

# Silkmore Primary Academy

Exeter Street, Stafford, Staffordshire ST17 4EG

## Inspection dates

25–26 April 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Outstanding</b>
Early years provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher and trust leaders have a determination that pupils and staff will excel. A strong team of leaders and staff supports the headteacher in realising her vision. This has resulted in outstanding provision.
- Leaders and staff are ambitious for pupils and expect them to do well, which they do. Consistently high expectations have led to significant improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes over the past two years.
- The academy trust provides very strong leadership. Directors support and challenge the headteacher highly effectively and make a significant contribution to the development of the school.
- High-quality training and regular feedback to staff ensure that teaching across the school is consistently strong. Teachers' high expectations and creative approach to the curriculum contribute strongly to pupils' rapid progress. The teaching of phonics and reading is highly effective.
- Teachers make excellent use of assessment information to plan learning that matches pupils' needs closely. As a result, pupils in all year groups make substantial and sustained progress. Precise guidance helps pupils to improve continuously.
- Pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of key stages 1 and 2, a high proportion of pupils achieve the standards expected for their age and an increasing number exceed them.
- The rich and stimulating curriculum engages pupils extremely well in their learning. Carefully planned 'mini-adventures' deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of subjects. Leaders recognise that the assessment of pupils' skills in subjects other than English and mathematics needs further development.
- Children in the early years benefit from high-quality teaching. From low starting points, they make rapid gains in their learning. As a result, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is above the national average.
- Leaders and staff ensure that they meet the needs of all pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make strong progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Exemplary attitudes to learning contribute to the high standards pupils achieve. Pupils' attendance is improving rapidly, although the rate of absence remains above the national average.

## **Full report**

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

- Further develop the assessment of pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics, so that leaders and governors have an even better understanding of pupils' achievement across the curriculum.
- Continue to improve attendance so that all pupils can benefit from uninterrupted learning.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- The headteacher leads the school with passion and determination. She has extremely high expectations of pupils and staff and is uncompromising in her ambition for every pupil. The school's motto of 'Aim High' permeates all aspects of its work. As a result, pupils thrive and their achievements are outstanding.
- Leaders within the school and from the academy trust have established a culture of continual improvement. They analyse all aspects of the school's performance closely in their pursuit of excellence. Rigorous and high-quality monitoring ensures that every leader is well equipped to identify strengths and areas for further improvement within their areas of responsibility. Leaders proactively engage with external partners to quality assure the impact of their work.
- All staff benefit from high-quality training and support, which ensures that their skills and subject knowledge are strong. Teachers who are at an early stage in their career, and those who are new to the school, receive excellent support. More experienced staff are flourishing because of the excellent professional development opportunities they receive. They are highly enthusiastic and motivated to do their very best for pupils. Staff feel extremely well supported and morale is high.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching significantly over the past two years so that it is now outstanding. They make regular checks on the quality of teaching and provide teachers with comprehensive feedback to develop their practice. Staff review and debate their work constantly to ensure that it is the best it can be.
- The purposeful and highly engaging curriculum is a significant strength of the school. Exciting 'mini-adventures' capture pupils' interests and fuel their enjoyment of learning. Skilful planning ensures that teaching deepens pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in science, the humanities and the creative arts exceptionally well. High-quality opportunities to develop pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills abound. Consequently, pupils of all abilities make substantial and sustained progress across a wide range of subjects.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. Pupils are deeply thoughtful and reflective as a result. Staff thread British values throughout the curriculum and pupils demonstrate an exceptional understanding of how these apply to their own lives. Trips ensure that every pupil experiences, for example, a visit to a museum, a restaurant and a stay away from home during their time at the school.
- Leaders broaden pupils' awareness of different faiths and cultures through a range of stimulating experiences, such as a whole-school trip to a Sikh temple and the recent visit of a Buddhist monk. Through the involvement of parents and carers in some of these experiences, leaders extend the positive impact of their work beyond the school gates. As a result, there is a strong sense of community and pupils show understanding and respect for individual differences.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is highly effective. The special educational needs coordinator works closely with other

professionals to ensure that staff have the necessary expertise to meet the needs of this group of pupils successfully. As a result, well-trained staff provide high-quality support for pupils' specific learning, behaviour, and social and emotional needs. Leaders diligently monitor the impact of this support on pupils' progress and well-being. This carefully planned approach ensures that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress from their starting points.

