

# Alsager Highfields Community Primary School

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

## Inspection dates

8–9 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- There has been a decline in outcomes since the last inspection due to pupils not making good enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2.
- Pupils' progress is not consistently good throughout the school. Progress is slower in key stage 1 than in key stage 2.
- Pupils, including the most able, are not sufficiently challenged in lessons. Too few reach the highest standards at the end of each key stage, particularly in writing.
- Leaders' improved system for tracking the progress of pupils in core subjects is not yet established across the wider curriculum.
- Attendance is above national averages for all pupils. Attendance for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving, but is not yet good.
- There are insufficient opportunities for key stage 2 pupils to study a modern foreign language in depth.
- Middle leadership is not fully established. As a result, some middle leaders are not yet playing a strong enough role in subject improvement.
- Transition from early years into key stage 1 is not yet fully effective in building on the good beginnings that children experience in Reception.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has a clear vision and is resolute and committed to achieving it, for the benefit of all pupils.
- The headteacher is working to improve outcomes at both key stages. He is supported by a strong leadership team, a committed governing body and staff. As a result, key stage 2 results look set to improve this year.
- Safeguarding is strong. Staff are vigilant in keeping pupils safe.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Positive relationships between staff and pupils are evident throughout the school.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is strong. This helps pupils to develop into confident, polite and caring individuals who enjoy coming to school.
- Effective provision in the early years ensures that children make good progress from their starting points.

## Full report

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

- Improve outcomes for key stage 1 and 2 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - improving transition from early years to key stage 1 so that rates of progress and learning continue smoothly
  - continuing to develop the role of middle leaders across the school to play a full role in subject leadership
  - ensuring that there is breadth in the curriculum so that pupils study a language in key stage 2, to fulfil the requirements of the national curriculum and gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of science at key stage 1
  - improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and ensuring that the proportion of pupils who persistently miss school decreases rapidly.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
  - teachers provide consistently high levels of challenge for all pupils, including the most able, to move pupils on rapidly
  - variations in the progress of groups of pupils continue to reduce, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors are aware of a decline in standards since the previous inspection and are taking determined steps to improve outcomes for pupils at all key stages.
- Leaders have responded to national changes in how pupils' progress is assessed in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders recognise that further developments are needed to extend the system across the wider curriculum and to track and monitor the progress of pupils from their starting points.
- The role of middle leaders is developing, so their impact on raising standards has been limited. They are developing in their subject knowledge and leadership skills to support leaders in improving the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. Some subject leaders' actions are now beginning to have a positive impact. For example, in mathematics, teachers are aware of the need to develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills in line with the demands of the new national curriculum.
- Leaders are improving progress for current pupils in key stage 2. However, leaders are aware that more-rapid progress needs to be secured during key stage 1. This is so that pupils make progress and attain more in line with their peers nationally from similar starting points.
- Pupil premium funding is carefully planned to support disadvantaged pupils. The impact of these interventions is beginning to show in the progress made by some disadvantaged pupils. Their progress is in line with, and in some cases above, the progress made by their peers. These improvements, however, are not consistent across the majority of year groups and subjects.
- Leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong. Leaders ensure that teaching assistants are skilled, knowledgeable and deployed well to support pupils in need of additional intervention. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is varied, but represents good progress from their individual starting points. The use of additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well to support pupils' progress.
- Pupils enjoy a broad curriculum, but there are not enough opportunities for pupils at key stage 2 to study a language to the required depth. Plans are in place to address this. Coverage of subjects such as science, history and geography lack depth at key stage 1, but are strong in Years 5 and 6. Standards in art are high, as seen in the high-quality work around the school.
- Robust systems are in place to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning. These have not yet had sufficient time to be embedded to see the impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Systems are in place to manage the performance of teachers. However, these are not closely linked to the progress of pupils, and so teachers are not held fully to account

through appraisal for the outcomes of pupils.

