

Smallwood C of E Primary School

School Lane, Sandbach, Cheshire CW11 2UR

Inspection dates

19–20 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, staff and governors have ensured that pupils receive a good standard of education.
- Good teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum ensure that pupils make good progress. Published data in 2018 showed that progress in writing was below that of reading and writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress across the curriculum.
- Attendance is good. It has remained above the national average for several years.
- The exciting curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stages of their education. Pupils are taught to apply their skills and solve problems.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Opportunities to develop a broader understanding of other cultures is not as well developed.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Excellent conduct and manners are the norm. Pupils treat one another with courtesy and respect.
- Leaders have ensured that all arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are effective. A strong culture of safeguarding permeates the school.
- The good teaching of phonics ensures that most pupils leave Year 1 having secured the required standard in the phonics screening check.
- Teachers do not challenge the most able pupils in writing. Expectations of writing across the curriculum are not high enough.
- Governors are very supportive of the school. They are passionate for it to continue to serve the community. However, governors lack a structured approach to their visits because these are not linked closely to the school improvement priorities.
- Many middle leaders are new to their roles. As a result, they have not yet had enough time to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.
- The early years is an exciting learning environment. Most children leave the early years with a good level of development. Children make better progress in English than mathematics.
- Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. They overwhelmingly stated that their children were safe and well-cared-for.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that governors link the information they gather about the school more closely to the school's identified priorities
 - ensuring that new middle leaders have sufficient opportunities to collect information about their subjects and identify current priorities
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to develop their broader understanding of other cultures.
- Strengthen teaching and improve progress in writing by:
 - providing more challenge for the most able writers
 - raising teachers' expectations of pupils' writing in other subjects across the curriculum.
- Strengthen the provision in the early years by:
 - ensuring that children's progress in mathematics is as strong as the progress they make in reading and writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in the school. The headteacher and all teachers are new to post. Since January 2017, when the headteacher was appointed, she, along with the senior teachers and governors, have worked efficiently to ensure that the school provides a good standard of education for all groups of pupils. The Christian ethos of the school underpins all aspects of the school's work.
- The headteacher, along with the senior teachers and governors, are honest in their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They recognise that pupils leave the school making good progress. A detailed school improvement plan clearly sets out how they intend to improve outcomes for pupils further.
- Leaders have ensured that attendance continues to be a strength of the school. Few pupils miss school. Rates of persistent absence remain low.
- The leader for mathematics has ensured that the quality of teaching and learning across the school is good. Recent changes to the way mathematics is taught have been embedded effectively. The mathematics leader has ensured that staff have received good-quality professional development training, to enable them to deliver mathematics effectively. Teachers regularly have opportunities to share and observe good practice. This extends their skills and pupils make good progress in mathematics.
- The headteacher is the leader of English. In this role she has not been complacent. She recognised that, for several years, progress in writing had been lower than progress in reading and mathematics. She implemented a new system for the teaching of writing. Staff have received up-to-date training, ensuring greater consistency in the teaching of writing across the school. Many improvements in pupils' books, and internal assessments, indicate that pupils make good progress. It is too early to confirm the impact of these actions on performance in national assessments.
- Leaders for subjects other than English and mathematics are enthusiastic and keen to develop their roles further. Due to changes in the small number of teachers, most are new to leadership roles. Where leaders are new they are supported well by more experienced members of staff. Many teachers are responsible for more than one subject area. For example, the leader for physical education (PE) is also the leader for science. The leader for art is also the leader for design and technology (D&T). Subject leaders have spent time evaluating and redesigning the curriculum. They have created detailed plans that identify the development and progression of skills and knowledge. Leaders make careful checks on the quality of work in pupils' books. Leaders are keen to develop their roles further to help them better understand the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- Additional funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Leaders make regular checks on the quality of pupils' work. Where necessary, leaders work alongside partner agencies to provide additional support. As a result, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND make good progress.
- Additional funding for the promotion and development of PE and sport is used

effectively. Pupils benefit from a diverse range of experiences, for example wheelchair rugby and indoor athletics. Pupils experience regular teaching sessions from professional coaches. Staff liaise closely with several local high schools to utilise their facilities. Many school clubs provide pupils with opportunities to develop their skills further and engage in competitive events. The school has recently enjoyed successes in netball and football competitions.