- Leaders are highly skilled in identifying the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. They use the pupil premium funding exceptionally well to provide academic, social and emotional support for these pupils. Staff carefully consider pupils' individual needs and provide tailored support to ensure that they learn well and make excellent progress. Leaders regularly check that the support pupils receive is making a positive difference. As a result, disadvantaged pupils achieve at least as well as, and in many cases better than, their peers.
- Leaders use the physical education (PE) and sport premium funding effectively to employ specialist sports coaches. These coaches teach physical education and deliver a wide range of sports activities at lunchtimes and after school. This has notably increased pupils' participation in physical activity.
- Parents spoken to during the inspection expressed overwhelming support for the school. For example, they appreciate the support their children receive and the information staff provide about their children's learning and achievement. Parents recognise the significant improvements to the quality of education over the past two years and value the changes leaders and the academy trust have made.

### **Governance of the school**

- The board of trustees provides strong governance. It takes full accountability for the performance of the school.
- The regional director is knowledgeable and highly skilled. Termly progress meetings ensure that the regional board has a deep understanding of the school's priorities and progress towards achieving these. The regional director provides robust challenge and methodically holds leaders to account for school improvement.
- The recently formed local governing body knows the school well. It makes good use of training opportunities provided by the trust and is beginning to offer helpful support and challenge to leaders.
- The board of trustees and local governing body make regular checks to ensure that additional funding, including the pupil premium and sports premium, improves pupils' outcomes.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff receive regular training on all aspects of safeguarding and there is a high level of vigilance across the school. Meticulous records show the breadth of training that staff have undertaken and when this is due for renewal.
- All staff are knowledgeable about the potential risks pupils may face. They are confident in applying the school's policies to keep pupils safe. Staff know the signs that

might indicate a pupil is at risk of harm and understand how to make referrals should they have concerns.

- School and trust leaders work together very effectively to ensure that statutory requirements are met well. Trust staff make regular and helpful checks on the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. For example, they monitor the school's single central record each term to ensure that employment checks on all adults are up to date.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because teachers use their strong subject knowledge and creativity to deliver lessons that excite pupils and enable them to learn highly effectively. All staff have high expectations of pupils and talk passionately about there being 'no glass ceiling' to what pupils can achieve. Teachers have an accurate understanding of each pupil's needs and skilfully plan learning to ensure that pupils make excellent progress.
- Teachers' use of assessment is a notable strength. In every class, staff ensure that work precisely matches pupils' individual needs and builds on their prior learning. Each pupil's learning journey is different, based on teachers' incisive evaluation of pupils' understanding. Teachers provide consolidation or work that is more challenging to ensure that every pupil makes strong and secure progress from their different starting points. Leaders recognise that while this highly effective practice is embedded in reading, writing and mathematics, it needs further development in other subjects.
- Checks on pupils' progress are frequent. Teachers are quick to address any misconceptions and to identify where pupils need more challenge. Through the school's 'try it, fix it' strategy, staff provide pupils with clear and helpful guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils consistently respond to this feedback, which is very effective in supporting their learning.
- Teachers and learning support assistants use questioning very well to check pupils' understanding and deepen their thinking. Many questions challenge pupils to explain why they think things and provide examples. As a result, pupils are articulate and reflective.
- Highly effective teaching enables pupils to achieve well in phonics and reading. The approach to the teaching of phonics is systematic and rigorous. Adults model sounds accurately and expect pupils to mirror this. Leaders track pupils' progress precisely. As a result, younger pupils make excellent progress in the development of their phonics skills. They use their phonics knowledge very well to read unfamiliar words and to spell. Staff promote reading avidly throughout the school. Consequently, pupils thoroughly enjoy reading. They talk confidently about the types of books they enjoy and their favourite authors. Older pupils demonstrate a strong understanding of inference. Pupils make rapid progress in reading in all year groups.
- The teaching of writing is excellent. Teachers provide lively and purposeful opportunities to motivate pupils to want to write. As a result, pupils produce high-quality work, and an increasing number are working at the highest standard.

