

Dove Bank Primary School

Off Rutland Road, Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST7 4AP

Inspection dates

28–29 November 2017

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are strong leaders. Governors, leaders and staff have maintained a good standard of education and good teaching since the previous inspection.
- Leaders and governors have done a great deal to bring about stability to staffing in recent years. This has resulted in good improvements to pupils' progress and teaching. More can now be done to improve the way teachers assess pupils' learning in lessons and the challenges they plan for them.
- Good early years provision has been maintained. Children in the early years, including the two- and three-year-olds in the Nursery unit, achieve well. Reception children are well prepared for their education in Year 1.
- The teaching of reading and phonics is very effective. Pupils make good progress in reading but there are inconsistencies in the way spelling is taught. As a result, pupils make relatively slower progress in writing compared with reading. Although improving, standards could be higher in writing.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics. Increasingly more pupils reach high standards. However, there is still scope for more pupils to study mathematics in greater depth and achieve higher standards.
- The school's curriculum and enrichment activities make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are energised by the subjects and topics they study and enjoy the many activities and visits provided.
- Pupils feel safe and secure. There are positive and trusting relationships between pupils and staff. Teachers and support staff are very committed to pupils' care and well-being.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress. The welfare, support and interventions for these pupils are very effective. Staff are committed to this aspect of the school's work.
- Pupil premium funding is being used well to support learning for disadvantaged pupils. These pupils achieve as well as others across the school and attainment gaps between them and other pupils are closing.
- Pupils who are in the early stages of learning English make good progress and are given effective support in lessons and at other times.
- Pupils are well behaved, courteous and respectful of other pupils and adults. Pupils' enjoyment of school is also reflected in high attendance rates.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue focusing on improving teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - making sure that, in all classes, teachers plan more challenging tasks specifically for pupils who have the potential to exceed age-related standards
 - assessing during lessons how well pupils understand their learning, as well as identifying gaps or misunderstandings that can be addressed with more support and intervention
 - making sure that teachers ask more challenging questions in lessons, rather than going over too much work already learned, to help pupils think harder and deeper about their learning.
- Sustain improvements to pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - using more consistent and effective methods to teach pupils how best to improve their spelling when writing independently
 - incorporate more opportunities for pupils to extend and improve their use of vocabulary when reading and writing
 - improving pupils' mathematical reasoning skills and planning more challenging tasks that aim to help pupils learn in greater depth.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection in 2013, there have been many changes to staffing. In addition, leaders and governors have adapted to the demands of a new national curriculum and its associated assessment procedures. The high turnover of teachers contributed towards a dip in some pupils' performance in the national assessments for Years 2 and 6 in 2016. The headteacher and governors remained resolute and determined throughout this period of instability to reverse this brief trend of decline. The most recent improvements evidenced in the provisional national assessment results in 2017, as well as current progress and standards across the school, show that the school is back on an even keel and has recovered well.
- Governors have recruited effective leaders and teachers. In addition, the appointment of a permanent deputy headteacher a year ago has brought the necessary stability that has been welcomed by the school community. This is also reflected in the views of parents who, rightly, believe that leaders, governors and staff are serving their children well, both academically and in securing their personal development and well-being.
- The headteacher's strong leadership of teaching, training and staff development, together with effective oversight and management demonstrated by senior staff, are keeping the school on a sustained course of improvement. Staff morale is high and is reflected in the positive responses from staff in the inspection questionnaire and during meetings with inspectors. The school demonstrates good capacity to secure further improvement.
- Senior leaders and staff with management responsibilities monitor and undertake accurate evaluations of teaching and pupils' achievements. They provide effective support and guidance to staff through well-devised training. There are good opportunities for leaders and staff to see and share best practice with other staff across the Newcastle Cooperative Learning Trust and other school partners in the local area.
- Where action is needed to improve or develop the skills of teachers, leaders provide effective performance management measures to check and scrutinise improvement. There is good-quality support and oversight of the performance of newly qualified teachers.
- The coordination and management of SEN provision is very effective. Support staff are being deployed very well. They provide timely interventions and individualised or group support for pupils who are working below age-related expectations or who have additional learning needs.
- School improvement planning and actions taken to improve pupil outcomes have been effective. For example, leaders' analysis of assessments, combined with regular pupil progress reviews with teachers, help to identify pupils at risk of falling behind. Appropriate interventions and additional support are then planned to help pupils catch up.
- Many of the actions set out in the school's improvement plan and subject action plans help to guide leaders' monitoring activities. Although the actions taken help to improve

teaching, some of the actions in leaders' plans do not focus sufficiently on improving pupils' outcomes. This is a relatively minor weakness in the plans themselves and leaders are already reviewing this to ensure that they focus on raising still further standards and achievement in writing and mathematics.

