

Hamilton Infants' School

Barthomley Road, Birches Head, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST1 6NW

Inspection dates 1–2 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school. Select

- The school is led well by the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher. They review the work of the school thoroughly and frequently and have helped it to improve quickly.
- Governors know the school well and are very supportive. They challenge leaders and staff to improve teaching, behaviour and achievement.
- The quality of teaching has improved well and is good. Training and work with leaders from different schools and with other educational experts have contributed well to improving teaching and the checks made on pupils' progress.
- Teaching assistants work well to help pupils learn.
- Homework helps pupils to develop and use creative skills.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe. They play well together and appreciate the range of activities provided by play leaders staff and the school's sports coach.
- Attendance is improving well. Office staff and the school's Home School Link worker work well with parents to ensure that their children attend school.
- Pupils enjoy exploring what makes each other special and appreciating different cultures. They are prepared well for life in a culturally diverse Britain.
- Pupils are now achieving well in reading, writing and mathematics from their varied starting levels.
- Children get off to a good start in their early years at school. This is because staff work well together as a team and know the needs of the children well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not always form letters in writing confidently and correctly.
- Sometimes pupils are not able to read and understand what they have written.
- Pupils are not always clear about what they need to achieve in their work.
- Pupils are not always given suitable work to help them to consistently reach higher levels than expected for their age.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a range of lessons across all classes. The deputy headteacher joined four of the visits.
- Pupils' books were closely checked by inspectors.
- Inspectors took account of 29 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also looked at responses to a parental questionnaire recently carried out by the school and talked to parents on the school grounds.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils and inspectors spoke to pupils at breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors also held discussions with governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and school staff.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current progress, documents relating to the school's plans for improvement, its procedures for checking the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Clarice Nelson-Rowe, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jeremy Barnes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- There have been significant changes in staffing since the last inspection. None of the current teaching staff were at the school at the time of the previous inspection. An executive head teacher was appointed in January 2014 and a deputy headteacher was appointed in April 2014.
- The school is now part of a federation with another infants' school called Northwood Broom Community School. They started linking together in September in 2013, but became a hard federation (joined formally) in January 2014.
- A growing proportion of pupils joins the school later than the normal points of entry. Many of these have either previously not attended school at all or had brief experiences of a number of different schools.
- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school and most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium (disadvantaged pupils) is average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children that are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise achievement further by ensuring that pupils are:
 - able to form letters confidently and correctly when writing
 - able to read and understand what they have written
 - clear about what they need to do in lessons to achieve their targets
 - consistently given suitable work to help them reach higher levels than expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Staff morale is high and all members of the school staff are committed to ensuring high quality care of pupils and their good achievement.
- Leaders regularly observe lessons and look at information on how well pupils are learning. As a result, any weaknesses in teaching and achievement are spotted and addressed quickly.
- Plans for improvement are detailed and pay good attention to the needs of different groups of pupils. The school demonstrates good commitment to ensuring that all pupils succeed. Leaders have ensured that systems to check pupils' levels of skills when they start and leave their classes are now accurate. Regular testing and checking of pupils' work is also used to ensure that most pupils are reaching their challenging targets.
- The range of topics that pupils study has improved and motivates them to learn. This also relates to the local area, such as studying the pottery industries. Pupils are also encouraged to respect and appreciate difference. For example, during the inspection pupils were observed learning about 'It's Good To Be Me' with parents in classrooms. This included learning about how to appreciate differences between themselves and others, in terms of physical characteristics, character and religious faith. The written feedback from parents was overwhelmingly positive, including the enjoyment of learning about different cultures.
- Middle leaders are supported well. They receive effective support to drive improvements in their areas, such as through reviewing work, observing lessons and putting in place arrangements for the new curriculum. Those new to teaching are also very well supported. They value the challenge and caring support that they get from senior leaders in the school.
- The arrangements to check the performance of teachers are rigorous. Teachers are very aware of the high expectations of their work to help pupils improve. Leaders have ensured a significant increase in the proportion of good or better teaching in a short space of time and pupils' work reflects this.
- The new primary school sport funding extends the opportunities pupils have to be involved in sporting activities effectively. This includes a greater range of physical activities during lunchtime to improve their health. Swimming has now been introduced into Key Stage 1 and the school is now successfully running sports days again.
- Senior leaders and governors are aware that most parents are positive about the school's work. However, the school has made a number of changes that give cause for some concern for a minority of parents.
- For example, school security has been tightened up and this has resulted in some parents feeling that they do not have the free access to the building that they used to have to talk to teachers. The school has also recently introduced comparisons to national expectations in reporting to parents about their children's achievement. Some parents have not been happy about how well their children's achievement compares to the national picture. Homework is also now much more challenging and demanding of creativity; again this has caused some parental concerns. However, the school is working well to address the concerns of some parents, including inviting parents into lessons and workshops, to improve parental awareness of how the school is improving. The parents that inspectors spoke to valued these actions.
- The local authority has been successful in helping the school to arrest a dip in the quality of leadership, behaviour, teaching and achievement during a time of changes in teaching staff. They have encouraged good leadership between schools, including the improvement of links with the local junior school. As a result, pupils settle more quickly when they go on to the junior school. The junior and infant schools are now working better with each other to ensure greater accuracy in knowing the levels at which that pupils start and leave their schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have good understanding of where the school is and what it needs to do to improve. This is because they regularly visit the school and feed back clearly to each other on their findings. The range of training they have undertaken and skills that governors have are wide ranging. They use them well to help to improve the school. Governors have very good knowledge of how well the pupil premium is being used to improve the chances of disadvantaged children and they ensure that gaps between groups are being narrowed. They pay good attention to ensuring that pupils are kept safe. Governors ensure that the school's targets for improvement are linked closely to the headteacher's performance targets. They also ensure that any salary rises are linked closely to how well teachers have been performing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons, pupils are enthusiastic and keen to learn. Their books show rapidly improving pride in their work. Homework is now a strength and pupils complete it on time.
- Pupils also say that they generally behave well. However, they say that from time to time teachers have to deal firmly with some pupils who may get restless in lessons. Parents who responded to Parent View and those spoken to by inspectors agree that their children are happy and looked after well.
- Pupils dress smartly and are polite and friendly to visitors. Pupils work well together and are respectful towards each other.
- Pupils behave very well at breaks and lunchtimes. This is partly helped by the fun games that are laid on for them by well-trained play leaders, as well as the sports coach.
- Attendance is improving very well and for all groups of pupils. The school's Home School Link worker and office staff have worked very well in chasing up absences. Attendance rates were low in 2013 when compared to the national averages. However, in 2014 they improved to average and are now continuing to improve further.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school has recently improved security around the school.
- Pupils feel safe with adults in the school.
- Pupils say that the school deals well with any disagreements that they may have between each other.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different ways of how to keep safe, such as on the road and with adults they do not know. Their knowledge of Internet safety is developing well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Significant staffing changes have led to some inconsistencies in teaching and achievement in the past. However, teaching is now good.
- Teachers now have much higher expectations of what pupils can and need to achieve. Teachers capture pupils' interest and engage them well through the varied activities in lessons.
- Marking is improving. Teachers now accurately measure the level of pupils' skills. Pupils say they value the 'fix it' times they are given that help in understanding how to improve the quality of their work.
- Teaching assistants are effective. They are skilled in helping pupils to engage in lessons and in improving their skills, due to training that is provided for them and knowing the needs of pupils well.
- Homework is challenging and used well to develop pupils' creative skills across a range of subjects. For example, pupils are encouraged to use the outdoor environment to conduct surveys on birds and plants.
- There is strong focus of making sure that groups of pupils at similar levels or with similar needs are given good support and attention in lessons to ensure that they achieve well. Additional after-school support by teachers also help individual pupils to catch up quickly in their reading and writing skills.
- Sometimes teachers do not always check closely enough on how well pupils are doing or how well they understand what they need to do. For example, pupils do not always find that targets given in activities are always clear, so they become unsure of what to do. Sometimes work is not set at the right level. As a result, some pupils don't always attain higher levels than expected in their work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' work and school information on how well pupils are doing show that currently achievement is generally good and sometimes it is outstanding. This has been particularly the case since the forming of the federation. The schools sets high targets for pupils to reach and most pupils are on track to meet them.
- Most-able pupils are now generally achieving well. Evidence seen in pupils' work shows that they, as other groups of pupils in the school, are being pushed well to reach their targets. There is good attention paid to ensuring that there is challenging work in lessons and in homework. This is due to teachers improving their planning of lessons.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress and reach standards that are least in line with and sometimes

