

Cottons Farm Primary School

Sheridan Street, Sinfin, Derby, Derbyshire DE24 9HG

Inspection dates

19–20 April 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Standards are low. Too many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make inadequate progress in writing, mathematics and particularly reading.
- Leaders, including the governing body, have not ensured that improvements have been rapid enough. The governing body has not been effective in holding leaders to account.
- Leaders and governors have overseen an extended period of weak outcomes. They have not ensured that the quality of teaching and the curriculum are good.
- Middle leaders do not have the expertise and capacity to help secure rapid improvement.
- Improvement plans are not sharply linked to pupils' outcomes. Leaders are not as effective as they should be in holding staff to account.
- Pupils are not well prepared for life in modern Britain. Older pupils do not show the maturity and understanding expected of pupils of their age in relation to British values.
- Leaders have not ensured that assessment is accurate. Leaders and governors do not have a clear enough understanding of pupils' progress.
- Leaders and the governing body cannot be sure that the pupil premium is having the maximum impact on accelerating the progress of pupils who are disadvantaged.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. They do not tackle pupils' errors and misconceptions quickly.
- Teachers do not use information about pupils' learning effectively to match activities and learning accurately to pupils' abilities.
- Teachers do not ensure that pupils use accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation in their writing appropriate to their ability.
- Teachers do not teach pupils to use and apply their phonics and early reading skills sufficiently well.
- Rates of persistent absence are too high.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher, staff and the governing body now recognise the urgency for rapid improvement to reverse the decline in pupils' outcomes.
- Actions to improve aspects of reading, writing and mathematics are showing some impact.
- Pupils' handwriting and presentation of their work are improving.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. They conduct themselves around the school well.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and those responsible for governance urgently bring about more rapid improvement by ensuring that:
 - they establish an effective senior and middle leadership team who have the skills they need to help improve standards in their areas of responsibility
 - their plans for improvement are sharply focused with measurable outcomes
 - the assessment of pupils' progress is accurate and used to identify specific targets to help all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make consistently strong progress
 - they monitor and evaluate standards more effectively to hold staff to account for pupils' progress
 - all staff have the expertise to teach pupils to use and apply their phonics and reading skills in order to improve standards in reading and writing.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils of all abilities make good progress by ensuring that all teachers:
 - raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons and over time
 - use accurate assessment information effectively, including in the early years, to precisely identify next steps in learning and match work to pupils' abilities
 - quickly tackle pupils' errors and misconceptions in all subjects
 - teach pupils the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics and how to apply them in their work
 - teach pupils how to use accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation in their writing
 - ensure that reading books are matched appropriately to pupils' abilities.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - leaders are relentless in emphasising the importance of attendance with parents and carers to reduce persistent absence and improve attendance
 - pupils are more secure and confident in their understanding of British values to better prepare them for life in modern Britain.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management should be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management should be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Since the previous inspection, there has been significant staff turbulence in both teaching and leadership roles. This has undoubtedly presented challenges in raising standards. However, leaders and the governing body have not ensured that improvements have been rapid enough. They have only recently identified and introduced the many initiatives necessary to bring about rapid improvement. Their leadership has lacked urgency. As a result, the pace of improvement has been too slow.
- The majority of pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics have been too low and slow for too long. Leaders and the governing body have overseen an extended period of weak outcomes. Leaders have not ensured that the quality of teaching and learning has been good enough for pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders' current self-evaluation of the school's performance identifies relevant priorities for improvement. Leaders and the governing body are realistic about the school's current performance. Their plans for improvement, however, are not sufficiently focused. They do not include ambitious and measurable targets to help drive more rapid improvement. Their plans do not enable the governing body to hold leaders to account.
- Leaders have not ensured that teachers' assessment of pupils' learning is accurate or used effectively. Leaders only recently moderated teachers' assessments of pupils' learning and identified that they were overgenerous. Leaders, other staff and the governing body do not have an accurate grasp of the progress of different groups of pupils in different classes and subjects. Leaders have not been effective in holding staff to account for the progress made by pupils.
- Leaders are not able to check the progress of disadvantaged pupils carefully enough to evaluate whether the pupil premium funding is having the maximum impact. Leaders and the governing body do not know if they are using the pupil premium funding well enough to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- The school does not have an effective middle leadership team. There are currently insufficient substantive and experienced staff to fulfil leadership roles. A small number of staff have significant responsibilities. These leaders are making some improvements. A 'mastery' curriculum for mathematics has been introduced. This, and recently introduced programmes to support pupils' reading and writing skills, are beginning to show some impact. However, many initiatives have only been introduced very recently and are at a very early stage of development. They are not showing sustained, consistent and secure impact on standards.
- The school provides a generally broad and balanced curriculum supplemented by enrichment activities and extra-curricular clubs. Leaders reviewed the curriculum at the beginning of the academic year. However, leaders and other staff do not promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education strongly enough. Pupils' understanding of different beliefs, faiths and religions is not secure. Their

