

Picknalls First School

Oldfields Road, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire ST14 7QL

Inspection dates 26–27 April 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and governors have sensibly steered the school through challenges, improved the quality of teaching and demonstrate good capacity to further develop the education provided.
- The positive ethos throughout the school has created a happy and cohesive learning community. Pupils, staff, governors and parents are very supportive of the headteacher and the upward direction of the school.
- The headteacher has taken decisive steps to ensure safeguarding is very robust. The school has improved considerably in this aspect of its work.
- Leaders and managers have an accurate self-evaluation of the school's strengths and those areas which need further development.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good because nearly all pupils are progressing well and achievement gaps between different groups of pupils are closing quickly.
- The early years provision is a strength as a result of effective leadership, high-quality teaching and children's good progress by the end of the foundation stage.
- Strong relationships exist between adults and pupils, leading to very positive attitudes, excellent conduct and mutual respect.
- The emphasis on social, moral, spiritual and cultural education effectively supports pupils' personal development and welfare. As a result, all pupils are well cared for, treated equally and their individual needs are carefully managed.
- Targeted government sports funding has been used very effectively and is having a significant impact on pupils' participation and success.
- Pupils are proud of their school, as they make good progress and are enthused by the redesigned curriculum. One pupil said to an inspector, 'we are a team who all help each other'.

The school is not yet outstanding because

- Leaders and managers do not always use a sharp, strategic analysis of the information they have available to them to further improve teaching and pupils' progress. Governors do not always have the information they need to act strategically.
- Pupils' achievement is not yet consistently strong across all year groups, as there is room to further improve teaching.
- Although whole-school attendance has improved, some pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium have too many absences.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring:
 - senior leaders use sharper analysis to evaluate which aspects of the school's provision are successful and change those that are not
 - good practice within the school is used effectively
 - governors are provided with information that enables them to act more strategically.

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of all groups of pupils, therefore enabling them to make the progress they are capable of
 - use leaders' analysis of provision to carefully target teaching resources and further improve pupils' outcomes.

- Further improve attendance by continuing to work closely with the small number of parents whose children have low attendance and those who qualify for the pupil premium in particular.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has taken rapid action to ensure safeguarding procedures are robust and the quality of education provided has improved. She has demonstrated strong, transparent leadership skills and responded quickly to external guidance, leading the school well through a challenging period. The headteacher and governors have a clear vision of how the school can further improve.
- Well-directed training, support and regular checks have been used to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. Better teaching in key stages 1 and 2 has led to improvements in pupils' current progress. Consequently, the vast majority of pupils are progressing well and previous gaps between different groups have nearly all closed.
- Senior leaders have clearly defined roles and support the headteacher well. They work closely with teachers and teaching assistants to deliver the school's priorities and close the gaps in the achievement of different groups of pupils. Further leadership skills are currently being developed to enable leaders and managers to offer further strategic support to the headteacher.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively. Additional teaching and teaching assistants focus well on improving reading, writing and mathematics for eligible pupils. As a result, the progress of these pupils has improved and there is no attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school.
- Parents are very supportive of the headteacher, their children's education and the improvements made to the school. The headteacher and governors set up a parent forum to discuss the actions the school was taking to ensure safeguarding procedures were robust and move the school forward. Leaders have shown strength and transparency by publishing the minutes of these meetings, along with improvement plans and external reports, on the school's website.
- Local authority support has been effective. Following the previous inspection, a safeguarding audit provided clear guidance to support improvements to the systems now in place. Subsequent visits from a local authority representative have helped to strengthen leadership and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders take an active role in the partnership work with a number of local schools. This includes curriculum development, transition arrangements to middle school and checks that teachers' assessments of pupils' work are accurate. As the assessment system here is now embedded and has been refined, leaders from Picknalls have helped lead the work to help local schools develop a shared assessment scheme.
- The school's well-designed curriculum provides a rich range of learning experiences. Pupils learn about equality of opportunity and democracy through the 'Connected Curriculum' and the school's highly inclusive approach to ensure all pupils, irrespective of ability or need, have equal access to learning. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular learning opportunities, including a highly regarded residential trip in Year 4. Assemblies provide good opportunities to tackle discrimination, promote equality and support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result of a range of experiences provided by the school, pupils have good knowledge of values, tolerance and respect, helping them to be well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils have good opportunities to develop a range of leadership skills. The school, sports and 'eco' councils are elected by pupils and have a clear voice in the school. As a result, pupils feel that they are listened to, develop their understanding of responsibility and learn about people less fortunate than themselves by fundraising for events such as 'Sport Relief'. Some pupils volunteer for the prestigious role of 'prefect'. Pupils are rightly proud of what they do and wear their badges with enormous pride. A pupil said to an inspector during a discussion, 'We are a kind, helping school.'
- Targeted government funding to improve pupils' participation and ability in sport has been used very effectively. For example, the school has used the funding to buy new equipment, for staff training and for specialised coaching for pupils in sports such as badminton and hockey. This has resulted in a significant increase in the proportion of pupils who have attended additional clubs and sports festivals, where the school has enjoyed recent success in hockey, cross-country and swimming, for example. The school's inclusive approach ensures all pupils are able to access physical education. Staff arrange a special activities day at a local sports centre for all those pupils who have not represented the school at sports. The sports leader has built high-quality links with a range of other schools and professional clubs. She also carefully evaluates the impact of sports provision, along with the longer-term sustainability of initiatives.
- Leaders regularly collect a range of information on pupils' progress and attainment but do not yet sharply