- Pupils have many opportunities to develop a strong understanding of key mathematical concepts, particularly those relating to number and calculation. A high level of challenge is evident and work in books shows that pupils apply their knowledge to solve mathematical problems very well. Teachers encourage pupils to use mathematical apparatus to aid their mathematical understanding very effectively. Consequently, pupils make excellent progress. A high proportion of pupils reach the standards expected for their age, and an increasing proportion exceed them.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are highly effective. These positive relationships contribute to pupils' exemplary behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and the strong progress they make.
- Pupils are keen to learn; they know that teachers have high expectations of them. As a result, pupils work exceptionally hard and productively across a wide range of subjects. Work in pupils' books shows careful attention to detail and neat presentation. Pupils are rightly proud of their work. Displays of pupils' work celebrate their achievements and support their learning. Leaders ensure that these displays are of a consistently high quality, reinforcing pupils' pride in themselves and their school.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. This is because staff share a strong commitment to supporting pupils' well-being. Leaders are determined to instil ambition in pupils and to broaden their horizons.
- Pupils are confident and motivated learners. They are proud of their school and of their achievements. Pupils speak very positively about the broad range of experiences they benefit from at school and about how staff challenge them to do their best. They have a well-developed understanding of what it means to be a successful learner.
- Strong curriculum provision ensures that pupils have an exceptional understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils learn how to make informed choices to avoid dangers. As a result, pupils are knowledgeable about ways to stay safe, for example when using the internet, crossing the road and playing in the local community.
- Pupils have a very good knowledge of different forms of bullying and understand the difference between bullying and falling out. They say that bullying at Silkmore is rare. Pupils are confident that if it happens, adults respond quickly and it is always resolved.
- Relationships across the school are excellent. Staff know pupils extremely well and are attentive to their different needs. They nurture pupils' confidence and emotional well-being successfully. Staff sensitively provide additional support for pupils who need extra help, for example in managing their feelings or behaviour. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are extremely positive.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe at school and that adults care for them well. Information on display around the school lets pupils know the key adults they can talk to if they are worried or upset. Pupils spoken to during the inspection readily identified that they had an adult they could go to if they needed help.

- The breakfast club enables pupils to start the day well. Pupils are able to engage in a variety of interesting activities and meet with their friends. A large number of pupils enjoy a wide range of after-school activities.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. This is because staff manage pupils' behaviour extremely well. Clear and high expectations, along with well-understood rewards and sanctions, support pupils to behave exceptionally well.
- Pupils' conduct is exemplary. They move around the school sensibly and calmly and are keen to meet staff's high expectations. There is a purposeful 'buzz' of learning throughout the school.
- Attitudes to learning are very positive and make a strong contribution to pupils' outstanding progress. Pupils listen attentively in lessons and are keen to answer questions. They respond quickly and quietly to teachers' instructions and move seamlessly from one lesson to another. Pupils take responsibility for their own learning. They apply themselves well to tasks and respond well to opportunities to improve their work.
- Pupils are courteous and polite. They learn and play happily together, showing respect and consideration for each other. At breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils take turns to share equipment. They use quiet areas well and enjoy reading and socialising with their friends.
- Staff are successful in meeting the needs of the small number of pupils who have difficulty in managing their own feelings and behaviour. High-quality adult support and skilled interventions enable these pupils to succeed. Leaders use exclusion where necessary, but only as a last resort, to help pupils understand what is expected of them in school.
- Leaders make expectations about pupils' attendance clear. They have implemented a range of strategies to improve pupils' attendance, including attendance 'clinics' and meetings with the headteacher. Leaders monitor attendance closely and are quick to identify when individual pupils' attendance declines. These actions have resulted in an increase in pupils' attendance rates, significantly so in the past two terms. Leaders continue to strive to improve attendance as they accept that it remains below the national average.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Outstanding

- Children enter the school with starting points that are below those typical for their age. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6, pupils achieve standards that are at least in line with, and sometimes better than, national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because of the outstanding progress pupils make in these subjects.
- In 2017, pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 was well above average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that current pupils are making similarly strong progress in all year groups.

- Pupils make excellent progress in phonics. The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been above the national average for the past two years. This means that pupils have a strong foundation to become successful readers.
- Work in books shows that pupils consistently develop strong knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects. The skilfully designed curriculum enables pupils to apply their learning well and make connections between their learning. Pupils continually practise and reinforce their skills in reading, writing and mathematics in a range of purposeful contexts. As a result, pupils' learning and understanding are consolidated and deepened extremely well.
- The proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are rising. In 2017, pupils' attainment at the expected standard was above national averages in reading and mathematics, and in line with the national average in writing. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard was above the national average in reading and broadly in line with the national average in writing and mathematics.
- In 2017, standards at the end of Year 2 were above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils working at greater depth was in line with national averages in reading and mathematics, and just below in writing.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is at least as good as, and sometimes better than, that of other pupils in the school and nationally. This is because leaders closely monitor these pupils' progress and identify their individual needs precisely. Consequently, these pupils receive exactly the right support to enable them to succeed.
- All pupils benefit from excellent support, including that provided by highly skilled teaching assistants. Leaders' close monitoring and carefully tailored additional support ensure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make very good progress from their low starting points.
- The most able pupils make strong and sustained progress. This is because teachers provide them with appropriately high levels of challenge. The school's assessment information and work in books show that more pupils in each year group are working at the higher standard in writing and mathematics than in previous years.