- Leaders promote the professional development of staff. Staff welcome training opportunities, but these are not always linked to individual needs. Newly qualified teachers feel well supported by senior leaders and enjoy working at the school.
- Pupils benefit from leaders' effective use of the sports premium funding. Sports coaching, staff training and extra-curricular clubs have all had a positive impact on the development of pupils' sporting skills and experiences. Pupils speak positively about the range of sporting activities available, including football, cricket, gymnastics and tennis.
- The local authority advisor has a good overview of the school's performance. The advisor meets with leaders to provide useful advice and guidance, particularly regarding self-evaluation and development planning.
- Safeguarding of vulnerable pupils is a strength of the school. Staff are vigilant and quick to identify any pupils in crisis or needing support. Leaders have effective relationships with external agencies and are tenacious in ensuring that vulnerable pupils receive timely guidance and support.
- Leadership of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is strong. As a result, pupils know about religions other than their own and develop respect for other cultures. British values are embedded well within the curriculum and assemblies. Pupils leave the school well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The headteacher's determined leadership is focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes for pupils. He is ably supported by a strong leadership team who are ambitious for all pupils.
- Staff are highly committed, caring and prepared to 'go the extra mile' for pupils. They work together effectively to provide an inclusive and welcoming school.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors are committed to pupils and to achieving the best for them. Until recently, the governing body has not held leaders to account effectively for the quality of education in the school and the declining standards.
- The governing body has taken steps to ensure that they are trained and better equipped to challenge school leaders robustly. Changes to committees, such as the addition of a data committee, has led to an increased focus on pupils' progress.
- The role of 'link governor' is developing. This role provides governors with regular opportunities to work directly with leaders to gain a better understanding of their work and its impact.
- Governors are aspirational for pupils and are not afraid to make difficult decisions when necessary. Governors are aware of the use of the pupil premium funding and the impact it is having on disadvantaged pupils' progress.
- Governors have confidence in senior leaders to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes. They are aware of the improvements that are required. They are united as a body to ensure that the school continues to move forward apace.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors create a culture where the safety and welfare of pupils is the highest priority. Staff and governors are trained and updated regularly and are able to identify pupils at risk of harm. All staff know what to do if they have any concerns and are vigilant in picking up any signs of a pupil in distress.
- The school works closely with parents and external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Leaders are tenacious in following up concerns and are determined to ensure the safety of all pupils in their charge. Safeguarding records are comprehensive and clear. All statutory checks on staff and visitors are compliant.
- Pupils are proactive and involved regarding safeguarding. Pupils are appointed to the 'safeguarding council'. They run competitions and have conducted 'site inspections' with leaders to ensure the safety of the environment. Pupils spoken with during the inspection say that there are rarely any incidents of bullying and if they do occur, they are dealt with effectively. Pupils trust the adults in school and say that they would talk to them if they had any concerns or worries.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it has not led to good enough outcomes for pupils over time. Teachers are not consistent in ensuring that they challenge pupils, including the most able, to reach the highest standards effectively. As a result, pupils do not develop the depth of understanding required to make strong and consistent progress across a range of subjects.
- Work in pupils' books shows a lack of challenge over time in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2. Pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that they often find their work easy. On such occasions, rates of progress slow and pupils do not engage in their learning.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported through individual support, small-group interventions or within the classroom. The majority of additional adults are highly effective and skilled in modelling questions and scaffolding concepts to ensure that pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to learning.
- New assessment systems are used by teachers to inform planning and identify gaps in learning. More work is needed to ensure that activities are consistently well matched to pupils' skills and abilities to accelerate progress made by pupils.
- Teachers use questioning well to check pupils' understanding of concepts. When opportunities are given for pupils to develop their thinking and reasoning skills, pupils work cooperatively and explain their rationale clearly to other pupils.
- Most teachers apply the school's marking and feedback policy consistently, but impact varies. When policies are used effectively, pupils' work improves as a result. However, evidence from pupils' books shows that younger pupils persist in making common errors, which does not move their writing forward. Pupils are positive about recent changes to feedback, telling inspectors that they enjoy the opportunities to improve

and redraft their work.