evaluate which aspects of the provision work well and those that do not. In addition, leaders do not yet enable staff to share good practice within the school effectively.

■ **The governance of the school**

- The governing body has supported the headteacher effectively to improve safeguarding arrangements, restore parents' confidence and help guide the school through a challenging time.
- Governors have a good understanding of how well the school is performing. They use detailed information to analyse the school's performance and ask challenging questions about pupils' achievement. However, governors do not always act strategically because they do not have all the information they need to hand. They have not evaluated their own effectiveness in this respect.
- Governors understand the targets that are set for teachers and how these are linked to teachers' pay progression. There is room to further develop this work so that targeted evaluations are used carefully to further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Governors have needed to make difficult decisions to manage the school's budget effectively. In the past, they have increased the number of teachers providing support to vulnerable pupils. This has resulted in rapid progress for these pupils, including those in receipt of the pupil premium and pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- Governors check on how the pupil premium and sports premium are used, and know the impact of the spending and the progress of eligible pupils through reports provided by leaders.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective, as a result of improvements made to procedures and checks ensuring that all adults in school are suitable to work with children. There is now a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Parents have been kept informed and are supportive of the improvements made to safeguarding. All statutory requirements are met and arrangements to support vulnerable pupils and families are very effective. Governors check that the single central record is kept up to date. Individual cases of concern are followed up thoroughly to ensure pupils are kept safe. Staff training is up to date and includes child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and preventing extremism in education.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The school's evaluation of the quality of teaching and its impact on learning is accurate. Teaching is now typically good across the school, as a result of focused training, effective use of teaching assistants and improved support for vulnerable pupils. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to motivate and interest all groups of pupils.
- All staff create a good climate for learning through positive attitudes, interesting lessons and effective questioning. This has resulted in pupils engaging in, and enjoying, their learning experiences at school.
- The assessment system used to check individual pupils' progress is well understood and shared with school leaders and teachers. As a result, teachers have a clear understanding of the progress required by individual pupils and organise adults well to provide additional pupil support.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective and is speeding up the rate of progress in this subject. As a result of effective teaching, pupils are able to use a range of strategies to solve number, shape and word problems. For example, Year 4 pupils were highly engaged in using a range of information to compare supermarket prices based on product value. As a result, these pupils developed their number and problem-solving skills using a real-life situation.
- Writing has been a focus for development and, as a result of good leadership and improved teaching, pupils are now making faster progress. Pupils start school with average skills in writing and communication. As a result of improved teaching and focused support, pupils have developed much better writing skills. Teaching is improving, so that pupils are now able to use a range of strategies to write well. For example, pupils in Year 1 eagerly followed a demonstration by the teacher and were able to improve their story openers, confidently using a range of punctuation, questions and conjunctions.
- The teaching of phonics is effective and has given pupils a solid foundation on which to develop good reading skills. Inspection evidence shows that pupils enjoy reading and read widely and often. Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check have improved their reading skills as a result of targeted support. Staff use opportune moments in lessons to reinforce pupils' phonics skills.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils and are well trained and deployed. They use detailed questioning, both in lessons and with small groups, to maintain pupils' concentration and challenge them to deepen their thinking.