- Leaders have ensured the curriculum is well planned so that pupils develop skills and knowledge progressively. Many trips and visits enrich the curriculum. Leaders have developed a core curriculum around providing outdoor experiences, many of which are linked closely to regular sessions of learning outdoors. Leaders are passionate about developing pupils' problem-solving skills; they want them to be creative thinkers. For example, pupils in key stage 2 receive regular chess lessons from a chess master to help them to plan ahead and think about the impact of decisions.
- The curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral and social understanding. For example, pupils have written their own code of conduct for the school. They engage in regular charity and fundraising events. The well-attended school choir regularly performs in the community. Pupils learn about a range of religions other than their own through their religious education curriculum. For example, older pupils recently visited the Anglican and Catholic cathedrals in Liverpool.
- Pupils' understanding of other cultures is not as well developed as other aspects of the curriculum. Leaders have put effective plans in place to address this; however, it is too early to judge the impact of their actions.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their views of the school and school leadership. They said that pupils are well cared for and safe. Most parents said that they would recommend the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors are aware of the strengths and priorities of the school. They hold school leaders to account effectively. They ask challenging questions about the performance of pupils. However, they do not ensure that the information they collect, including when they visit school, is relevant to addressing identified school priorities.
- Governors have ensured that additional funding is used effectively so that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are supported to make good progress. They are knowledgeable about how the additional funding for PE has been used to improve outcomes and experiences for pupils.
- Governors have ensured that they meet their statutory responsibilities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture. Staff have received up-to-date safeguarding basic awareness training. Staff have received training in the 'Prevent' duty, to help them spot potential signs of radicalisation.

