

Inspection of Spire Junior School

Jawbones Hill, Derby Road, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 2EN

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 May 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a family atmosphere about Spire Junior School. It is a caring school. Pupils enjoy their learning and being with their friends. One pupil told inspectors, 'We have rules to keep the world in harmony and keep life an enjoyment, not a punishment.'

Staff have very high expectations of pupils. They celebrate the school's three rules of 'ready, respectful, safe'. Pupils understand these rules. They have positive attitudes towards their work and towards each other.

Pupils know that bullying is not tolerated. They know that staff are quick to sort out any concerns for them. Pupils behave well. They are polite and respectful. One pupil told inspectors: 'If something is right, it will make others feel good. There's no point doing wrong things to affect other people in a bad way.'

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent, typical of many, said, 'Staff always put the children first and make it an enjoyable place for them to learn.' Parents particularly appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular clubs available to pupils.

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

Leaders have set out an ambitious curriculum in some subjects. Leaders have arranged the curriculum to ensure that pupils build their learning throughout key stage 2. Pupils remember what they have learned. For example, pupils can explain that focusing on hand-eye coordination helps them when playing tennis. Other pupils know that the same skill can be applied to other sports, such as cricket. However, in some subjects, leaders have not identified precisely the key knowledge that pupils need to learn, and when.

There is a strong culture of reading at the school. Leaders ensure that there is a concentrated focus on reading from the moment that pupils join the school. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. If pupils fall behind, staff provide them with extra sessions so that they can catch up. Leaders make sure that the books pupils are given to read match the letters and sounds that they are learning. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to win books from the school's book vending machine.

The mathematics curriculum is set out so that pupils build their understanding and skills securely. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to recap their knowledge by asking six questions in six minutes. Pupils use mathematical vocabulary precisely. For example, pupils correctly use the terms 'tenths' and 'hundredths' when discussing fractions and decimals. Staff provide mathematical equipment to help pupils understand what they are learning. For example, some pupils use counters to help them to count and subtract.

Leaders are quick to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders work well with external agencies and ensure that pupils with SEND

access the full curriculum. Teachers provide strong support for these pupils. Pupils with SEND achieve well. Staff communicate very well with parents.

Leaders are reviewing the school's approach to assessment. In some subjects, teachers check how successfully pupils acquire and use knowledge. However, in other subjects, leaders have not identified precisely the key content that pupils need to learn. In these subjects, approaches to assessment do not identify gaps in pupils' learning well enough.

Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to be responsible. Pupils enjoy their roles as school councillors and mini police. They have a strong understanding of equalities and diversity. There is some inconsistency in some pupils' knowledge of British values. Most understand the rule of law and respect. However, some pupils struggle to explain what living in a democracy means. Other pupils confuse different faiths and beliefs.

Governors and representatives of the local authority know the school well. They understand the school's strengths and know what needs to improve. Leaders consider staff's workload. Staff are very positive about the school's leaders and the professional support they have received from the local authority.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe. Pupils know how to stay safe, including when online. Pupils know whom to go to if they have a concern.

There is a very strong culture of care at the school. Leaders provide support for vulnerable pupils. Leaders ensure that they provide regular training for staff. Staff pass on concerns promptly. They know how to spot pupils who may be at risk. Record-keeping is comprehensive. Leaders work well with external agencies. Representatives of the governing body regularly check the school's safeguarding procedures.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently well planned and sequenced in some subjects. However, it is clear from leaders' actions that they are in the process of bringing this about. Leaders need to complete the process of reviewing the curriculum in all subjects, including in pupils' personal development, within their identified timescale. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied. In completing their curriculum review, leaders should ensure that there is clarity in their curriculum thinking across all subjects and areas as to the

knowledge that all pupils, including those with SEND, should learn and when they should learn it.

- Approaches to assessment are inconsistent in some subjects. In some subjects, where curriculum thinking is less clear, teachers do not check effectively how successfully pupils acquire and use knowledge. Leaders should ensure that assessment consistently assists teachers in identifying clear next steps for pupils without causing unnecessary burdens for staff and pupils.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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 the school and 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

Unique reference number	112661
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10227852
Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Vanessa Edwards
Headteacher	David Shaw
Website	www.spirejunior.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, curriculum leaders, the leader with responsibility for provision for pupils with SEND, and a sample of teaching and support staff.
- One inspector met with representatives of the governing body and the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, art and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with

subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspectors examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans and documentation relating to attendance and behaviour.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. He considered the safeguarding policy, training records and examples of safeguarding concerns.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the responses to Ofsted's free-text service. They also considered the responses to the staff survey and the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Damien Turrell, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Phil Abbott

Ofsted Inspector

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