- Current assessment information and work in pupils' books demonstrate good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This supports the school's view that previous gaps in attainment between groups of pupils have now nearly all closed. However, there is room to improve on the organisation of support for the most able and the least able pupils during some lessons.
- Parents are invited to a range of information and shared learning sessions with their children in school. This results in better parental understanding of how their children are taught and improved adult skills to support pupils at home.
- Teachers plan well to meet the differing needs of pupils. Lessons typically challenge pupils appropriately and make good use of resources. In a small number of lessons, the expectations of the most and least able pupils are not consistently high enough to enable them to make the progress they are capable of.
- Teachers' marking typically follows the school's policy and leads to improved work, but not always consistently. Leaders agreed that this aspect of teaching is still developing; there is still some work needed to ensure the use of marking and feedback is consistent with the school policy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils at Picknalls are confident and energetic learners. They enjoy coming to school and experiencing the exciting and broad curriculum on offer.
- They are keen to tell visitors about what they do and how they make progress. Their impeccable manners are a real strength; asking one another how they are and offering gratitude comes naturally to them.
- The school works hard to develop an environment where children can extend their learning beyond the national curriculum. Children have recently redesigned the growing area and are very proud of the school greenhouse.
- Leaders promote pupils' confidence, physical and emotional well-being and ensure pupils are given time to discuss sensitive topics. Consequently, pupils have good self-awareness and confidently try out new learning opportunities and challenges.
- Parents are very supportive of the school's actions to support pupils' personal development and welfare. For example, one parent explained how pleased she is that the school recognised in Nursery that her child needed help with motor control. The parent was kept informed, health professionals liaised with and appropriate support in school put in place.
- Leaders ensure pupils have equal access to the curriculum. For example, staff check appropriate adaptations are made for pupils who have special educational needs or disability to fully participate in swimming lessons and all school activities, including external sports festivals.
- Nearly all parents say their children are happy at school and well looked after. Parents have confidence in the school to meet their child's educational, personal and welfare needs.
- Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves and others safe. For example, they are knowledgeable about the dangers associated with the internet. Pupils say they feel safe in school because adults are there to help them if needed. Risk assessments are robust and detail any measures that may need to be taken to make an event or visit as safe as possible.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their conduct in lessons is very good and they show great respect towards both adults and each other. Pupils play actively and happily at playtimes and younger children are helped at lunchtimes by older 'prefects'.
- Picknalls is a happy and calm place to learn. Children wear broad smiles and are quick to say hello and ask your name. All pupils have good attitudes around the school and during smooth transitions between classes.
- Staff promote good behaviour and manage pupils' needs well. Consequently, lessons run smoothly and are not disrupted. Staff and parents are very positive about the management of behaviour in the school.
- Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their school's rewards and sanctions. They love sharing their learning with the headteacher and look forward to receiving recognition of their efforts.
- Pupils enjoy lessons and respond well to adults' questions and prompts. They move sensibly between activities in lessons and work thoughtfully during group work, carefully considering each other's views.

