

Knypersley First School

Newpool Road, Knypersley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST8 6NN

Inspection dates

14–15 March 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The quality of leadership at this school is excellent. The exceptional leadership provided by the executive headteacher has been a key driver in improving the school's performance and lifting its overall effectiveness to outstanding.
- Senior leaders and governors set high standards. They have created a climate where pupils enjoy learning, make the most of their abilities and thrive at school.
- Pupils make excellent progress and academic results at the end of Year 2 are usually well above national figures, although there was a slight dip in 2016. By the end of Year 4, pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their move up to middle school.
- The quality of teaching is consistently strong. Teachers and support staff learn from one another, are open to new ideas and constantly look for ways to improve what they do.
- Lessons run very smoothly. Pupils listen to their teachers and work hard. They value the many incentives that spur them on to do their best.
- Pupils have a say in how things are done at school and know that their opinions are listened to. In all situations, pupils behave well and show concern for others. Bullying or unkind behaviour are very rare.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school.
- The provision in early years is very strong. From the very start, children acquire effective learning behaviours that serve them well in the years ahead. Most children make excellent progress, although some of the most able could do even better.
- Safeguarding procedures are top notch. Everyone is up to date with requirements and understands their duty of care. Pupils are well cared for and feel safe in school.
- The school curriculum is exceptionally well organised. It is honed to pupils' interests and needs and is regularly enriched by trips, special events and memorable activities. Through the range of activities on offer, all are able to experience feelings of success and have a chance to shine.
- Productive partnerships with other schools enable staff to share and develop expertise.
- Governance is highly effective. Governors understand the importance of their strategic role. They have efficient routines for gathering and checking information about the school and are always thinking ahead. They bring a high level of informed rigour to their role, while also being mindful of everyone's welfare.
- Pupils are inspired at Knypersley First School. All do well, although the standard of pupils' handwriting varies significantly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build further on the strong early years provision by making sure that those children who start school already ahead of their peers make the same excellent progress as all the other children.
- Develop a more consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The executive headteacher provides superb leadership. She has overseen significant improvements at Knypersley First School and is a leading light in the local educational landscape. She exercises wise judgement, takes decisive action and is able to articulate her vision for education with inspirational confidence and authority. The local authority and other school leaders value the quality of her leadership and call upon her expertise. They are right to do so.
- Other leaders, too, are highly effective in their roles. The associate headteacher, assistant headteacher and subject leaders are well informed, ambitious and capable. They have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and work to ensure that everyone is challenged and supported to do their best. Lines of accountability are crystal clear and training for all is a regular expectation. All staff routinely observe others at work, in this school and in other schools, and there is a highly evaluative workplace culture. All staff, whether newly appointed or long-serving, are open to new ideas, welcome feedback about their work and are always thinking about ways to improve teaching and learning. This open-minded reflective approach means that effective practice is shared, encouraged and thrives.
- The school curriculum is full of rich colour and worthwhile experiences. Pupils have ample opportunity to take part in a range of activities, indoors and outside, to support learning in different subjects. The planning and organisation of the school curriculum allows pupils to exercise and develop the skills learned in one subject in another. This helps pupils to understand the relevance of the work they do and to develop a wide range of interests. Furthermore, the school has worked with the local middle school to make sure the curriculum on offer in the upper-key-stage-2 years follows on seamlessly from pupils' work in Years 3 and 4. This partnership working helps to ensure that no learning time is lost when pupils transfer to the next school. As such, pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their move up to middle school.
- Extra-curricular activities enrich learning. Clubs for sports or art, for example, are well attended and there is even a chance for parents to get involved. During this inspection, parents took part in an after-school club, with their children, to promote healthy lifestyles through sport. At other times, parents are invited into school to take part in workshops alongside their children or to find out about ways to support learning at home.
- Specific funds, such as the pupil premium, sports premium, and money to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are put to excellent use. Each year, spending is targeted at particular needs so provision is constantly evolving in response to the changing requirements in school. One constant, however, is the commitment to ongoing staff training and evaluative practice. For example, teachers benefit from working with expert sports teachers and all staff are involved in checking the impact of additional support and resources on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

- The values, care and behaviours promoted in school, coupled with the breadth of learning experience, enable all pupils to develop the qualities and skills they need for later life.

