

Inspection of Alsager Highfields Community Primary School

Fairview Avenue, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST7 2NW

Inspection dates: 6–7 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not get a good deal at this school. Their school is not improving.

Leaders' and staff's expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Pupils do not achieve well enough. This is particularly true for disadvantaged pupils. Many parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, would not recommend the school to others.

Around school, pupils are polite and friendly. They treat each other and adults with respect. All the same, behaviour is not as good in lessons. Some pupils distract others from their learning. Leaders do not provide staff with clear guidance about dealing with pupils' behaviour. The school's approach to promoting good mental and physical health for all pupils is not as effective as it could be.

Pupils told us that they feel safe. They said that leaders make sure that the school grounds are secure. Even so, parents and some pupils told us that leaders and staff do not consistently deal well with incidents of bullying.

Pupils enjoy school. They told us that teachers plan interesting activities for them. Pupils have opportunities to take part in activities such as pond dipping outside in the school's forest area.

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

Leaders at all levels, including governors, have made too little difference to the quality of education that pupils experience. Senior leaders have an overgenerous view of how the school is performing. They have an inaccurate understanding of pupils' achievement. Published data shows that pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 has been weak in recent years. Many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are not well prepared for their move into secondary school. Most of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have not been dealt with.

Senior leaders have had considerable support from the local authority and from a national leader of education (NLE). When this support has been reduced, the school leaders have not been able to maintain standards. It is clear that leaders cannot make the urgent changes required at the school without substantial support.

Governors have also had support to help them understand what they should do. They are beginning to make better checks on how well the school is doing. Governors accept that this has not been the case in the past.

Some staff told us that poor communication with senior leaders adds to their workload.

Very little thought has been given to the design and implementation of the

curriculum. The headteacher has not allocated time for the development of subject leaders to enable them to develop and monitor their area of responsibility. Most subject leaders do not have plans for their subjects. This means that teachers have little direction. They do not receive the guidance that they need to help them to plan learning which builds on what pupils already know. This problem is magnified in those classes where two age groups are taught together. Pupils make poor progress through the curriculum. Work in pupils' books and discussions with pupils show that they have not developed a deep understanding in many of the subjects that they have studied. These include mathematics, history and science.

Leaders have very recently introduced a new structured approach to the teaching of reading in the early years and at key stage 1. Children begin to learn to read as soon as they start in the Reception class. Children in the early years class can remember the sounds that they have learned. Some staff are skilled at delivering phonics in the early years. Others are not. Adults help children in the Reception class to catch up if they start to fall behind with their reading. However, across the rest of the school, there is no structured support in place for pupils who struggle to read. In key stage 2, pupils find reading tasks too easy or too difficult because teachers do not use what they know about pupils' reading abilities. A new approach to reading has also been introduced for older pupils but it is too early to see if this is making any difference.

We observed lots of positive interactions between staff and pupils. Pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and make visitors to the school feel welcome. However, at times, pupils' behaviour disrupts lessons. These interruptions to learning often go unchallenged by staff. Some parents and pupils also commented to us that instances of bullying are not always dealt with as well as they could be.

Despite its many failings, pupils clearly enjoy attending school. This is reflected in their high rates of attendance. Good attendance is encouraged, and any unexplained absences are followed up swiftly.

Pupils take part in activities that help them to develop their personal skills. Older pupils are very proud of the leadership roles that they have. They enjoy being prefects or being involved with the safeguarding council. They raise money for various charities and help keep their local environment clean by litter-picking. Pupils work collaboratively in 'business' ventures with other schools. The money raised from these ventures goes to local charities nominated by the pupils. Pupils have opportunities to learn about different faiths and cultures. A broad range of trips, visitors and out-of-school activities are also available for pupils to enjoy.

Some pupils have good-quality and regular support to promote their emotional and mental health and well-being. Pupils told us that the support provided by the school 'made them feel better about themselves'. However, these opportunities are not available to all pupils who may need this support.