understanding of British values is not sufficiently developed to prepare them well for their life in modern Britain.

- Leaders welcome support from other schools and the local authority. They recognise the need for urgency in bringing about improvement. Leaders from other schools are supporting the development of leadership skills. Staff now work with the staff from other schools in the federation to moderate pupils' work. The school organised, and is receiving, additional support from the local authority to help improve leadership and teaching. The school plans to join a trust which is already supporting the school to develop the quality of leadership and teaching. The executive headteacher, other staff and the governing body are positive about this support. Again, however, much of this work is very recent and has not had a secure impact on pupils' progress.
- The additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/disabilities is generally used well. The coordinator for provision for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities organises specific interventions and support well. The coordinator has a sound grasp of pupils' progress within specific programmes of support. However, leaders have not effectively linked pupils' learning and progress to the wider curriculum expectations. As a result, the overall progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is unclear due to the inaccuracy of school assessments.
- Leaders use the additional funds provided through the primary physical education and sports premium grant effectively. This has improved the skills of teachers in delivering lessons and raised pupils' participation rates by increasing the range of sporting activities on offer. Leaders recognise that they are not as sharp as they could be in evaluating the impact of the funding.
- In 2015, the school had a short inspection due to concerns about behaviour. Since that time, leaders have ensured that standards of behaviour have improved. Parents who spoke with inspectors are generally positive about the school.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has failed to hold leaders to account for pupils' attainment and progress. They have not been effective in challenging leaders to make the improvements needed.
- Governors are not sufficiently involved in the evaluation of the school's performance. They have not been sufficiently strategic in their role. They have not challenged leaders to check that priorities for improvement are being tackled effectively.
- The governing body has not been effective in holding the school to account for the impact of the pupil premium to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make accelerated progress.
- The governing body has recently recognised that it has not been as effective as it should be in supporting rapid school improvement. Governors have conducted a self-audit of their effectiveness and created a plan for improvement. The local authority attend governors' meetings in a supportive capacity. The governing body is now committed to improving its effectiveness in supporting and challenging leaders in order to improve outcomes for pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a secure culture of safeguarding. The school's recruitment checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children are thorough.
- Staff have received safeguarding training and are aware of their responsibilities. Staff are clear on the procedures for reporting any concerns.
- Leaders take relevant actions where there are concerns about a pupil's welfare. They respond swiftly to concerns raised and secure the involvement of outside agencies where appropriate. Leaders recognise that even greater rigour is possible in their recording of the actions they have taken.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. The very large majority of parents say their children are safe in school. Pupils are taught how to keep safe when online. Pupils have confidence that any concerns they may have will be addressed by staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. While there is stronger practice in some year groups, teaching overall is inadequate because teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons and over time are too low. Consequently, too many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and the most able, do not make the progress they should.
- Leaders have not ensured that teachers' assessment of pupils' learning is accurate. Teachers do not use information about pupils' learning sufficiently well to plan pupils' next steps in their learning. Activities are often not matched well to pupils' needs or abilities. Pupils of different abilities are often given the same work to complete. Too often, teachers do not give pupils challenging enough work. In mathematics, for example, pupils often complete many examples of work at the same level of difficulty, rather than moving on to more challenging work. Too few pupils progress to achieve at greater depth.
- Teachers do not ensure that pupils securely acquire key skills. Teachers do not ensure, for example, that pupils are able to apply the skills they have learned in phonics and reading or spelling, grammar and punctuation accurately in their work. Pupils do not learn to apply their mathematical skills at sufficient depth.
- Too often, teachers do not tackle pupils' errors and misconceptions. In many classes, pupils rarely are asked to edit and improve their work.
- Class teachers and other staff do not consistently ensure that pupils are able to use and apply their phonics skills, including in their writing. Staff are not consistently skilled in the teaching of phonics at each stage of pupils' learning.
- Teachers do not ensure that reading books are well matched to pupils' reading skills and understanding. This slows pupils' progress in reading.
- Teaching assistants sometimes provide effective support for pupils' learning. Sometimes, teachers do not ensure that teaching assistants are clear on their role so

that they have the maximum impact on pupils' learning.