Governance of the school

- Governance is highly effective. Governors are extremely well informed about the school's work and performance. Not only do they receive regular and comprehensive reports from the school's leaders, but this information is presented in a way that requires governors to analyse it and then come to meetings prepared to share their observations and questions. This approach, and the frequent visits that governors make to school, ensures that governors have a detailed understanding of the school's current position. This helps them to make judgements about the school's work and plan future strategy.
- There is no doubt that this well-informed governance brings challenge and rigour. Governors expect the best and plan for ways to make this happen. They are ambitious for pupils to reach high academic standards but equally mindful of the importance of a balanced curriculum, decent values and the well-being of all in the school community. To this end, they regularly examine the breadth of pupils' school experience and gather feedback from staff and pupils about what it is like to work and learn at the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding procedures cannot be faulted. The school's routines, whether these be connected with site security, first-aid arrangements, medicines in school or checks on staff and visitors, all operate with extremely well-organised efficiency. Leaders routinely analyse information about playground bumps to make sure any common causes are identified and reduced.
- Safer recruitment checks are carried out as they should be and records are stored securely. All staff know exactly what to do should they have a concern about a child's safety because the procedures are regularly discussed at staff meetings and all the relevant guidance is up to date and readily available in the staff room. When staff have had cause to act on a concern, they have done so in the proper way. Records show that school staff have made sure that all the right information is shared with the right people at the right time. In all things, staff and governors put children's safety first.
- Governors and school leaders stay up to speed with current legislation and guidance and share information with parents. They have completed training under the 'Prevent' duty and are alert to the dangers of extreme views and other risks that pupils can face. Leaders and staff also make sure pupils learn how to manage everyday risks, such as using the internet or crossing the road, in a sensible and proportionate way.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- In all classes, pupils learn a lot. From the moment they enter school in the morning, not a moment is lost because pupils set to work straight away. Long-established routines and high expectations mean pupils settle quickly to their 'morning work'. This might be practising spellings or multiplication tables, following up work from the day before, or reading. Whatever it is, they settle to it without fuss and work with a high degree of independence and maturity. This sets the tone for the day ahead.
- A distinctive feature of teaching across the school is the attention to equipping pupils with effective learning behaviours. Teachers lead by example; they teach pupils to ask questions and search for answers and to not be afraid of making mistakes. Indeed, teachers seize upon mistakes as new learning opportunities. Consequently, pupils gain confidence in their abilities and push themselves to do their best. This self-confidence and interest in learning has prompted pupils to create their own top tips for learning. For example, pupil-made posters in classrooms and corridors remind everyone about the importance of determination and not giving up. It is clear that pupils follow this advice.
- Teachers and teaching assistants display an excellent understanding of how children learn. Regular high-quality training is provided for all adults involved in teaching and the benefits of this show in their work. Teaching builds pupils' conceptual understanding and all new work builds progressively and sequentially on earlier learning. In mathematics, for example, pupils have ready access to some excellent, often simple, resources that help them to understand the underlying concept behind whatever aspect is being taught. This attention to deep and secure understanding and the quality of teachers' explanations mean that pupils learn to spot patterns, generalise, reason and apply their knowledge to solve problems. As a result, their progress in mathematics is excellent. Similarly, in other subjects, pupils are inspired to think hard and to test out and develop their ideas. Simple prompts, such as a giant egg on the playground or a dinosaur day, fire pupils' imaginations and get them thinking, writing or building in creative ways with some impressive results.
- The use of assessment information is also a key strength. Through their careful questions and observations, teachers maintain a well-informed and up-to-date understanding of what pupils know and can do. They use this information to make sure pupils do not rush through work too quickly or are not held back when they are ready to move on. The use of bronze, silver and gold levels of challenge in classrooms also allows teachers to adjust the pitch of learning there and then. Work in pupils' books and inspectors' conversations with parents and pupils confirm that, on a day-to-day basis, pupils are given work at just the right level for their learning needs.
- Homework, too, plays its part. All pupils are expected to practise and consolidate skills at home and the school puts on a homework club for those who need a bit of extra encouragement.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils enjoy school and grow in confidence because of the care and attention they receive. Adults are excellent role models; they treat pupils with kindness while also setting high expectations. Courteous behaviour is the norm and there are lots of rewards to recognise and encourage thoughtful and caring attitudes. The lunchtime treasure chest, house points and special person of the week all serve to identify worthy qualities that help the school community to run smoothly.
- Pupils with particular talents or interests are encouraged to share these at school. During this inspection, for example, pupils who were learning to play a musical instrument were given a platform to perform during assembly and were met with applause. This recognition and encouragement of effort and commitment is typical and is evident in the numerous displays around school and comments from pupils and parents.
- Bullying or unkind behaviour are very rare. Upsets and fall-outs do happen from time to time but pupils are taught how to deal with such situations. They also know that an adult is always on hand to help or listen to any worries, if needs be.
- Around the school, there are worry boxes for pupils to raise concerns and the school council and eco-club give pupils a voice in shaping school policy. In fact, pupils have a very strong say in school life. They know that their ideas are valued and that their actions can bring about change for the better.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils attend regularly, arrive on time, look smart and are keen to learn.
- For the past two years, attendance at school has been above average. Unnecessary absence is rare. Any unexplained absence is followed up immediately and parents and pupils are given plenty of reminders about the link between regular attendance and achievement at school.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. In lessons, they are attentive and responsive and show respect for other people and their ideas. Outside on the playground, they get on well and enjoy one another's company. The range of activities available at breaktimes helps to maintain positive attitudes and behaviour. For instance, there is a wooden hut called the reading ranch where pupils who prefer a quiet space to read can go. It is staffed by 'reading rancher' pupils who ensure that the rules are followed, although the pupils on duty there during the inspection explained that it isn't a particularly demanding job as everyone is very respectful. For those wishing to follow more active pursuits, there is plenty of play equipment and the available space is organised well so as to minimise the risk of knocks and bumps.
- Whether inside or out, pupils have a say in setting the expectations and agreeing on how things should be done. The playground code of conduct has been written by

