improved. However, leaders acknowledge that parents' support for their children's learning is not encouraged effectively at the moment. They are working hard to ensure that parents can contribute effectively through the introduction of an online system.
- Local authority advisers are supporting leaders to improve the quality of provision in the early years. They have helped to identify appropriate actions for improvement. However, it is too soon to see evidence of impact on outcomes for children.

School details

Unique reference number	124125
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10082178

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	97
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Marie Smith
Acting Headteacher	Lesley Biddle
Telephone number	01889 221890
Website	www.westernsprings.staffs.sch.uk/
Email address	office@westernsprings.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 January 2015

Information about this school

- Western Springs Primary School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans is above the national average. The proportion of pupils receiving support for SEND is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The on-site Nursery has a limited number of places for two-year-old children.
- The school runs a breakfast club. Currently, there is no after-school facility.
- The local authority issued a formal warning notice in February 2019 and replaced the governing body with an interim executive board in June 2019.

Information about this inspection

- Prior to the inspection, the lead inspector analysed published assessment information and looked at previous inspection reports. It was not possible to review the school's policies or curriculum information because the school does not have a live website.
- During the inspection, all classes were observed at least once. The majority of lesson observations were carried out jointly with the acting headteacher.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the acting headteacher, a senior officer from the local authority and the chair of the IEB. In addition, the lead inspector met with the acting headteacher as designated safeguarding lead and the school business manager as deputy designated safeguarding lead, to discuss safeguarding practices and record-keeping. The single central record of pre-employment checks was reviewed.
- A meeting was held with the acting headteacher and a member of the IEB to discuss the school's provision for pupils with SEND. A meeting was held with the early years leader. The lead inspector met with a small group of teachers. Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons and during breaktimes and lunchtimes about their learning and about how the school helps them to keep themselves safe.
- Inspectors took account of nine responses to the staff survey and five responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent survey. Four free-text responses to Parent View were also considered. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- A range of documents were reviewed, including the safeguarding and child protection policy; the administration of medicines policy; risk assessments; minutes of governing body meetings; safeguarding records; accident records; attendance and behaviour records; training records and certificates.
- Inspectors considered six complaints about the school submitted to Ofsted.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day and held a meeting with one parent at their request.

Inspection team

Jane Spilsbury, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Susan Morris-King

Senior Her Majesty's Inspector

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