### Early years provision

### Outstanding

- Leadership of the early years is highly effective. The early years leader checks the quality of teaching regularly and supports staff to develop their practice. She has a precise understanding of the many strengths in the provision, as well as what could be even better. Staff have high expectations of what children can achieve and there is a continual drive for improvement. The provision is outstanding as a result.
- Children enter Nursery and pre-school with knowledge, skills and understanding that are below those typical for their age. Some children enter Reception at a similarly low level. From these low starting points, children make excellent progress. As a result, the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year has been above the national average for the past two years.



- Adults skilfully plan activities that are engaging and appeal to children's interests. The curriculum is rich and varied and immerses children in experiences that stimulate their imagination. Consequently, children are engrossed in their learning. For example, during the inspection, the very youngest children were enthralled while learning to play percussion instruments with a specialist musician. Children's excitement was evident when testing out their predictions of which objects would float or sink in the pre-school class. They observed intently when checking to see if George, the class duckling, would float.
- Leaders have identified that many children enter Nursery and Reception needing to develop their communication and language skills. To address this, adults take every opportunity to develop children's speaking and listening. They are very skilled in talking to children and continually model language to support children's vocabulary development. As a result, children make rapid progress in their acquisition of communication and language skills.
- The learning environment across early years is richly resourced and highly stimulating. Children benefit from a wide range of opportunities to explore and investigate, both indoors and outdoors. Adults use the outdoor area exceptionally well to develop children's reading, writing and number skills. Opportunities for children to read, write and count during their play are plentiful. Children relish these opportunities.
- Children learn and play very well together. They work collaboratively, sharing resources and taking turns. Through highly effective modelling by adults, children develop social skills rapidly and show maturity in their actions. For example, when one pre-school child was struggling to put an apron on, another child was quick to help, directing him to put his arms up so that she could place the apron over his head.
- Excellent use is made of precise assessments to plan learning that builds on what children know, understand and can do. Leaders monitor children's progress closely and adapt planning to maximise children's development. As a result, children make tremendous gains in the early years, particularly those who start in the school's Nursery and attend through to the end of the Reception Year.
- Clear routines, high expectations and strong relationships ensure that children's behaviour is exemplary. Children listen carefully to adults and respond quickly to instructions. They move sensibly and safely around the learning environment and speak politely to each other and to adults.
- Adults have recently begun to prepare children in the Reception class to move into Year 1. They have carefully considered the key knowledge and skills that children need to be able to make a flying start to the next stage of their education. Over the past term, adults have delivered a curriculum that has prepared children very well for their move into key stage 1.
- Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning. Initiatives such as 'Family Fridays' and the 'reading café' give parents the chance to work alongside their children in school. Parents are able to use the school's online system to look at examples of their children's learning, as well as sharing learning from home with staff. Parents engage well because of the very positive relationships that staff foster with them. Attendance at parents' evenings is high.

## School details

Unique reference number	142014
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10048363

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Graham Cole
Headteacher	Sarah Mills
Telephone number	01785 333930
Website	<a href="http://www.silkmoreacademy.co.uk">www.silkmoreacademy.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@silkmoreacademy.co.uk">office@silkmoreacademy.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Silkmore Primary Academy converted to become a sponsored academy in July 2015. It is part of the REAch2 multi-academy trust. The multi-academy trust is governed by a trust board who are accountable for all of the schools in the trust. Regional boards hold leaders to account for school performance. The local governing body makes checks at a school level and reports its findings back to the regional board.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs, or an education, health and care plan, is also below the national average.
- The early years comprises a Nursery class for two- and three-year-old children, a pre-school class for three- and four-year-olds, and a Reception class.

- There is one class in each year group from Year 1 to Year 6.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in parts of 15 lessons. Nine of these observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. One inspector visited the breakfast club and after-school club.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke formally with a group of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around the school.
- An inspector listened to a group of pupils read and talked to them about their reading.
- Inspectors extensively examined the quality of work in pupils' 'mini-adventure', mathematics and science books jointly with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and other school leaders. The lead inspector met with six school staff to gather their views on safeguarding, professional development and pupils' learning.
- The lead inspector met with the regional director for the REAch2 multi-academy trust. A meeting was also held with the chair of the local governing body and one local governing body member.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, information about current pupils' attainment and progress, records of checks made on the quality of teaching, records relating to safeguarding and attendance, minutes of meetings of the local governing body and information on the school's website.
- Inspectors took into consideration the 12 responses to Parent View. Inspectors also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors spoke to staff and took account of the views expressed in the 27 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Claire Jones, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Helen Morrison

Ofsted Inspector

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