- Pupils are well informed of different types of bullying and say it is not a problem here. If anything does go wrong, problems are dealt with quickly and do not worry them.
- The school analyses behaviour logs carefully. Checks show that there has been one exclusion in the last three years.
- Attendance rates are currently above the national average and have improved since the last inspection, especially for those pupils who were persistently absent. However, the attendance of some disadvantaged pupils is below that of other pupils and it is not improving. Leaders are aware that further work is needed to ensure this group of pupils is not further disadvantaged by missing too much school.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' achievement has improved for most groups over the last three years. By the end of Year 2, pupils typically achieve in line with or above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, nearly all pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education when they move to middle school.
- Pupils now make faster progress in Years 3 and 4 due to better teaching. While there are no national tests to compare with, inspectors judge that Year 4 pupils are typically working at or above age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school places a high importance on reading and, as a result, pupils read well. The daily teaching of phonics has resulted in improved teaching and pupils' achievement in this area. Consequently, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected level in the Year 1 phonics check has been above the national average for the last two years. In particular, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the expected standard was in line with other pupils in the school in 2015 and above other pupils nationally.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is effective. Staff ensure these pupils have equal access to the curriculum, they are fully included and both their learning and their physical needs are met. Good-quality support and effective programmes have resulted in faster progress and increasing achievement for this group of pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve in line with other pupils in the school and those nationally. The focused additional support given to these pupils has almost removed the attainment gap between them and other pupils in the school. However, due to the small numbers of disadvantaged pupils in the school, it is difficult to draw meaningful comparisons. By the end of Year 2 in 2015, disadvantaged pupils were, on average, one term behind other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's current assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils are progressing in line with or above that of other pupils in the school.
- The achievement of the most able pupils is overall in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. There was a dip in the achievement of the most able pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2015, especially in mathematics. A comparison of the proportion of the most able disadvantaged pupils who achieved in line with those nationally is not possible due to the very small numbers in this group. Inspection evidence and the school's current assessment information suggest that the challenge for the most able is now greater in some classes and more focused on enabling this group of pupils to reach their potential.
- There was a slight dip in boys' achievement at the end of Year 2 in 2015, especially in writing. The school's current assessment information shows that boys' progress is in line with or above that of girls in reading, writing and mathematics. Therefore, the gap between boys' and girls' achievement is closing rapidly.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is well led and managed. Staff systematically track how children improve their skills through play and modify activities according to children's needs. The classrooms and outdoor learning areas are very well equipped, giving children access to a range of learning activities to develop their skills.
- The majority of children start in the Nursery and Reception classes with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. The skills in reading, number and space, shape and measurement of some children are slightly below those typical for their age. Adults provide well-directed support for weaker areas of learning. They encourage children's independence right from the start.

- Leaders ensure pupil premium funding for the very few disadvantaged children in early years is used effectively. These children are progressing in line with the other children in early years. The picture at the end of Reception suggests a similar pattern, with disadvantaged children achieving in line with others in the school and above other children nationally in 2015.
- Children's positive attitudes are promoted well because the learning environments engage and interest them. Adults provide purposeful and exciting activities which are well matched to the children's needs and interests. Teachers have responded well to recent advice to provide additional challenge to the most able children sooner. Examples of this were seen during the inspection when these children completed additional writing challenges following on from a lesson earlier in the day.
- Teachers promote early reading skills through high-quality daily phonics sessions. Children's active participation helps to develop their enjoyment in learning letters and the sounds they make. Staff work closely together to ensure all classes are focused on developing reading and number skills. Writing is also promoted well, through stimulating teaching and the effective use of resources.
- Children behave and cooperate very well as a result of good-quality provision and high expectations. They adapt well to new routines and respond positively to class systems. Whether playing indoors or outdoors, children are happy and behave in ways that keep them safe.
- Staff promote equality and celebrate diversity. They make good use of opportunities to help children learn about the different cultures in the school. For example, the children learned an Indian dance and sometimes say the register in Afrikaans.
- Parents are encouraged to play an active role in their child's learning through maintaining good communication with the school and regularly contributing to their child's 'learning journey'. Parents are very supportive of the school's work in early years. When interviewed by an inspector, one parent said, 'School is amazing. It is like dropping my child off at another home. They are so settled and happy.'
- Well-focused leadership, teaching and support enable children to make good progress in the early years and leave with skills typically above the national average. Consequently, nearly all children are very well prepared for Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	124142
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10006884

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 and nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	299
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Johnson
Principal	Anne Tapp
Telephone number	01889 256416
Website	www.picknalls.staffs.sch.uk
Email address	office@picknalls.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 June 2015

Information about this school

- Picknalls First School is slightly larger than most primary schools.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is much lower than other schools nationally.
- Approximately one in ten pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding, which is well below the national average. Pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible to receive free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Children in the Reception classes attend full time.
- Children in the Nursery class attend part time.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 20 lessons or part-lessons, including examples of teaching in every year group. Some of these teaching observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority who works with the school.
- The inspection team looked at pupils' books in a range of subjects to establish the progress and quality of their work over time.
- The inspection team talked with a group of pupils as well as individual pupils during their lessons and at playtimes to find out their views about the school.
- The inspection team heard pupils read and observed their behaviour in lessons, around the school and at playtimes.
- Informal discussions were held with parents to gauge their views of the school. The inspection team took account of 33 recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) during the inspection and the school's own recent parental questionnaire.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's plans for improvement, external monitoring reports, records of checks made by leaders and information on pupils' progress and outcomes. They also scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

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