

Stimpson Avenue Academy

Stimpson Avenue, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN1 4LR

Inspection dates

9 to 10 July 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' views of the work of the academy are overgenerous. While some improvements have been made, the attainment gap between academy pupils and pupils nationally is widening.
- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has not been urgent nor robust enough to address inconsistencies and to ensure that it is of good quality.
- Leaders, including governors, have not made effective use of the pupil premium funding. Consequently, progress over time for disadvantaged pupils remains weak.
- The high turnover of staff has weakened the relationship some parents have with the school.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are not consistently high. This is particularly true in writing.
- Teachers do not consistently provide pupils or children in the early years with tasks which are well suited to their ability, particularly for the most able.
- Pupils' skills in understanding what they read are underdeveloped in key stage 1 because teachers do not develop them well enough.
- Low-level disruption is not consistently or effectively dealt with in some classes. Consequently, learning is sometimes interrupted.
- Pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities to develop their understanding of spiritual aspects of their lives.
- Children's communication and language skills in the early years are underdeveloped, which delays their progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The teaching of phonics is good and the number of pupils attaining the expected standard in phonics is rising. Pupils use their phonics skills effectively when reading unfamiliar words.
- Pupils enjoy school and attendance is in line with national averages. The majority of parents would recommend the school to others.
- Pupils feel happy and safe at school and say that the adults look after them well. They are taught how to keep themselves safe in school, when on line and when using the roads.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and offers opportunities for pupils to expand their understanding of the world around them.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders develop a greater sense of urgency in improving the standard of education for pupils
 - leaders make better use of national benchmarking data in order to measure and analyse pupils' outcomes accurately
 - leaders, including governors, link pupil premium spending to clear and measurable impact measures in order to raise levels of progress for disadvantaged pupils
 - leaders continue to build on improvements in communication with parents.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and thereby outcomes, by ensuring that:
 - teachers' planning, including in the early years, takes into account pupils' starting points, particularly of the most able, so that work is consistently well matched to their abilities
 - teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are suitably high, particularly in writing
 - pupils are provided with opportunities to develop and deepen their understanding of what they are reading, particularly in key stage 1
 - pupils, including children across the early years, are provided with opportunities to develop their language and communication skills
 - teachers address children's and pupils' misconceptions in a timely manner.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - leaders equip teachers with the skills they need to eradicate low level disruption in classrooms
 - opportunities for pupils to explore spiritual education are further developed.

An external review of the pupil premium spending should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, there have been continued and considerable changes in staffing throughout the academy. These changes include a new principal in January 2018 and two new assistant principals in September 2018. This turbulence has hampered the pace of improvement. While some improvements have been made, the impact of their work has not yet been sufficient to ensure that the academy is now good.
- Leaders' plans for academy improvement lack precision. Targets for improvement are not consistently based on an accurate analysis of pupils' outcomes, nor are they routinely compared to national figures. Consequently, leaders have an overgenerous view of the work of the school.
- Leaders have not sufficiently addressed the inconsistencies in the quality of education pupils receive. Their monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are not robust and lack a sense of urgency to bring about swift improvements. The inconsistencies observed in the quality of teaching and learning as well as in the progress seen in current pupils' books across the school have not been addressed in a timely manner. Consequently, the provision pupils receive and the progress they make are not consistently strong.
- Leaders have not made effective use of the additional government pupil premium funding. Progress and attainment for disadvantaged pupils continues to fall below other pupils nationally. Leaders at all levels are unclear of the impact of the spending.
- A minority of parents expressed concerns about the continued high turnover of staff and the quality of communication they receive from the school. Some felt that the considerable changes in staff have had a detrimental impact on the quality of education their child receives. While the school has begun to improve communications with parents, occasionally concerns parents raise are not dealt with as effectively as they could be.
- The leader for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has a secure overview of these pupils' needs across the school. Identification systems are effective and staff, parents and pupils are all involved in the process. Progress for these pupils, however, has been hindered this year due to inaccurate targets and imprecise systems which were in place at the beginning of the year. The leader correctly identified this and reset pupils' targets in the spring term, which has enabled these pupils to begin to make stronger progress.
- A large majority of staff say they feel respected and value highly the support they receive to improve their practice. Several middle leaders have recently completed leadership training provided by the East Midlands Academy Trust. Curriculum leaders demonstrate a real passion for their subjects and, as a result, the wider curriculum across the school has a high profile and interests the pupils. Pupils cited several subjects as their favourites, including design and technology, art, history and religious education.
- The curriculum offered is broad and balanced. Work in pupils' books shows they benefit

from a wide variety of creative and engaging topics which capture their interest, allowing them to learn about the world around them. The curriculum is further enhanced through a wide variety of before and after school clubs, including drama, art, languages and dance.

- Pupils have a good understanding of fundamental British values because these are taught well through the curriculum and assembly themes. Pupils are very aware of the importance of accepting other views and beliefs even if they differ from their own.

