

# Inspection of a good school: Ellison Primary Academy

Ellison Street, Wolstanton, Newcastle, Staffordshire ST5 0BL

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Inspection dates: 17–18 September 2019

## Outcome

Ellison Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a section 5 inspection now.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They are safe and very well cared for. Pupils like the many topics they study. A popular event is the 'promenade' performed for parents by every class. The most recent was Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet'. Even the youngest pupils in the early years Reception class played their part. Pupils learn a great deal in history. They were keen to talk to their teachers and each other about the Roman invasion of Britain. The school's curriculum helps pupils discuss a range of issues. These include sensitive discussions to determine whether invasions, for example, are right or wrong. These and many more examples show how pupils achieve very well and learn a great deal in school. There is strong leadership and governance. Leaders, staff and governors are very ambitious. They value pupils' efforts to succeed at school.

Pupils are exceptionally well behaved. Bullying is very rare, and pupils say they can speak to anyone if they are worried. Parents are very pleased with their children's education. Many told the inspector how caring and genuine leaders and staff are. One summed up the views of most when writing 'this is a fantastic and supportive school.' The inspector agrees.

## What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils achieve very well in all classes, including the early years Reception classes. The headteacher and deputy headteacher, together with other leaders and governors, are very ambitious for pupils to succeed, whatever their abilities or backgrounds. Leaders and staff have given careful thought to the school's curriculum. They have thought intelligently about how best to plan topics that help pupils learn more and remember more.

The curriculum is designed to incorporate important concepts, knowledge and key vocabulary that pupils must learn. Teachers plan work so that it builds on what pupils have learned before. There are also well-planned, school-wide projects. For example, in

science, pupils will shortly celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing. They look forward to using telescopes to observe the moon. This, like in other subjects, builds on what pupils have learned before, for example learning about the solar system in science, the wider world in geography and space travel in history.

Pupils have a good start to their learning in the early years, where they learn to read with confidence, accuracy and fluency. In the early years and key stage 1, pupils get a very good grounding in phonics. The phonics programme is taught consistently well so that pupils make great progress breaking down words into letter sounds. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn to apply their phonics skills very well.

In key stage 2, pupils build on these strong foundations. They read a broad range of books with confidence and enjoyment. Pupils told the inspector how they aspire to be authors. They showed the inspector copies of a published anthology of their high-quality poetry, fiction and letter writing from all classes.

There are a few occasions when pupils could do better. Pupils have access to dictionaries, thesauruses and word banks. However, teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to learn about new, more complex words and phrases.

Mathematics is taught very well. Many pupils reach high standards. Most can recall mental arithmetic facts fluently to calculate problems. In key stage 2, for example, pupils can apply what they know about the value of digits in large numbers to work out more complex calculations. There are, however, occasions when staff do not ask more probing questions or adapt the tasks set, so that pupils learn in greater depth.

The school provides a rich curriculum. This has a huge impact on pupils' academic and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. History is taught very well, supporting the school's intentions. Pupils learn about the history of the local area and the school. They learn about significant periods of history, such as the way the local coal mining industry was affected by the demands of the industrial revolution. Teachers skilfully use discussion sessions to encourage pupils to generate and share ideas thoughtfully.

Pupils behave exceptionally well at all times and listen attentively to other pupils' views with maturity and respect. Pupils in Year 6, for example, discussed the rights and wrongs of the fictitious character Fagin in Victorian England using the story of Dickens' 'Oliver Twist' as a stimulus.

Pupils achieve very well in science. Pupils become science ambassadors and some act as expert role models. This builds on the excellent work done with other schools and universities in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) projects to help them understand the value and be excited by these subjects.

The special educational needs coordinator is very skilled and effective in managing SEND provision. Pupils with SEND make strong progress as a result, especially in improving core skills such as reading, writing and mathematics.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders carefully check on staff they appoint. Parents, rightly, believe that their children are safe in school. Leaders and staff adopt both a caring and robust approach to make sure that pupils are safe when they are absent. There are clear referral procedures and the staff are aware of whom to go to if concerned about a child's welfare or safety. The designated safeguarding leaders (DSLs) make sure that staff are kept up to date and promptly follow up any concerns reported to them.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In English and mathematics lessons, some pupils need more support or different tasks to help them fully understand new learning. Leaders now need to consider how this is considered when planning what they want pupils to achieve. There are occasions when the staff miss opportunities to change what they originally planned for pupils to help all of them understand better. The questions teachers ask do not always assess or focus enough on addressing gaps or misunderstandings pupils may have. This results in some pupils not fully grasping new ideas in mathematics or the meaning of new words and vocabulary in reading sessions. The school should now ensure that teachers ask questions and plan tasks in lessons to help all pupils fully understand their learning.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Ellison Primary School, to be good.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	142984
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10111711
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	366
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Guy Weir
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nichola Gibson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.ellison.staffs.sch.uk/">www.ellison.staffs.sch.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The predecessor school, Ellison Primary School, became an academy in September 2016. The school joined a multi-academy trust (The Societas Trust). The predecessor primary school was maintained by Staffordshire local authority and was inspected in January 2016. That inspection judged it to be a good school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector held discussions with the chief executive of the trust; the headteacher; deputy headteacher; assistant headteachers and teachers responsible for leading English, mathematics, science and history. A meeting was held with the home school links worker and the teacher responsible for managing SEND provision.
- The inspector held a meeting with five governors, including the chair and vice chair of the local governing board. Some governors are also members of the trust board.
- The inspector spoke with the business manager and DSLs to judge the effectiveness of child protection and safeguarding procedures.
- The inspector spoke with some parents to seek their views about the school and analysed responses to the online survey, Parent View. The inspector also considered the text messages sent by parents to Ofsted. The inspector spoke with staff and

considered responses from staff to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

- The inspector focused on reading and the teaching of phonics, as well as in-depth investigations into mathematics and history. The inspector also looked at some of the work pupils completed in science.
- The inspector visited parts of lessons in all classes. Many visits were made jointly with leaders. The inspector looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector spoke to pupils during lessons. He also met with three groups of pupils to hear them read and to discuss their views about their experience of school. The inspector also spoke with pupils informally during break and lunchtimes.
- The inspector considered a range of documentation including leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness, the school's and trust's strategic development plans and documents relating to governance and the trust's scheme of delegation.

### **Inspection team**

Charalambos Loizou, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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