- Leaders identified homework as a focus area and consulted parents and pupils. As a result, leaders have made changes to the style, quality and quantity of homework set. Pupils and parents are positive in their attitudes to homework and see it as an intrinsic part of home-school life. Parents are also happy with the reports they receive from school about their child's progress. They state that teachers are approachable and helpful if parents have any concerns.
- Strong, positive relationships between teachers and pupils are a strength which runs throughout the school. Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are respectful, polite and well-mannered.
- Pupils are confident, articulate and are eager to take on roles of responsibility. They develop leadership skills through being members of the school council, eco-team, safeguarding council and volunteering as 'playground friends' at playtimes. Pupils are proud of the part they play on such committees, citing 'wanting to help others' as their primary reason for getting involved.
- Pupils take pride in their work and are keen to celebrate their successes. Leaders celebrate positive learning behaviours, such as independence, resilience and motivation. Pupils respond well and try hard to be successful. In a praise assembly, for example, boys congratulated each other quietly with 'high fives' for being awarded 'star of the week', demonstrating their support of each other.
- There is a culture of safeguarding around the school resulting from regular and appropriate training and a good knowledge of the pupils. Pupils feel safe and are taught how to keep themselves safe personally and online. Pupils are taught how to manage a wide range of risks from water safety, fire safety and internet safety.
- Pupils state that bullying rarely occurs, and are confident that if it did occur, it would be dealt with swiftly. An anti-bullying programme operates in school. Pupils understand about different forms of bullying and what to do if they have any concerns.
- Pupils are clear on the role of law, democracy, tolerance and the right for individuals to have beliefs different from themselves. They are considerate of the feelings of others and understand the consequences their actions can have. Pupils are being well prepared to contribute to life in modern Britain.
- Leaders' emphasis on promoting personal development and welfare is reflected in the warm and caring atmosphere which permeates throughout the school. The inclusive nature of all staff and pupils gives rise to a school where pupils feel valued and supported. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy school, feel safe and would recommend the school to others.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are happy to come to school and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Pupils mix well and play cooperatively during social times.
- Parents are positive about the headteacher's presence around school, acknowledging his drive and insistence on good manners and high standards of behaviour.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and based on mutual respect. The majority of pupils are attentive and keen to learn. Occasionally, where teaching does not meet pupils' needs effectively because it lacks sufficient challenge, some passivity is evident and the pace of learning slows.
- Very few incidents of misbehaviour were seen during the inspection. School logs show that incidents of poor behaviour are low and decreasing. Leaders at all levels have high expectations of and for pupils, and this is clearly conveyed to pupils at every opportunity. There are a few pupils who need additional support with managing their behaviour and emotions. These pupils are well supported by staff and external agencies as appropriate.
- Attendance for all pupils is above the national average. There is a reduction in the numbers of pupils regularly absent from school. There is still work to be done in continuing to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders' actions are beginning to improve the attendance of individual pupils.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, outcomes for pupils have declined and pupils do not make strong enough progress.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2016, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics were considerably below the national average. Far fewer pupils than expected achieved greater depth in their learning. This indicates that achievement for pupils in key stage 1, including the most able pupils, was not as good as it should be.
- There was a similar picture at the end of key stage 2 in 2016, where the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standards were below average in reading and writing. However, the standards achieved in mathematics were more in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in phonics in Year 1 has been just below the standards nationally for the past two years.
- Information provided by the school, in addition to work seen in lessons and in pupils' books, shows that at key stage 1, little improvements are expected in outcomes for current pupils.
- Key stage 2 information for current pupils shows a more positive, improving picture. Pupils are on track to reach standards in line with expectations in reading and mathematics. Progress is slower in writing. For example, common errors seen in writing occasionally persist throughout the year and progress and attainment in writing is still low.

