

Inspection of good school: Springfield School

Springfield Road, Leek, Staffordshire ST13 6LQ

Inspection dates:

25–26 September 2019

Outcome

Springfield School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Parents and carers and pupils have lots of great things to say about Springfield School. Parents like the way teachers and leaders keep them up to date about what is happening day to day in school. One parent told us, 'This is a wonderful inclusive school with fantastic caring staff.' This view is shared by many other parents. Pupils have exceptionally positive relationships with their teachers. Pupils are particularly proud of their elected council. The council helps raise money for good causes and makes important decisions about school life.

Above all, this is a school where pupils are safe. Leaders have put in place effective behaviour management systems. Staff support pupils in a positive and consistent way. As a result, pupils behave very well and have no concerns about bullying. Pupils are also taught how to keep themselves healthy. They are proud of the vegetables they grow in the school's award-winning allotment area. Older pupils can also describe the importance of eating the right foods.

Staff feel very proud to work at the school and have high expectations of pupils. There is a happy atmosphere in the school and a real sense of teamwork.

Leaders know that they need to improve the teaching of reading and further develop the wider curriculum.

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

Over the past year, staff have begun to review the school's curriculum. This review has involved taking a fresh look at what is working well and what needs updating. Leaders have also been working with staff from their partner secondary school to plan improvements. Leaders' work is beginning to bring about a clearer sequence of learning.

This is particularly the case in the lower school. However, there is more work to do and some improvements are quite new.

In mathematics, pupils experience new topics in a logical order. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They plan activities that help pupils to understand and practise new concepts. Teachers also select the right resources to make learning practical and easy to understand.

Staff have redesigned the way they teach physical education (PE). They have adapted the curriculum to make it easier to develop pupils' skills. There are further changes for staff to make in this subject, but things are going in the right direction.

In some other subjects, such as history, geography and personal, social and health (PSH) education, there is not enough focus on what should be taught and why. Though teachers have topic overviews for all subjects, more thought needs to be given to the knowledge and skills pupils will learn over time. Pupils enjoy a wide range of trips and special events. However, leaders have not yet made it clear how these opportunities support and extend pupils' knowledge and skills in other subjects.

The school has begun to review the teaching of reading. For example, leaders have introduced tracking sheets so that they can keep a closer eye on the sounds that pupils are learning. Staff work hard to foster pupils' love of reading. However, the planned improvements to reading need to go further. Phonics has not been a strategic priority in the school's development plan. As a result, staff have not received enough training, and some teaching does not get going quickly enough at the start of the year. The structure and content of the phonics programme are not clear enough. These shortcomings in reading hamper pupils' ability to develop their reading confidence and accuracy.

Leaders place a sharp focus on pupils' welfare and well-being. Staff are passionate about the opportunities they create to get pupils active and learning outside. A chicken coop, recently donated to the school, has been painted and refurbished by staff. Everyone is looking forward to welcoming chickens to the school in the near future.

The school arranges plenty of extra activities for pupils at lunchtime. These include gardening, archery and a football club, which is led by Leek Town FC. Pupils love the football club and were keen to ask me which team I support.

Pupils' behaviour throughout the inspection was excellent. Pupils are keen to come to school because they are looked after and cared for by dedicated staff.

Leaders are professional and receptive. They have the experience and skills to address the shortcomings in the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a special welfare team to support families. The team looks out for any emerging concerns and someone is available at any time to meet with parents. The team works with a number of local agencies, such as the police and the children's disability team, to keep pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The teaching of reading has not had enough priority in the school's development plans. Leaders need to formalise their plans for developing this area further. This will improve practice and allow governors to keep track of improvements.
- The school's phonics programme lacks rigour. Leaders need to ensure that the content of the phonics programme has greater clarity and structure. This structure needs to be fully understood by all staff so that they are completely confident in delivering the programme.
- Staff have not had enough training in the teaching of phonics. Leaders should devise a more detailed programme of training for staff. Expertise should be shared so that teaching improves.
- Leaders have introduced a new system to ensure pupils' progress in phonics is checked more frequently. This system should now be carefully monitored by leaders and used to keep a closer eye on pupils' progress. Any pupil who falls behind the school's programme should receive extra support to catch up quickly.
- The teaching of phonics doesn't get going quickly enough in some classes at the start of the year. Leaders should ensure that phonics is taught at the earliest opportunity so that pupils can keep practising and gain greater fluency in their reading.
- Not enough thought has been given to the content and structure of some subjects. Leaders need to be clearer about the content they want pupils to learn and the order in which it will be taught. The curriculum should be adapted further to make sure it meets the needs of pupils.
- Enrichment activities, trips and events are well planned and enjoyed by pupils. However, the rationale for how some of these activities support and reinforce learning is unclear. Leaders need to consider more fully the knowledge and skills that pupils will acquire in all curriculum activities.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Springfield Community Special School, to be good on 5–6 February 2014.

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 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	143354
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10111721
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Elgar Glandfield
Executive headteacher	Christopher Best
Website	www.springfield.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Springfield School converted to become an academy in October 2016.
- The school is part of the Manor Hall Academy Trust.
- The school is a generic primary special school. Springfield provides provision for pupils with: autism spectrum disorder, severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, and complex needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the following senior staff: the chief executive officer of the trust, the executive headteacher, the head of school, the school business manager, and the leaders of English and mathematics.
- The following subjects were specifically considered as part of this inspection: reading, mathematics, PE and PSH education. To explore the effectiveness of these curriculum areas, inspectors: spoke to senior leaders to understand their aims and rationale for overall curriculum design; met with curriculum leaders to explore long- and medium-term thinking; visited lessons to see the curriculum in action and consider the activities

chosen by teachers; explored how leaders and pupils record their learning; and talked to teachers and pupils about their experience and understanding of the curriculum.

- The inspection of reading included a consideration of the following practice: how leaders prioritise the teaching of early reading; how the school fosters familiarity and interest in different books; the content and rigour of the phonics programme; the extent to which pupils' books match to the sounds that they know; how quickly phonics is taught at the start of the school year; how ongoing assessment is used to identify any pupils falling behind the programme; and how the school develops sufficient expertise in the teaching of phonics.
- To determine the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; met with the designated safeguarding lead to review how the school records information and makes decisions about any concerns; explored how the school takes account of the additional safeguarding challenges that can be faced by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); and talked to pupils and staff about safety and well-being.

Inspection team

Jonathan Keay, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jo Evans

Her Majesty's Inspector

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