- Additional funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium is targeted well at those that need to catch up. The difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others is narrowing across the school. Funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used very effectively. Support for these pupils is tailored well to meet their specific learning needs, including for pupils who have more severe or acute needs.
- The school's curriculum is stimulating, varied and excites pupils. The staff plan a programme of inspiring themes and topics that sit alongside subjects of the national curriculum, including the creative arts, such as music and fine arts. The school is successful in promoting a strong emphasis on tolerance and equality, which prepares pupils well for life in a modern democratic Britain.
- The staff make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This results in mainly good behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons. There are very good opportunities for pupils to learn about other faiths, customs and traditions through religious education, the arts, music and themed topics, projects and educational visits. The close links with the Royal Shakespeare Company enable pupils to visit Stratford-upon-Avon's theatres and to perform plays such as last year's performance of 'Hamlet' by Year 6 pupils.
- Leaders and governors make good use of additional funding and effectively monitor its impact. The primary school physical education (PE) and sport premium is used exceptionally well to provide a range of opportunities and resources for pupils to engage in team games, sports and activities that promote healthy and active lifestyles.
- The external support commissioned by the local authority has been effective. This includes visits by consultants and advisers which focus on specific areas, such as improving pupils' writing and helping governors to sharpen their monitoring activities. The headteacher is very keen to work with other schools beyond the Newcastle Cooperative Learning Trust and has established productive working relationships with some local schools. These have the potential for further improvement as staff have increasing opportunities to see and share best practice.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed and they support the work of the school well. The governing body has recruited leaders and staff intelligently in recent years to maintain a good quality of education.
- Governors are generous with their time and visit the school regularly. They provide effective oversight and direction for the school.
- Governors have been diligent and effective in recruiting staff and work with the school's leadership team to develop and continually improve the performance and effectiveness of teachers and support staff.

- Governors have a good understanding of assessment information, enabling them to challenge underperformance. They are fully aware of the improvements and priorities reported to them, including the way teachers and support staff are reducing the differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally who are not disadvantaged.
- Nominated governors are linked to subjects and other aspects of the school's work. They exercise effective oversight of pupil premium funding, additional funding for special educational needs provision and the primary school PE and sport premium.
- Members of the governing body are recruiting further expertise to fill vacancies and have the necessary experience and skills to ensure that the school sustains improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective, robust and fit for purpose. There is a vigilant culture of safeguarding and all leaders, staff and governors regard making sure that pupils are happy and safe in school as a high priority.
- Teachers and support and administrative staff are well trained. Both governors and staff keep up to date with legal requirements and undertake regular reviews of the school's child protection and safeguarding policies. The safety and well-being of children in the early years settings are well managed. The early years welfare requirements are fully met.
- Pupils and the parents spoken with by inspectors were unanimous in their belief that pupils are safe in school. Pupils say that the staff and other pupils make them feel very safe, valued and secure. Risk assessments of all indoor and outdoor activities are systematic and inform staff about the necessary precautions to take, including supervision and transport arrangements when off-site.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Lesson observations and pupils' work in books show that pupils are expected to do their best. Teachers usually set high expectations in lessons for both behaviour and learning. A typical comment was, 'We are expected to try hard and never give up.' Pupils are right. The teaching is helping pupils to achieve well, including those eligible for additional pupil premium funding and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Teachers and support staff provide a good balance of whole-class teaching and targeted support for pupils. Pupil groupings and specialised intervention programmes have been carefully tailored to meet the needs of pupils who need to catch up. Assessment information shows that most pupils are making good progress and, increasingly, many reach ambitious learning targets.
- The teaching of early reading and phonics in key stage 1 is very effective and lays strong foundations for pupils' development and interests in reading in key stage 2. Teachers are very good at improving pupils' speaking and listening skills from an early age. This is particularly helpful for the small number of pupils who are in the early stages of learning English. Opportunities to read a wide range of books and to read

aloud to others improves pupils' knowledge of letter sounds and words as well as extending their vocabulary.

