

Inspection of Springfield School

Springfield Road, Leek, Staffordshire ST13 6LQ

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Expectations and ambition are high at Springfield School. The parents that gave their views were unanimously positive about the school. A new leadership team is driving improvements to what and how pupils learn.

Pupils have various special educational needs and/or disabilities that affect their day-to-day lives. However, staff and families work well together to provide the support pupils need to overcome barriers, whether these are academic, sensory, physical or medical.

Pupils' behaviour across the school is calm, settled and purposeful. They want to be in school, and they are keen to learn. When pupils struggle with behaviour, caring staff act quickly to provide the support they need. Consequently, this is a calm and purposeful place to learn.

Trips to museums, shops, fire stations and barge trips develop pupils' understanding of the local community. On-site swimming and exciting outdoor learning spaces enrich their learning. Residential trips help to provide an experience of the wider world while developing pupils' enthusiasm for outdoor activities.

Pupils have a varying understanding of what bullying is. However, they know adults will help them deal with it in all cases. Leaders and staff act swiftly to intervene if they think bullying might be happening.

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

Since the previous inspection, there have been several leadership changes. The new headteacher from September 2021 and the current acting headteachers have high expectations for the school and its pupils. These leaders' ambitions are fully supported by the multi-academy trust. Governors regularly visit to see how things are progressing. However, some governors do not understand enough about what the school is good at and what needs further improvements. This affects how well they can challenge leaders.

Pupils' needs are wide-ranging and include various speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). Most pupils communicate well with others and understand what is being asked of them. However, for some pupils with more complex SLCN, staff do not always use the right systems to help them communicate their needs and wants and express themselves. In other cases, some staff use too many words when talking to pupils, which confuses them and makes learning harder.

In subjects such as mathematics, physical education (PE) and science, staff set a high bar for what pupils should learn. For example, in science, some pupils were learning about how the human digestive system works, while in PE, some were learning to swim and be confident with water safety. Sometimes, such as in

mathematics, teachers carefully plan opportunities to practise these skills in other lessons. For example, the 'Springfield Pound' is a way that helps pupils apply their knowledge. Pupils earn tokens based on acts of kindness or understanding. Pupils are then encouraged to use their number skills to save tokens to buy things in the Springfield school shop. However, this type of practice is not consistent across all subjects and classes. Sometimes, teachers do not find out what pupils actually know and can do before they try to teach them new things. This makes it harder for pupils to learn new knowledge and skills.

Helping all pupils to read is now a top priority. Since the previous inspection, a new phonics and reading scheme has been put in place. All staff have been trained and are teaching phonics and reading from the first day pupils arrive. Staff regularly read to the pupils and, at times, use fancy dress or costume to act out characters from the books they read. Teachers are careful to ensure pupils can read and understand what they read.

In the early years, leaders know that parents bring a wealth of knowledge and understanding about their child's needs. Every attempt is made to understand and embrace this knowledge. Consequently, children get the right support from the very first days in school. From this starting point, caring staff use indoor and outdoor learning to develop early learning skills.

Leaders have carefully considered what it is like to be a child or young person growing up in Staffordshire. Consequently, local trips to the town centre, local museums or shops are prioritised. This means that pupils quickly learn about the area they grow up in. From this local knowledge, staff carefully consider how the wider world relates to Staffordshire. For example, pupils were proud to tell inspectors they recently laid flowers at an Elizabeth II memorial as she had been the Queen of the country they live in.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Through regular training, high expectations and robust communication systems, leaders have created a culture where children are safe. Consequently, families and pupils get the support they need to stay safe. When required, a highly skilled family support team provides support for families at school and home. Staff keep secure and detailed records relating to child protection.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Communication systems for pupils with profound and complex communication needs are not yet securely embedded across the school. Sometimes, staff do not demonstrate the training they have received when helping pupils access and use the systems to get their 'voice' across. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils have

access to and are consistently empowered to use the most appropriate communication system for that pupil.

- Some teachers have not ensured that pupils have securely learned, understood or embedded prior learning. This makes new knowledge harder to learn, understand and remember. Leaders need to ensure that they prioritise learning to fill these gaps and then provide opportunities for pupils to practise and apply these skills in a wide range of contexts.
- Some governors do not have a clear enough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the current provision at the school. While they know the unique nature of the school, they are not accurately aware of what the school is good at or in what areas further improvement is needed. This limits their ability to hold leaders to account. Those with responsibility for governance need to ensure that they have a strong understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school so they can effectively hold leaders to account for further improvement.

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

Unique reference number	143354
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10241073
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	65
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Alexander
Headteacher	Anna Latos and Helen Summers (Acting Headteachers)
Website	www.springfield.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 and 26 September 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- In September 2021, a new headteacher took up post at the school.
- At the time of this inspection, two acting headteachers at the school were providing maternity cover for the headteacher. They had taken up posts in September 2022. These two leaders have substantive roles as senior teachers at the school.
- The school has a federated governing body with Meadows Special School.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, physical education and science. In these subjects, they

visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils and staff about how these subjects were taught. Inspectors also looked at other subjects in less detail to check how they were planned and taught.

- Inspectors asked pupils, staff, leaders and local academy board members about safeguarding arrangements. They scrutinised the employment checks on school staff and looked at other school records. They also found out about health and safety procedures and routines.
- Inspectors observed informal times to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors also spoke to representatives from the multi-academy trust. Inspectors spoke to two school improvement partners.
- During the inspection, the inspectors had formal meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject teachers, governors, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally with parents, carers, escorts, drivers, pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.

Inspection team

Chris Pollitt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ellen Taylor

Ofsted Inspector

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