- The headteacher and one member of the governing body are trained in safer recruitment. Members of staff are vigilant in their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Leaders have ensured that all checks have been made on the suitability of adults who work and volunteer in the school. The school site is secure. Parents report that they have no concerns about the safety of their children. Parents and leaders have worked together to create an unofficial one-way-system to access the school site on the small rural road where it is situated.
- Records of safeguarding concerns are detailed. Where necessary, leaders work with external agencies such as children’s social care to ensure that families receive relevant and appropriate support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Effective teaching, learning and assessment are securing good progress for all groups of pupils across the curriculum. Pupils’ behaviour in lessons is good and pupils said that they enjoy their learning.
- Teachers encourage pupils to do their best. Good standards of presentation are evident in pupils’ books. Pupils take pride in their learning.
- Effective relationships ensure that staff know the pupils well. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND receive tailored support to meet their needs. This enables them to play a full part in lessons and make good progress.
- The teaching of phonics is effective in securing good outcomes in reading for pupils in key stage 1. Accurate adult pronunciation of sounds and probing questioning ensure that pupils make strong progress. Staff make lessons fun and interactive, ensuring that pupils remain engaged and enthusiastic learners. For example, pupils in Year 1 enjoy playing games as part of their revision of earlier sounds and letters.
- Teachers apply highly effective strategies throughout the school to ensure that pupils engage in a wide range of reading activities. Pupils apply their knowledge of phonics well to their reading. Younger pupils have a range of strategies that they can use to help them read unfamiliar words.
- The teaching of writing has been recently redesigned. Teaching is now effective because teachers follow a consistent approach to teaching writing across all years. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their writing across a wide range of styles. This ensures teaching is effective, as teachers build on pupils’ prior learning. Sometimes, teachers do not use assessment information effectively and tasks fail to challenge the most able pupils to develop their writing in English lessons. Expectations of writing in other subjects across the curriculum are not consistently high enough.
- Teachers ensure that pupils accurately apply a range of punctuation, spelling patterns and grammatical features to their writing. Standards of handwriting and presentation are good.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. Teachers have benefited from training to help them plan and teach mathematics more effectively. Teachers encourage and challenge pupils to solve problems and work things out for themselves. As a result, pupils make good progress.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good across the curriculum. In science, teachers provide pupils with many opportunities to investigate and find things out for themselves. For example, pupils in Year 1 apply their prediction skills well to determine whether spring had arrived. When learning outdoors, teachers challenge pupils to take risks, use tools and to be innovative, creative thinkers. During the inspection, pupils in key stage 2 designed and built outdoor challenges for younger pupils. They applied their knowledge of construction, materials and aesthetics well while using different knots they had been previously taught.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy attending school. They treat one another with respect and follow adults' instructions with care.
- Leaders promote pupils' resilience and self-confidence through the challenges that they set for them. Many pupils enjoy taking on these extra challenges, which add further enrichment to the curriculum while encouraging them to try new things. For example, the youngest pupils were eager to cut up and taste unusual fruits, such as passion fruits and lychees.
- Pupils are aware of the need to stay fit and healthy and how this helps them to be better learners. They know what foods are healthy to eat and why exercise is important.
- Pupils have many opportunities to discuss their ideas. During regular group discussions, adults listen to pupils' views and act upon them. Pupils are currently considering how they can raise funds to further develop their playground.
- Pupils are aware of the need to stay safe. They are aware of the potential dangers of social media and online gaming. They know not to share their personal information with strangers. Pupils are aware of the dangers of traffic in their rural community and how to remain safe.
- Pupils have many opportunities to take on additional roles. For example, they can join the eco council, the safety council or the worship council. Older pupils lead games at playtimes for the younger pupils.
- Pupils have a developing understanding of equality and democracy. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The curriculum currently does not provide the pupils with enough opportunities to deepen and enrich their understanding of other cultures.
- Pupils enjoy the many trips and residential visits that enrich the curriculum. Year 2 pupils talked enthusiastically about their recent stay near a local forest. Pupils in Year 4 were keen to discuss the outdoor and adventure activity residential that they experienced earlier in the year.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils work and play together well. They conduct themselves around school in an exemplary fashion. Pupils are polite and courteous. They benefit from effective relationships with the staff.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and while at play. They cooperate happily with their peers; as a result, there is little disruption to learning.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the school behaviour policy. They said that the behaviour of other boys and girls was good. Pupils said that their teachers are fair and help them to overcome problems.
- Attendance remains a strength of the school. For several years, attendance has remained above the national average. Rates of persistent absence remain low.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Published performance information for pupils leaving key stage 2 indicates that pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress that pupils make in reading and mathematics has been stronger than the progress they make in writing for the past three years. Leaders took effective action and current assessment data and work in pupils' books indicate that current pupils are now making stronger gains in their writing. The difference between reading and writing outcomes is no longer apparent.
- Pupils leaving key stage 1 typically attain better at the expected standard than other pupils nationally. In 2018, the proportion of pupils attaining greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics was in line with other pupils nationally. Evidence in pupils' books shows that pupils in key stage 1 make good progress.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check has remained well above the national average for several years. Current pupils apply their knowledge of phonics well to their reading and writing.
- Pupils' writing in their books shows that they typically apply a wide range of skills to their writing. They are proficient in their application of grammar, punctuation and spelling. The older pupils write confidently about tsunamis and the First World War. They enjoy writing stories and engaging in exciting journalistic writing. Occasionally, the most able pupils are not challenged enough to make even stronger progress. This is also evident across subjects when writing tasks are not always hard enough to extend pupils' writing skills.
- Pupils have a genuine love of reading. They are skilled in reading a wide range of high-quality, diverse texts. For example, recent whole-school reading topics have been based on 'Oliver Twist'. Texts provide effective challenge and pupils, including the most able, make strong progress in reading.
- Progress in mathematics is good. Frequent revision of the basic skills of number ensures that pupils have a secure understanding of different methods of calculations. Pupils are confident in applying their skills to solve problems. Inspectors noted that the

most able pupils are challenged in mathematics and make strong progress.

- Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND make good progress across the curriculum. From looking at pupils' books and examining assessment information, it was evident that this small group of pupils are receiving a good standard of education.
- The curriculum extends pupils' skills and knowledge across different subjects. Much time is devoted to generating meaningful learning experiences, creating a depth of knowledge. For example, in science, skills are evident in pupils' books. The younger pupils label their diagrams and predict what might happen during their investigations. By the time they reach key stage 2, they plan and develop their own experiments.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop skills and knowledge in history, geography and art through rich and exciting topics. For example, when the whole school studied the story 'The Wind in the Willows', this led to creative construction in the school's outdoor area and high-quality painting and writing in key stage 2. Year 6 pupils consolidated their knowledge of the Victorians by engaging in a themed day at a Victorian mansion where they experienced first-hand what a day in the life of a Victorian child may have been like. Pupils leave key stage 2 prepared for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Good

- Effective leadership in the early years ensures that children make good progress. Most children leave the early years having secured a good level of development.
- Children are safe in the early years. The classroom and the outdoor learning area are attractive and ensure that children develop and explore, while managing their own risks.
- Information shows that children enter school with skills typical for their age. However, leaders have noticed that children recently have entered school with very low skills in mathematics. As a result, they have focused much of their efforts on making improvements in this area. Progress data indicates that children are now making good progress in mathematics, but it continues to lag behind the progress they make in reading and writing.
- Teaching is effective in developing children's understanding. For example, children name and identify the features of 2D and 3D shapes. Learning activities enable children to explore and deepen their understanding. Children use mathematical vocabulary with increasing confidence.
- The classroom is organised imaginatively to encourage curiosity and exploration. Children have many opportunities to develop their fine and gross motor skills through exciting activities. While threading beads on a string, children discuss colour, patterns and provide reasons for their choices.
- The curriculum is enhanced with many inspiring activities. For example, a local farmer recently brought new-born lambs to school for the children to meet and discuss.
- Children enjoy reading. The classroom is rich in print, various texts and prompts support their learning; children know where to find help to improve their writing. Colourful displays celebrate children's work and the stories they have been reading.

Children build successfully on their phonics lessons and a culture of reading is developed at an early age. Phonics lessons are fun and engaging. Children enjoy singing and saying rhymes to help them remember sounds and attempt to read new words.

- Children behave well in the early years. They share resources and cooperate happily with one another. Children typically concentrate on tasks with little distraction. Children are polite and curious learners.
- Adults in the early years patiently support and listen to children and direct them to further challenges as necessary.
- Leaders have ensured that parents are fully involved in the daily school life of the children. Parents are kept fully informed about the progress of their children through the work they send home. Parents are given a vast array of information so that they can help at home. Parents are regularly invited to contribute to their children's record of progress. Evidence of learning at home is encouraged and celebrated well by the staff.
- Children who leave the early years are well prepared to move into Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	140894
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10090537

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	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	165
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr John Ball
Headteacher	Miss Caroline Mander
Telephone number	01477 500362
Website	http://www.smallwood.cheshire.sch.uk
Email address	head@smallwood.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 December 2007

Information about this school

- This school converted to an academy since the previous inspection.
- The school remains a Church of England school, it was judged to be outstanding in its most recent section 48 religious education inspection in 2017.
- The headteacher and all teachers are new to post since the previous inspection.
- The school is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. Some of these observations were carried out alongside the headteacher.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in classes and around school. Inspectors listened to pupils read from key stage 1 and key stage 2. The lead inspector met with a group of eight pupils formally.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of both days. Inspectors considered the 56 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire and one email sent by a parent.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including the single central safeguarding record and records related to safeguarding concerns and qualifications.
- Inspectors examined the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan.
- The lead inspector met with seven members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders.

Inspection team

John Donald, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Linda Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

Suzanne Blay

Ofsted Inspector

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