- Pupils of similar abilities and starting points on entry are identified in the school's assessments, but teachers are not planning enough challenge for some pupils who have the potential to exceed age-related standards. Workbooks and lesson observations show that there are instances when the most able pupils are doing too much work to consolidate their knowledge and understanding rather than extending learning through more demanding tasks. This is particularly the case in some mathematics lessons.
- The assessment system used by leaders to check pupils' progress is accurate and assessment information is accessible to staff and governors. This is helping to identify and target pupils early who may be at risk of underachieving. This enables leaders to plan timely interventions and accelerate pupils' progress. There is scope now to focus on assessing pupils' outcomes earlier, for example in the early years and key stage 1, in order to identify the most capable pupils. The reason for this is that some pupils who have the potential to reach high standards fall short of their expected targets in key stage 2, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils in all year groups in key stage 2 are provided with recommended reading lists. In addition, the school's strong focus on curriculum enrichment through stimulating topics, the creative arts, drama and literature improves pupils' love of reading and confidence in speaking and listening. This is particularly helpful as many pupils join the school with limited vocabulary.
- There is scope now to build on these curriculum strengths so that teachers and support staff focus more on further extending pupils' use of vocabulary and improving the accuracy of pupils' spelling. Currently, the teaching of spelling is inconsistent and results in many pupils making unnecessary or repeated spelling errors when writing independently. The best practice seen in lessons improves pupils' spelling because teachers intervene while pupils write. However, this is not consistent practice in all classes yet.
- There is good evidence that pupils' writing is improving. For example, pupils write well about a range of stimulating topics, such as Tudor England, the two World Wars and life in Victorian Britain. The work that is displayed demonstrates that the form and structure of pupils' writing improves well over time. Work in books shows that pupils gain confidence in writing extended stories, poems and factual accounts independently as they move up the school from key stage 1 through to key stage 2.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- 'Our teachers make learning fun', 'It is easy to make friends at this school,' 'Teachers are really helpful and if you are worried, you can always find a friend or adult to talk to', were some of many comments made by pupils. Pupils have excellent opportunities

to contribute to their school community. School councillors, librarians and play buddies all contribute to a harmonious and positive school community.

- Pupils respond well to the excellent opportunities they have to study special topics, engage in creative art and craft or take part in visits to places of interest. For example, older pupils participated in adventurous activities during residential visits. The range of activities and special themes studied by pupils enable them to improve their personal and social skills. As a result, they develop into mature and sensible young people who are ready for the next stage of their education and adulthood.
- Pupils who have social, emotional or mental health needs are nurtured and cared for well. They feel safe and secure in school and adults engage with these pupils and monitor how well they settle and achieve in school. There are positive relationships between all pupils and staff, so pupils know they can trust anyone. Classroom 'worry boxes' are there, pupils say, because they sometimes want to say something personal and can write these concerns to post in the box knowing that the class teacher will help and respond. Nearly all the parents that inspectors spoke with confirmed that the staff are very caring and approachable. Parents feel very confident in the nurture and welfare provided for their children.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to learn about other faiths, customs and traditions through religious education, the arts, music, themed topics, projects and educational visits. The school is successful in promoting British values of respect for law and democracy and a strong emphasis on tolerance and equality, which prepares pupils well for life in a modern democratic Britain. These opportunities make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet or mobile technology. During the inspection, pupils were able to explain the precautions they need to take when using computers, including the use of online messaging sites. Pupils say that bullying is rare. Pupils confirmed that the few incidents, like name-calling or teasing, are dealt with very well by leaders, teachers and support staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In nearly all of the lessons observed, inspectors found pupils to be attentive and well behaved. Pupils are keen to learn and do their best. They cooperate well when working in groups or with a partner, and usually demonstrate resilience and perseverance. Some stray off task if the work is undemanding or when it is not clear how much work they need to complete in the allotted time.
- Pupils are trusted to take on responsibilities, such as ambassadors, monitors, librarians or when reading to younger pupils during guided reading sessions or special projects. School councillors are very proud of their status and responsibilities. They make a significant contribution to their school community and come up with ideas and suggestions to improve the school.
- Teachers and support staff keep pertinent records and logs of incidents of poor behaviour, racism or bullying. These incidents are very rare and records show a significant reduction over time in the number of cases. Classroom rules and systems for

regulating behaviour are consistently applied across the school. For example, a group of pupils explained to an inspector how the awards and sanctions system works and that this is fair and helps them to do well in school.