The early years leader makes sure that children's reading, writing and mathematical knowledge is secure. Children do not develop their knowledge in the other areas of

the early years curriculum equally well. Adults who work in the early years are not given enough guidance on how to challenge children to try different activities. As a result, some children's development is limited in some areas of their learning. This is particularly true for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They do not get the support that they need to build up their knowledge in all areas of learning.

Across the rest of the school, support for pupils with SEND is more effective. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) makes sure that pupils with SEND get the support that they need. The SENCo works well with parents and other agencies. She makes sure that pupils access specialist provision when they need it. Older pupils with SEND that we spoke to said that the support that they get helps them with their learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff and governors access regular training to help them keep pupils safe. They are clear about the procedures they need to follow if they have concerns about pupils. All staff make effective use of the school's online recording system. Leaders work with parents and a range of agencies to make sure that pupils get any support that they need. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. They know how to protect themselves from potential danger from strangers. This includes when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Senior leadership, including governance, is weak. It has not made a difference to improving the quality of education that pupils receive. Leadership at all levels needs to be developed in order to secure urgent and necessary change to almost all areas of the school. Leaders need to gain an accurate understanding of how well pupils are achieving and make sure that action is taken to help those who have fallen behind. In addition, leaders need to develop further their communication systems with staff so that teachers' workload becomes more manageable.
- Leaders have not produced an overview of the curriculum for all subjects across the school. They have not defined what they want pupils to know and remember by the time that they are ready to move on to secondary school. Leaders have not decided how knowledge will be taught through specific subject areas. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is especially true for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders need to design a curriculum that is well planned and ambitious for all pupils. Plans need to make clear the steps of learning that pupils should have in each year group. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum design meets the needs of all pupils who attend the school.

- Subject leaders make too little difference to the way in which the curriculum is implemented. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders receive support to be able to carry out their role effectively. Subject leaders must ensure that they provide clear guidance to teachers so that learning in different subjects helps pupils to gain secure knowledge over time.
- At the start of this academic year, new approaches to the teaching of reading have been introduced. It is unclear what difference they will make. Leaders need to ensure that all staff are skilled in the teaching of reading. They should also ensure that pupils who are falling behind with reading are given the support that they need to help them catch up quickly.
- Some pupils do not keep focused in lessons. Some pupils talk to other pupils while the teacher is talking and distract others from learning. Leaders have not provided clear guidance to staff about agreed strategies to encourage pupils to behave well. Leaders need to ensure that pupils behave well in lessons so that all pupils learn as well as they can. Leaders also need to ensure that all incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly, in line with the school's behaviour management policy.
- Staff support some pupils well to manage their feelings. Not all pupils have this support regularly. Leaders need to ensure that teachers plan regular activities that help all pupils to develop good mental health.
- Some children do not develop well in all areas of learning in the early years. Leaders need to ensure that early years staff are clear about what they need to do to support all children, including those with SEND, to achieve well across the full early years curriculum.

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

Unique reference number	111032
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10110890
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Suzanne Ellis
Headteacher	Philip Whiston
Website	www.alsagerhighfields.com
Date of previous inspection	8–9 June 2017

Information about this school

- Middle leadership roles have been restructured due to a reduction in teaching staff.
- The number of pupils on roll has reduced.

Information about this inspection

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

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.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

- We spoke with the headteacher, the SENCo, a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, an NLE who has worked with the school and a representative from the local authority.

- We looked at a range of documentation for safeguarding, including the record of required checks carried out on school staff, staff training logs and case files. We met with the person responsible for safeguarding to discuss how the school keeps pupils safe.
- We focused closely on reading, mathematics, history and science. We talked to the leaders of these subjects. We visited lessons. We looked at examples of children’s work. We talked with teachers and pupils about what pupils were learning.
- We also looked at pupils’ workbooks in other subjects. These included geography, religious education, computing, art, design and technology, and writing.
- We observed pupils’ behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. We observed them in breakfast club, a session for pupils who need additional emotional support and as they moved around the school.
- We spoke to pupils about their experiences at school.
- We looked at the 47 responses to Ofsted’s parental questionnaire, Parent View, and the 31 free-text responses from parents to find out their views of the school. We spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Craig Richardson	Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Beard	Ofsted Inspector

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