

# Inspection of a good school: Stowlawn Primary School

Green Park Avenue, Stowlawn, Bilston, West Midlands WV14 6EH

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Inspection dates:

13 and 14 March 2023

## Outcome

Stowlawn Primary School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy and welcoming school. Pupils are taught to respect and care for others, and to treat everyone equally. And they do. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in all lessons and school activities. This is because teachers skilfully adapt curriculum activities to allow pupils to take part, including in physical education (PE).

Pupils behave well and feel safe. They feel comfortable speaking to an adult if they are upset or worried. Pupils do not have concerns about poor behaviour or bullying. They know that they will be kept safe because staff and leaders manage behaviour well.

Leaders expect pupils to be 'Ready, Respectful and Safe'. Pupils live up to these expectations. All age groups know the importance of the 'Stowlawn Six' attributes to be: kind, ambitious, honest, independent, resilient and creative.

Pupils particularly enjoy art, PE and mathematics. They also thrive on the wide range of experiences and activities that the school provides. This includes exciting visitors, such as storytellers and army leaders. Memorable visits and interesting clubs, such as chess, cookery, sports and performance club, make a huge contribution to pupils' personal development and enjoyment of school.

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

Most curriculum subjects are well planned and sequenced. Leaders have set out what pupils should learn and when. Children begin building the essential knowledge and skills they need in the early years. This stands them in good stead for their later learning in different subjects. However, there are a small number of curriculum subjects that are not as coherently organised. Where this is the case, pupils struggle to remember what they have been taught. This leads to them not achieving as well as they could.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and present information clearly. They make sure that pupils understand and use the appropriate subject vocabulary in lessons. Teachers check how well pupils are progressing in lessons and at appropriate intervals. They provide extra help where needed. Leaders track pupils' achievement closely.

Leaders ensure that reading is a high priority. Teachers incorporate reading and phonic skills into all lessons. The 'home reading challenge' motivates pupils to read widely and often. All classes visit the well-stocked library. Daily story time is a regular feature on the timetable. Older pupils enjoy the high-quality texts leaders choose to support the curriculum.

The school's phonics programme is well planned and organised. Staff introduce children to rhymes and sounds as soon as they join Nursery class. Reading workshops provide parents with the information they need to support their children to read at home. Staff provide extra support for pupils who begin to fall behind. However, not all books that pupils read closely match the sounds that they know and learn in lessons. This slows down their progress.

Senior leaders have strong systems in place to identify pupils with SEND. Additional help is quickly arranged. Leaders ensure that those with complex needs receive specialist support from external agencies. Teachers also skilfully adjust tasks and activities in school so that pupils access learning and extra-curricular opportunities. This ensures pupils are fully included in school life and achieve well.

Pupils behave well in lessons and at playtime, including wet playtimes. Older pupils take on roles such as 'play leaders' to support younger pupils. They help put out and put away playtime equipment. In class, pupils listen carefully and show positive attitudes to their learning. Most attend school regularly. However, there are a large number of vulnerable pupils who are persistently absent. These pupils miss important lessons. This impacts negatively on their achievement.

Leaders are wholly committed to developing pupils' personal development to a high level. It is a strength of the school's work. Staff encourage pupils to flourish and to develop a wide range of interests and talents. Opportunities to build character are offered both in lessons and through enrichment activities. The school recently received a prestigious award in recognition of the range of high-quality enrichment opportunities afforded to all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.

Parents have only positive things to say about the school. They appreciate the approachability of leaders and the support and care all staff show to pupils. Staff are also incredibly proud to work at Stowlawn. They feel valued by the headteacher and well supported.

Leaders, including governors, are considerate of staff's well-being. Every effort is made to reduce staff's workload. Leaders ensure that staff receive quality training opportunities, not only to maintain their knowledge and skills, but to develop them professionally.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding underpins everything at Stowlawn. No stone is left unturned to ensure pupils are safe. Well-trained staff know how to keep pupils safe. They go above and beyond to support vulnerable pupils. Safeguarding leads attend residential visits to provide close supervision.

Safeguarding records are detailed and fit for purpose. Leaders work well with external agencies and are relentless in accessing the support needed. Leaders make appropriate checks on all adults working in the school.

Pupils feel safe. They are taught how to keep themselves safe, including online. For example, they are aware of the importance of not sharing personal information.

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

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

- The school's curriculum is not yet successfully well planned and sequenced in every subject. This means that pupils do not retain the key content and vocabulary taught in a small number of subjects. Leaders should continue to apply the successful model seen in some subjects to those where pupils struggle to remember their learning.
- Some reading books do not match the phonics pupils learn in lessons. This confuses pupils and slows their progress. Leaders should ensure that reading books are matched to pupils' abilities and are fully decodable, particularly for the lower attainers.
- Too many disadvantaged pupils are persistently absent. This leads to gaps in their learning, and they do not make the progress they should. Leaders should continue to work with parents to instil the importance of regular attendance in order to improve the life chances of vulnerable pupils.

## 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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2013.

## 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.

## 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>	104317
<b>Local authority</b>	Wolverhampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256978
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	354
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Sarah Fullard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kate Charles
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stowlawnprimary.co.uk">www.stowlawnprimary.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part-way through moving from one-form to two-form entry. This will be complete in September 2024. The increase in capacity has impacted on the context and demographics of the school community. It has become more diverse.
- The leadership team has changed since the previous inspection. The headteacher joined the school in September 2019. The deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2021. Three assistant headteachers have also joined the leadership team.
- The school has recently achieved an 'Excellence in Pupil Development Award' for its commitment to promoting pupils' wider interests and personal development.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. She also met with all members of the governing body, including the two co-chairs of governors.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and PE. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at work in pupils' books. The inspector also looked at curriculum plans and heard some pupils read to staff.
- The inspector met with all teaching staff to talk about the curriculum, staff's workload and the behaviour and personal development of pupils. She also met with groups of pupils to talk about their learning and well-being.
- The inspector checked the school's single central record and spoke to the headteacher and pastoral support officer about safeguarding procedures.
- The inspector considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement. Records of attendance and behaviour were checked.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour at playtime and talked to them about behaviour, bullying and welfare.
- The inspector talked to parents after school and considered the responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. She gathered the views of pupils and staff on site through discussion with these groups and from their online questionnaire responses.

### **Inspection team**

Heather Simpson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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