pupils. Playground leaders help out as needs be and the 'Knypersley Knights', clearly identifiable in their blue sweatshirts, act as champions of positive behaviour. For those who find it difficult to cope in some situations, there is a chill-out zone which provides a calm place.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils of all abilities make great progress at this school. Year after year, standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 have been well above national figures. Considering that many start school with a level of knowledge and skill below that typical for their age this is a commendable achievement. It is also worth noting that the proportions of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonic check each year have been consistently high. Furthermore, the vast majority of pupils are able to apply their reading skills in many different situations and learn to read with fluency and enjoyment. In the school library, a video screen shows short films made by pupils about books they have read. This is just one example of the extra thought and effort that goes into promoting an interest in reading and books.
- This excellent progress continues into the key stage 2 years and, by the time pupils reach the end of Year 4, they are exceptionally well prepared for life and learning at middle school. Inspectors' conversations with pupils, parents and staff, as well as the standards of work seen in pupils' books, revealed that pupils have the academic skills they need for learning in the years ahead. On top of this, they are equipped with resilience, curiosity and respect, qualities that will help them to make the most of future opportunities.
- Having said this, in 2016 when assessment arrangements changed, the proportion of pupils reaching the greater depth standard in writing and mathematics dropped below national figures. This was the first time in four years that any aspect of the school's Year 2 results had been below the national standard. Understandably, this inspection focused heavily on the reasons for this. This is what inspectors found: firstly, in some cases, the newness of the system led to some overly cautious judgements; in other cases, pupils' handwriting held them back. Inspectors checked current pupils' books, with a particular focus on the most able pupils. These checks found that standards for the most able are high and the school's assessment information is reliable. There is no doubt that a significant proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are on track to exceed age-related expectations by the end of key stage 1. Pupils' handwriting, however, remains an area where further improvements could still be made.
- Over time, disadvantaged pupils have done well at this school. Like other pupils, standards reached in national assessments up until 2015 tended to be above national figures. In 2016, most disadvantaged pupils reached the expected level for their age in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. The school's leaders are very alert to the progress of this group of pupils and target additional spending with care and attention. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils in all year groups get the support they need in order to make the best possible progress.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also do very well. While progress rates vary depending on individual circumstances, a watchful and attentive eye is kept on each and every pupil to make sure their needs are being met.
- Importantly, the school does not limit the measurement of pupils' achievement to academic success in just English and mathematics. While these core skills are important, school leaders recognise the need to provide opportunities for all to experience success in a wide range of subjects and activities. To this end, pupils' achievements in subjects such as music, science, art or sport are regularly noticed and applauded. Indeed, the corridor and classroom walls are bulging with examples of how pupils' efforts and successes in a range of different situations and subjects are celebrated.
- All achieve highly at this school.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Some children start in the school's nursery and some do not start until the Reception year, having gone to nursery elsewhere or not at all. In whichever case, a significant proportion start school with a level of knowledge and skill below that typical for their age. A lesser proportion start with skills in line with what would be considered typical. In all cases, however, children do well during their time in early years. So much so that, by the time they get to the end of the Reception year, the proportion reaching a good level of development is above the national figure.
- A check on the school's records and children's work found that those who start school behind their peers make excellent progress. In the vast majority of cases, children not only catch up to age-related expectations, but exceed them. There is no doubt that this is the result of the outstanding provision provided. Teaching is skilful and highly effective. Children are kept productively occupied by worthwhile activities and acquire excellent learning habits and behaviours that endure. All of this has come about as the result of clear-sighted and informed leadership.
- Even so, within this excellent provision there is still room for further improvement. A check on the progress of the most able children found that, in some cases, their progress was not quite as strong as that of others. This is not a cause for concern; these children are still doing well. However, on a few occasions they complete activities easily and are clearly capable of, and interested in, further challenge.
- Safety and welfare arrangements are managed with well-thought-out efficiency. Children feel secure at school but have the freedom to make choices and develop independent skills. Incentives such as 'have-a-go hero' stickers and regular praise and encouragement from staff build children's confidence and fuel feelings of success.
- The school's work to engage with parents is a notable strength. The quality of information provided is excellent. There are many opportunities for parents to come into school, to meet with staff and find out about school life and classroom learning.