- Generally, teachers have secure subject knowledge. Teachers often ask relevant questions to promote pupils' learning. However, they do not use information about pupils' learning sufficiently well to move pupils' learning on quickly enough or provide challenge to push pupils' thinking and develop their understanding.
- A recent initiative to improve writing, including the recently introduced writing 'toolkits', was observed across the school. Where this was most effective, pupils were given a clear structure and guidance to support their work. Pupils explained, for example, how the structure was helping them to write a letter in the context of the Second World War. Too often, however, pupils do not produce the quality or quantity of work of which they are capable.
- Teachers ensure that pupils' handwriting and presentation are improving.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- School displays reflect staff's work to promote British values. However, pupils have only a vague understanding of the importance of respecting others. They are not as confident as they should be in articulating why it is important to respect pupils from different faiths and backgrounds. Older pupils do not show the maturity and understanding expected of pupils their age.
- Pupils generally try to apply themselves well to tasks set in lessons. They often apply themselves well initially. However, too often, many lose focus because the work is not well matched to their needs or sufficiently challenging. Some low-level disruption was observed. When this happens, pupils' attitudes to learning are not as positive as they could be.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. The majority of parents who responded to Parent View or who spoke with inspectors said their children were safe. The school site is secure. Pupils show sound knowledge about how the school teaches them to keep safe online.
- Pupils say there is very little bullying and they are confident that staff will respond to any concerns they may have.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Current rates of attendance are higher than at the end of 2017, but still below the national average. Leaders carry out a range of actions to support families whose children have low levels of attendance, involving the role of the exclusion manager and education welfare officer when appropriate. While leaders report some improvements, they are not as sharp in analysing attendance data and the impact of their actions. Currently, persistent absence is higher

than at the end of 2017 and is much higher than the national average.

- Pupils generally conduct themselves well around the school. Pupils are usually polite and courteous. Pupils enjoy breaktimes and the equipment they have available. They have a clear understanding of the school's systems to promote good behaviour. Pupils expressed mixed feelings about behaviour, but say behaviour has improved. They are positive overall about their school. One pupil in key stage 2 said, 'Our school is a decent place to be.'
- Current information shows that the number of fixed-term exclusions is low compared to the previous year. Leaders say this was high in the past due to poor behaviour management. Leaders put into place specific behaviour plans to help pupils who need extra support.
- Pupils take increasing pride over their work.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Standards in many areas have been too low for too long. At the end of 2017, the proportion of children in the early years who achieved a good level of development was well below the national average. The proportions of pupils reaching the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2 have been below the national averages for the last two years. Progress in reading has been well below the national averages for the last three years. In 2017, pupils were not well prepared for the next phase of their education.
- Current pupils' work shows that too few pupils are on track to achieve the standards expected for their age and ability. In the majority of classes, leaders identify that only half of pupils are on track to achieve the standards expected for their age. Too many pupils make inadequate progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In too many classes, too many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and the most able, are underachieving.
- In 2017, the proportions of pupils achieving at greater depth at the end of key stages 1 and 2, in reading, writing and mathematics, were well below the national averages. Apart from a small proportion of pupils in key stage 2 mathematics in 2017, no pupils have attained at greater depth for the last two years. Leaders currently assess that no pupils in the majority of classes are currently on track to achieve at greater depth in reading, writing or mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils have made slow progress for too long. Information for 2017 shows that their progress and attainment were well below that of pupils nationally. Current assessment information is not accurate. As a result, leaders and other staff are not able to identify effectively how much progress disadvantaged pupils need to make and target the additional funds from the pupil premium well enough to help disadvantaged pupils catch up with their non-disadvantaged peers.
- In writing, the quality of pupils' work and the progress they make is often let down by poor grammar, punctuation and spelling. Teachers do not consistently teach pupils how to edit and improve their work. This reduces the quality of their work and the progress they make. In mathematics, work is often not challenging enough to help pupils make the accelerated progress of which they are capable.