above those of others in the school and nationally. The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is now also improving well.

- Pupils' progress in reading is good. This is because the teaching of reading has improved, due to better training for teachers and teaching assistants. For example, in the national reading test for Year 1 in 2013, results were below the national average. However, the 2014 reading results were much closer to the national average, by over 25% for most pupils. Pupils enjoy reading books and talking about what they read. However, sometimes they lack confidence in understanding and reading back sentences they have written.
- Pupils' mathematical and writing skills are improving well too. Pupils enjoy the different resources they have to improve their number skills. However, pupils do not always form their letters correctly and confidently when writing words.
- Due to significant staffing changes and some weak teaching in the past, there have been inconsistencies in the accuracy of measuring the levels of children's skills when they start Nursery and in other classes throughout the school. This is now no longer the case. Inspection evidence shows that currently children join the school with skills that vary from year to year. In recent years, this has resulted in some fluctuation in standards at the end of Year 2. Pupils are prepared well for Year 1. Inspection evidence from observing learning, talking to pupils and scrutiny of their work, show that children make good progress and achieve well.

The early years provision

is good

- From their starting points, the progress that most groups of children make is good. This is also the case for those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, and for children for whom the school receives additional funding. This is because of good and outstanding teaching as well as the strong care that children receive.
- Good leadership of the early years ensures that staff work well as a team. All safeguarding policies and procedures are also carefully implemented.
- By the end of Reception children reach good levels of development that compare well with national percentages for different groups of children. They achieve well across all the key areas of learning, but particularly in terms of personal and social development and creative skills. This was very evident in observations by inspectors.
- Children work and play well together in both the well-organised inside and outside areas. Activities are well planned and help to promote good physical and emotional well-being. Staff are skilled at asking open-ended questions to encourage children to work things out for themselves and try to use their imagination.
- Parents are happy and feel well informed of how well their children are doing. They are satisfied with how quickly their children settle into the school. They feel that this has been helped by staff visiting parents to find out about their needs before they start.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	123994
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	448546

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	S Sodagar
Headteacher	S Moran
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2009
Telephone number	01782 234420
Fax number	01782 234421
Email address	hamilton@sgfl.org.uk

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