- The proportions of pupils on track to achieve greater depth in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 are rapidly improving. This shows that the most able pupils are being sufficiently challenged in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics across the year groups varies. Pupils are developing good functional mathematical skills, but are not consistently using reasoning and problem-solving skills to develop their understanding fully.
- Pupils read often and with interest. They develop their reading skills and apply them well in their lessons. Pupils have a wide range of books to choose from and make sensible selections appropriate to their ability. Many pupils enjoy reading for pleasure. Younger pupils are beginning to read with confidence and older pupils are developing favourite authors and genres.
- Disadvantaged pupils historically have not made as good progress as their classmates. As a result of a carefully planned and detailed use of additional funding, assessments show that these differences in progress are beginning to diminish for disadvantaged pupils in most year groups, including the most able disadvantaged. Some inconsistencies in progress remain. Leaders are targeting intervention to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils further.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Strong leadership of this area, coupled with highly effective support from skilled teaching assistants, are making a positive difference to the learning and development of these pupils.
- Pupils are well prepared socially and emotionally for high school. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are particularly well supported during transition to high school. Communication with local high schools is strong, with support continuing for vulnerable pupils throughout their initial year at their new school.
- Progress of pupils across the wider curriculum is inconsistent. For example, in key stage 1, the development of scientific knowledge and understanding is weak. In key stage 2, pupils do not make strong progress in acquiring modern foreign language skills. The high-quality artwork seen all around the school indicates that standards in art are good.
- The good start children gain in Reception falters during key stage 1 and lower key stage 2. This leaves pupils with a steep climb ahead of them in Years 5 and 6 in order to make expected progress. Leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that outcomes rise rapidly across all key stages, so that pupils maintain strong and consistent progress throughout their academic journey in school.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children join early years with skills and abilities slightly below those typically expected for their age. Leaders assess any gaps astutely and accurately. As a result of good teaching, children make good progress from their varied starting points. The majority of children achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year, which prepares them well for Year 1.
- Children are happy and enjoy learning in bright, stimulating and well-resourced indoor and outdoor areas. The early years area is brimming with colour, life and celebration of

children's work and experiences. The Forest Schools display shows children having immense fun while learning. The significant investment recently into outdoor resources has had a positive impact on children's skills development.

- Staff provide a broad range of activities which engage and enthuse children. Learning journeys not only show clear progression of knowledge and skills, but also show parents the wide range of experiences enjoyed by the children. Parents are overwhelmingly happy with their children's progress in the early years; communication between home and school is effective.
- Leaders and staff know the needs of children well and provide timely interventions to address any gaps in learning. Children move safely and are well supervised throughout, with relationships between staff and children warm and respectful. Children respond quickly to instructions and are well-mannered with both staff and other children. They play well and safely together.
- Leaders make good use of the extra funding for disadvantaged pupils in the early years. However, there are still differences in outcomes for this group of pupils compared to their peers and others nationally, particularly in writing.
- Leadership of the early years is effective in promoting the safeguarding of pupils. All statutory requirements are met. Leaders assess children's progress accurately. Leaders have clear plans for further improvement through analysing assessment information further. This is in order to continue to raise achievement, particularly for the most able and disadvantaged children.

## School details

Unique reference number	111032
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10032799

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	310
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Ellis
Headteacher	Mr P Whiston
Telephone number	01270 882472
Website	<a href="http://www.alsagerhighfields.cheshire.sch.uk">www.alsagerhighfields.cheshire.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@alsagerhighfields.cheshire.sch.uk">head@alsagerhighfields.cheshire.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	21 October 2008

## Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, but the proportion of pupils with an education and health care plan is average.
- The early years provision comprises two Reception classes. Children in Reception attend full time.
- There have been several staff changes since the last inspection. A new headteacher has been appointed and changes in staffing have occurred. A new chair of the

governing body has also been appointed since December 2016.

- The school receives general support from the local authority and an independent school improvement partner.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about PE and sports premium, 2016 results, 2010 equality duty requirements and a link to the government performance tables information.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school. Some learning walks were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors met with pupils, both formally and informally, to listen to their views and hear them read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders, newly qualified teachers, middle leaders and governors, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector spoke by telephone to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation that covered: information about pupils' attainment and progress; the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plan; minutes of governing body meetings; and records relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour and safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaks, lunchtimes, during assembly and in lessons. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and looked at samples of their books.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents and staff who responded to surveys undertaken by leaders. Inspectors also spoke to parents informally on the playground.

## Inspection team

Helen O'Neill, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stephen Rigby	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Kelly	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Bentham	Her Majesty's Inspector

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