School details

Unique reference number	124060
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10008833

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	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	330
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mrs Nicola Chell
Executive headteacher	Mrs Abigail Rourke
Telephone number	01782 297900
Website	www.knypersley.staffs.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@knypersley.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 November 2011

Information about this school

- Knypersley First School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school offers early years provision for nursery and reception-age children.
- The school is part of a federation which currently includes Knypersley First School, Kingsfield First School and Reginald Mitchell Primary School. The three schools are led by one executive headteacher.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups. The inspectors also examined pupils' work in books, and considered test and assessment information.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour, and the school's procedures, at the beginning and end of the school day, at lunch and break times, during assemblies and when pupils were moving about the school site and taking part in clubs and music lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, school leaders and governors. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a local authority officer and the headteacher of the nearby middle school.
- By the end of the inspection, there were 57 recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and 36 free text comments. There were 11 responses to the staff questionnaire and 57 responses to the pupil questionnaire. The inspectors noted these and also spoke with parents, pupils and staff during the inspection.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included: information about pupils' achievement, evaluations of the school's performance and numerous policy statements. Records relating to governance, staff performance management, training, the quality of teaching, external advice, behaviour, admissions, attendance, safety and safeguarding were also scrutinised. The school's website was also checked.

Inspection team

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Melanie Callaghan-Lewis	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Blackburn	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Smith	Ofsted Inspector

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