- Pupils have good manners, are polite and they show respect for others' feelings. They are helpful and courteous to adults and visitors, and are also helpful and respectful to pupils with disabilities or when a child has an accident. Pupils appreciate the efforts of others and often applaud or comment on how well another pupil is doing. This was clearly evident during the weekly awards assembly as pupils looked on in admiration when others were collecting their certificates of praise and achievement.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most children join the Nursery or Reception class with skills and abilities that are typically well below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. The current attainment of pupils by the end of key stages 1 and 2 represents good rates of progress in relation to these starting points in the early years.
- Although standards by the end of the Reception Year improved consistently between 2014 and 2016, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development in 2017 declined compared with the three previous years. The reason for this was that half of this small cohort of children, who are currently in Year 1, have lower starting points for a range of reasons, some of whom have special educational needs or joined the school speaking little or no English. These pupils continue to make good progress with approximately a quarter of those who did not reach a good level of development now being close to reaching age-related standards.
- The small cohorts of pupils taking national tests each year at both key stage 1 and key stage 2 need to be interpreted and analysed with caution as one pupil represents a significant percentage of the whole cohort.
- Last year's national assessments at key stage 1 show that standards were in line with the national averages and pupils made good progress. The results represented a significant improvement on the previous year's assessments. Most pupils reached age-related standards in reading, writing and mathematics, although some disadvantaged pupils could have done better in writing.
- Although too few pupils exceeded age-related standards in writing and mathematics, most of the pupils joining the school with low starting points reached age-related standards, signifying some outstanding rates of progress. There is now scope for leaders and staff to identify the most able pupils sooner in order to increase the number exceeding age-related standards in writing and mathematics.
- Current assessments show a sustained improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in phonics by the end of Year 1. Pupils are well on course to reach or exceed last year's national figures for phonics in both Year 1 and Year 2. This trend is being sustained as teachers build on the good start made in the early years.
- At key stage 2, the 2017 national assessments, though unvalidated at this stage, show a significant improvement on the previous results in 2016. Only 15 pupils took the Year

6 tests last year and most had made good progress. Progress in reading was strong and disadvantaged pupils achieved as well as other pupils who were not disadvantaged. Attainment was in line with the national average in 2017 in reading, writing and mathematics. Although more pupils could have exceeded these standards in writing and, to a lesser extent, in mathematics.

- Current assessments of pupils' attainment and progress in all year groups in key stage 2 show an upturn in reading, writing and mathematics outcomes and the targets set by leaders are challenging, but also realistic.
- Accurate assessments of pupils' progress and teachers' performance help leaders identify any dips in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils early and so plan appropriate interventions and support so they can catch up quickly. The most recent assessments show that differences have closed in reading and are narrowing in writing and mathematics across the school and with other pupils nationally. The difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others is closing faster in reading compared with writing and mathematics. This confirms that the teaching of reading is a real strength of the school.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress and some make outstanding progress. These pupils receive timely and expert levels of support in class or when working separately as a group or individually. The good management of this provision enables teachers and support staff to plan the right interventions for these pupils. These include sensitive and effective support for pupils who have acute additional needs that affect their learning and behaviour.

Early years provision

Good

- In the early years, children, including those who are two years of age, make good progress in relation to their low starting points. Currently, the large majority of children in the Reception class are on track to reach a good level of development in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Good teaching and effective support for children and families in both the Nursery unit and Reception class enable young children to get off to a good start. Children are well prepared for Year 1 by the time they finish the Reception Year. There are effective transition arrangements in place when children move into Year 1. This lays good foundations for learning and development in key stage 1. There is, however, insufficient focus on children who have the potential to reach high standards and not enough is done to identify these children quickly.
- Learning journeys (written and pictorial records of children's work and progress) and current assessments indicate positive outcomes. The outcomes from the early years in recent years represent a sustained profile of good achievement. The frequency and detail of assessments and records are not yet applied consistently across the early years provision. However, inspection evidence shows that, more recently, improvements are being seen in the ongoing recording of all children's achievements across the early years.
- In the Nursery, two- and three-year-old children are very settled and adults make sure that the children have plenty of stimulating and purposeful activities to engage them. Adults demonstrate good teaching and provide sensitive care and attention to

children's needs. Governors and leaders are considering increasing adult-child ratios in the Nursery for three-year-olds to provide even more outdoor learning opportunities. This is a positive step as, currently, space and supervision is limited for this particular age group. Nonetheless, the children are making good progress in all areas of learning appropriate to their age and capabilities.