- Recently introduced initiatives to improve standards in reading and promote pupils' mathematical understanding are showing some positive impact on pupils' learning in some classes. However, this is inconsistent across the school.
- As a result of carefully targeted intervention teaching, the proportion of pupils meeting the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017 was above the national average. However, pupils' work shows that pupils' phonics skills are not sufficiently developed in their classwork.

Early years provision

Inadequate

- The school's available on-entry assessment information shows that most children enter the early years with skills that are generally below those typical for their age. The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development at the end of 2017 was lower than the previous year and well below the national average. Children are not well prepared to start Year 1. Current school information from the end of the autumn and spring terms shows that the majority of children are currently not on track to achieve as well as they should in many areas of learning.
- Leaders' current plans for improvement do not focus sharply enough on improving children's learning and progress. They are not sufficiently based on a detailed evaluation of strengths and weaknesses and the specific actions needed to improve provision. Plans do not set sharp targets for different groups of children and for specific areas of learning to secure accelerated improvements.
- Leaders' systems to check and analyse children's progress are not yet sufficiently refined to ensure that teaching promotes good progress. Children's learning journey records and school documents show that assessment is not sufficiently informed by a secure understanding of the requirements of the early years curriculum. Leaders complete regular assessments of children's learning. However, these, and the next steps identified for children's learning, are not linked well enough to the early years requirements or informed by a secure understanding of children's developmental needs. As a result, children, including those who are disadvantaged and the most able, do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- Teaching is sometimes enthusiastic and adults often seek to promote children's communication skills. Children enjoyed retelling the story of 'The Gingerbread Man' for example, along with accompanying actions. However, planned activities sometimes do not offer children sufficient or appropriate challenge. Staff do not consistently and effectively reinforce children's phonics skills appropriate to children's abilities. This inhibits the progress children make.
- Staff have established effective routines for children. Children generally have positive relationships with each other and follow instructions given to them by adults. Adults reinforce positively expectations of behaviour. However, without guidance, some children quickly lose focus and this slows their learning. Teachers have not ensured that children are as confident as they should be in persevering and exploring independently.
- Outdoor learning areas are well resourced and attractive. Activities provide opportunities in all areas of learning.

- The new leader, who is also the class teacher for the early years, took up her post in April 2018. The executive headteacher has ensured that she has opportunities to work with teachers at other schools. This is enabling her to develop her leadership skills, expertise and understanding of early years provision.
- Most parents who spoke with inspectors were positive about the start their children have made in the early years.
- The safeguarding arrangements in the early years are met.

School details

Unique reference number	112734
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10041631

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	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Hill
Executive headteacher	Penny Brown
Telephone number	01332 771370
Website	www.ashcroftandcottonsfarm.co.uk/
Email address	head@ashcroft.derby.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 May 2014

Information about this school

- In 2017, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- In January 2018, the local authority issued a warning notice to the governing body due to low standards.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been considerable changes in staffing. The assistant headteacher left the school in autumn 2017; the head of school has been absent since December 2017 and was not present during the inspection. A new leader, who is also the class teacher, for the early years was appointed in April 2018. Two of the six classes in the school are taught by long-term supply staff.
- Cottons Farm Primary School is part of a federation of schools with Ash Croft Primary School, with which it shares a governing body and the executive headteacher. The

executive headteacher is also the leader for Reigate Primary School. She has been the executive headteacher of the three schools since April 2016. There is a head of school on each site.

- Cottons Farm Primary School is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and of pupils who speak English as an additional language, are above those seen nationally.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the coordinator for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, subject leaders and the designated leader for safeguarding. They met with members of the governing body and spoke with two representatives from the local authority. Discussions explored a wide range of subjects, including safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors observed learning in all year groups. Twelve lessons were observed, some jointly with the executive headteacher. Inspectors looked at pupils' work, spoke with them to evaluate the quality of their learning and listened to pupils read. They scrutinised a variety of documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' attainment and progress, and staff performance. Inspectors looked at plans for improvement as well as leaders' evaluation of the school's performance. Inspectors also considered the range and quality of information provided on the school's website.
- Inspectors spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day. They took account of the 33 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. Three additional parents responded to Parent View during the course of the inspection.
- There were no responses to the pupil and staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

John Lawson, lead inspector

Fiona Riley

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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