

# Inspection of Smallthorne Primary Academy

Chetwynd Street, Smallthorne, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST6 1PR

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Inspection dates: 19–20 November 2019

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

This is a warm and welcoming school where pupils feel safe and valued. Caring relationships exist between staff and pupils and among pupils. Pupils say, 'Everyone knows everyone and we all look after each other.'

Leaders and staff are determined for pupils to do well. This has resulted in some positive changes across the school. Leaders and staff have worked together effectively to develop aspects of pupils' learning. However, they are very aware that there is more work to be done.

Behaviour is positive around the school and there is a calm atmosphere. However, pupils do not always listen well in lessons and they do not always focus well on their work. This happens too often and slows down pupils' learning. This frustrates other pupils who are keen to get on with their work.

Pupils have a clear understanding of the different types of bullying. They say that when it does happen, staff deal with it immediately and effectively.

Most parents and carers are positive about the school. They say that their children are cared for and feel safe. Parents value the work of the staff and the support that they give to the children.

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

In some areas of the curriculum, including mathematics, learning is well ordered. Teachers are clear about what to teach, when to teach it and the order in which it needs to be taught. This helps teachers to plan lessons that build on what pupils have learned before. In these subjects, pupils remember what they have been taught and they can talk about it confidently.

In other subjects, the order of learning is not as well planned. Teachers are unclear what pupils have learned in the past. Therefore, lessons do not always build on what pupils have learned before. Pupils are not achieving as well as they could in these subjects. Currently, leaders with responsibility for these curriculum areas do not possess sufficient subject knowledge and the essential skills required to develop their subject.

When children join the Nursery and Reception classes they settle quickly and enjoy being in school. This is because the school works closely with families, even before their children start school. Staff maintain strong links with families throughout the early years. Parents value this. From the very start of Nursery, children learn lots of new things quickly. Activities build on what children already know. Teachers make learning interesting. Positive, caring relationships exist between staff and children. Children are confident, and they enjoy speaking about their learning to adults. The early years classrooms and outdoor areas are well resourced and colourful, and help

children to learn.

Teachers plan work that is matched to the needs of most pupils. As a result, these pupils can complete their work independently with an appropriate level of support. However, teachers do not always set work that is matched to the needs of pupils who require additional support. This includes those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, these pupils do not always achieve as well as they could.

Teaching assistants support groups of pupils or individuals in lessons. Where this is effective, pupils understand what they are doing and are prompted when they are stuck. However, some teaching assistants do not pick up errors or step in quickly enough when pupils need help.

Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Staff know all the pupils by name and they take great care of them. They provide extra help in many ways, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils trust staff and know that they are cared for. The school supports pupils who display challenging behaviour very well. Every day is a new start.

Pupils enjoy sharing stories and talking about books. Most pupils read with confidence from an early age. However, not all staff teach phonics well. Consequently, some pupils fall behind with their reading and require extra help.

Staff organise a wide range of trips, clubs and special events. This makes learning interesting. Pupils are very excited about the residential trip to Stanley Head. Pupils relish the opportunity to compete against other schools in sporting competitions. From a very young age, pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online. They also speak confidently about the importance of healthy eating and exercise.

Senior leaders are working hard to improve the school. They are supported by those responsible for governance to bring about improvements. Staff feel valued and listened to. They agree that leaders are considerate of their well-being. Staff appreciate this immensely.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Keeping pupils safe is the school's highest priority. Leaders check staff's suitability to work with children before they start to work at the school. Staff are aware that safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone. Pupils say they feel safe because their teachers look after them and the school site is secure. Leaders have ensured that all staff are well trained. Regular safeguarding updates are provided. As a result, staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. Pupils get the help they need. Teachers help pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe when in school and when not in school.

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

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

- The school's curriculum is designed and sequenced effectively in some subjects, such as mathematics. However, other subjects are not as well developed. Consequently, pupils do not do as well as they could in these subjects. The school needs to build on the work already started to develop the curriculum further. The curriculum needs to be clearly planned and ordered to build pupils' knowledge and skills over time.
- A few curriculum leaders do not have the subject knowledge, skills and expertise required to lead their curriculum areas effectively. As a result, curriculum leaders do not make sure that the curriculum is designed and delivered to meet pupils' needs. The school needs to ensure that curriculum leaders have the capability to plan, implement and monitor an effective curriculum.
- Low-level, unacceptable behaviour disrupts pupils' learning too often. The school needs to further develop consistent, positive attitudes towards learning. This will ensure that all pupils can learn, and all teachers can teach without interruption.
- At times, the work set by teachers is not closely matched to the needs of pupils who require additional support, including pupils with SEND. Consequently, these groups of pupils do not do as well as they could. Staff need to make sure that these pupils are secure in their basic knowledge and skills before moving them on to more complex areas of learning. This will support these pupils to become independent learners.
- The contribution made by teaching assistants to pupils' learning is variable. Some teaching assistants provide good levels of support, but others lack the expertise to aid pupils' progress. The school needs to ensure that teaching assistants have the necessary skills and knowledge to support pupils with their learning.

### 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're 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>	142207
<b>Local authority</b>	Stoke-on-Trent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10130584
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	238
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Melanie Sproston
<b>Principal</b>	Dilesh Parmar
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.smallthorneprimary.org.uk">www.smallthorneprimary.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Smallthorne Primary Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 January 2017. When its predecessor school, Smallthorne Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of the City Learning Trust.
- The school has a breakfast club, operating on the school site. This provision is managed by the school.
- There is an after-school club operating on the school site. This provision is inspected separately by Ofsted.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We held meetings with the executive principal for primaries, the interim principal and the assistant principal. We met with four members of the local governing committee, including the chair, and the vice-chair of the board of trustees. We also met with the chief executive officer.
- We held meetings with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and

the early years, attendance and behaviour leads.

- As part of the inspection, we looked in depth at reading, mathematics, design and technology, and history. We met with groups of pupils, curriculum leaders and teachers to talk about the quality of education at the school.
- We made visits to classrooms. Many of these visits were with curriculum leaders or senior leaders.
- We listened to several groups of pupils read.
- We spoke with pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school. We looked at pupils' work in a range of different subjects to see how well the curriculum is implemented. A group of pupils accompanied us on a walk around the school.
- Documents relating to safeguarding were checked, including the checks that leaders make on staff's suitability to work with children prior to employment. We checked that safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented effectively across the school.
- We talked to parents after school. We considered the 13 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the eight free-text responses received during the inspection.
- We considered the nine responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- We considered a range of documentation provided by the school. We looked at the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, school policies, curriculum documents, published information about pupils' performance, behaviour records, attendance records and minutes of local governing committee meetings.
- We looked at published information on the school's website.

### **Inspection team**

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Rebecca Nash

Ofsted Inspector

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