- In the Reception class, indoor and outdoor resources are easily accessible to children and provide a stimulating environment for play and learning. The staff provide good care and plan some exciting activities that improve children's physical and emotional development in safe and secure surroundings. Children throughout the early years are very well behaved and attentive. They listen to instructions and are polite to each other and to adults.
- Leaders and staff have formed strong and trusting relationships with parents, carers and families. All the parents that spoke with inspectors paid tribute to the staff team and the school's leaders for the way they care for their children and the information they receive about progress. The regular 'Stay and Share' sessions for children and families are very successful and popular with parents. These enable parents and carers to share best practice in helping children to communicate, read, write and learn about numbers and shapes.
- Early literacy and phonics skills are taught very well. The children in both Nursery and Reception settings learn to recognise and form letters and to recite stories, nursery rhymes and familiar songs. However, there are sometimes missed opportunities to extend children's knowledge and experiences, particular for the most able Reception children.
- Role play is well structured. The children soon settle in home corners using familiar kitchen utensils, and in outdoor wet areas. Reception children in particular gain confidence exploring and experimenting with natural materials. Both Nursery and Reception children improve their language skills and self-confidence when cooperating with other children and sharing equipment. Two-year-olds were observed cooperating using a computer, sharing as they drew pictures. Two- and three-year-olds regularly help each other with some small scale construction and problem-solving activities. Reception children, both four- and five-year-olds, like to read stories and share books, helping them to form good learning habits when handling books and resources.
- Leadership of the early years provision is good. All welfare requirements, including assessments and the provision made for two-year-olds, meet statutory requirements. Staff are well qualified and have the necessary experience and expertise to deliver good teaching and sustain improved outcomes for children and their families.

School details

Unique reference number	124089
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10043150

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Laws
Headteacher	Eithna Ford
Telephone number	01782 898015
Website	www.dovebank.staffs.sch.uk/
Email address	headteacher@dovebank.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 February 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a small primary school. It admits children from the ages of two and three years in the Nursery through to Year 6. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage and a small number are from minority ethnic groups, some of whom are in the early stages of speaking English as an additional language.
- Early years provision comprises the Nursery unit for two- and three-year-old children and a Reception class for four- and five-year-olds. In addition to the early years, there are six more single-aged classes from Year 1 through to Year 6.
- The percentage of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above that of most primary schools. A small number of pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Some of the pupils who have SEN and/or

disabilities have autism and most have moderate learning difficulties and/or need additional support to improve their speech and language.

- The percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- The school met the government's current floor standards in 2016, which are the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school is part of a local learning trust which provides training and development in partnership with two other schools in the area. In addition, the local authority and school leaders have commissioned support for the school as part of continuing professional development. The school has also established other partnerships with local schools to share best practice and moderate assessment information.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited parts of lessons, many jointly with the headteacher. They checked samples of pupils' work. A school assembly was observed. An inspector observed a 'Stay and Share' session organised for parents in the Reception class.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons and met with groups of pupils to discuss their work, behaviour and safety, or to hear them read. Inspectors spoke to pupils during breaktimes and lunchtimes to ask them for their views about the school. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and safety on the playground and at other times. Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the early years leader and senior teachers responsible for managing a subject. The lead inspector held a meeting with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. The vice chair of governors joined a meeting with an inspector and member of staff to discuss early years provision and the coordination of special educational needs. The lead inspector spoke by telephone with one of the local authority's commissioning managers who is responsible for deploying advisory and improvement support for the school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including external reviews and evaluations of the school's effectiveness, and the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation. They reviewed information about pupils' achievement, progress and performance. They looked at documents related to governance and safeguarding and information about teaching, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents and carers to seek their views about the school and analysed 19 responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. The lead inspector analysed 19 responses from pupils and 14 responses from staff to online inspection surveys. Inspectors also talked to the staff team during the inspection to gauge their views about the support they receive.

Inspection team

Charalambos Loizou, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Justine Lomas

Ofsted Inspector

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