Governance of the school

- The academy improvement board and the East Midland Academy Trust are fully responsible for the academy and are deeply passionate about raising standards. Although there have continued to be considerable changes of staff since the previous inspection, they have secured a much more stable workforce for next academic year. The academy is beginning the transition to a local governing body.
- Members of the board do not challenge leaders robustly enough regarding the progress pupils make, particularly the disadvantaged. Their focus on the spending of the pupil premium funding and its impact on pupils' progress has not been sharp enough.
- Members of the board are knowledgeable about the improvements which have been made since the previous inspection. They have used their resources well to support the school, for example the training provided to middle leaders. Through discussions with them, it was clear that they are aware of the work which needs to take place to secure a good quality of education for all pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The designated safeguarding leaders have ensured that all adults associated with the school receive thorough training in how to keep pupils safe. This training includes female genital mutilation and the prevent agenda, for example. Staff understand their obligation to ensure that they report any safeguarding concerns, no matter how small they are. The school's safeguarding records show that staff at all levels report concerns to the designated leads, using the school's systems.
- Records show that concerns are dealt with effectively and in a timely manner. The school is tenacious in reporting concerns. The lead for pastoral and family support is well versed in the local authority thresholds for child protection and uses these regularly when reporting concerns to them. Designated safeguarding leads work well with outside agencies to support pupils and families.
- Pupils know how to stay safe in a variety of situations, including when on the internet and using the roads. Pupils and a very large majority of parents feel that school is a safe place to be and that pupils are well cared for. Pupils have a solid understanding of the difference between falling out and bullying. They report that incidents of bullying have diminished in recent years and are now rare and dealt with well by staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is variable and therefore requires improvement.
- Teachers do not consistently use their knowledge of pupils' prior learning nor pupils' interests to plan effectively for all to progress sufficiently well. Work in pupils' books and observations of lessons show that pupils are not consistently given work which matches their ability or their needs. When this happens, pupils' engagement in lessons is weak. This is particularly true for the most able pupils.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are not consistently high enough, particularly in writing. Work in some books shows that occasionally work is too easy and does not sufficiently challenge pupils.
- Equally, the presentation of some pupils' work is not of a high enough standard. This is particularly true of some boys.
- Teachers do not consistently check pupils' understanding of concepts in an effective or timely manner. Pupils are not routinely given time to correct their thinking. Consequently, pupils are not always able to learn from their mistakes and their progress slows.
- Pupils enjoy and value reading. They are able to use their phonics skills to successfully decode unfamiliar words. However, pupils are less able to understand or discuss the content of what they have read confidently or in any depth as teachers do not teach these skills well enough. This is particularly true in key stage 1.
- When questioning is used well, teachers deepen pupils' understanding and allow them to think carefully about concepts. However, this is not consistently done well throughout the school.
- When teachers provide pupils with enriching experiences which enhance their understanding of concepts, pupils' engagement in their learning is heightened. In a Year 4 English lesson, pupils used a picture book to collect ideas and vocabulary to use in a seaside poem. Pupils who had not had any personal experiences of the seaside to draw on were provided with effective extra support, such as holding and listening to a conch shell. This enhanced their writing.
- Phonics is taught effectively as lessons are well planned and build on previous knowledge. Teachers reinforce what pupils already know before introducing new sounds. Interventions for those who fall behind are beginning to have a positive impact on their progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- In some lessons, engagement of pupils in their learning is not as high as it could be. This occurs when tasks are not well matched to pupils' abilities. When this happens, not all pupils participate in the learning intended and they become disengaged. As a

result, some pupils' motivation for learning is undermined and underdeveloped.

- Pupils' social, moral and cultural development is well catered for through the curriculum, which provides plenty of exposure to a variety of cultures and beliefs in particular. However, pupils' spiritual development is not as strong. Pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to reflect or deepen their understanding of how the world around them shapes their own sense of self, individual beliefs and personalities.
- Pupils enjoy the leadership opportunities and responsibilities they are provided with. The junior leadership team spoke confidently about their role in communicating pupils' views to the senior leadership team and participating in school improvements such as the addition of the exercise equipment in the playground.
- Pupils have a good sense about what a healthy life style is. The school is proactive in promoting this through the effective use of the sports premium. As a result of the introduction of a wider variety of sporting clubs, more pupils are now participating in physical activity more often. The 'Healthy Heroes' club, which targets vulnerable pupils and families, supports pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle through teaching pupils how to cook healthy meals and encouraging them to participate more regularly in physical activity.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is inconsistent throughout the school. Where it is not good, low level disruptions are not effectively addressed by teachers and learning is interrupted. This usually occurs when tasks are not well matched to pupils' abilities and work is not challenging.
- Pupils generally conduct themselves well during unstructured times of the school day, such as playtimes. This is the result of clear routines set by adults and the opportunities pupils have to reflect on their actions and behaviours in 'the retreat' and the 'think tank'. Pupils are generally polite, well-mannered and friendly. Pupils told inspectors, 'We are all friends.'
- Pupils enjoy going to school and most attend regularly. The school has a rigorous system for dealing with persistent absences, and this has had a positive impact on improving the attendance for these pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because of the variation in attainment and progress pupils make from their starting points across the academy.
- The proportion of key stage 2 pupils who attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined increased in 2018 but remained well below national averages.
- Although the proportion of pupils attaining both the expected and higher standards by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics has generally been improving, this has been at a slower rate than national improvements.

- From their individual starting points, some pupils do not make sufficient progress over time in key stage 2. This is particularly true for disadvantaged pupils. This is reflected in the work seen in books, during lessons and in the academy's own progress information.
- Pupils' attainment by the end of key stage 1 in reading in 2018 was in the bottom 10% of schools nationally. The academy's own current progress information shows that the proportion of pupils in key stage 1 who make sufficient progress from their starting points in reading is weak. This is due to the inconsistent quality of teaching and learning of early comprehension as well as communication and language skills.
- However, the academy's own progress information regarding progress made by pupils this year alone is beginning to show a more positive picture across the academy. Where teaching and learning is stronger, so is the progress for many pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. This also matched work seen in pupils' books for this year.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in phonics has been improving year-on-year, closing the gap between the school and the national average. Adults are well trained and deliver well-planned lessons which allow pupils to practice known sounds before introducing new ones. Pupils are given opportunities to link their phonics knowledge to spelling and writing to support them in their independent work.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The quality of provision across the early years requires improvement because of the variation in the quality of teaching and learning across the provision.
- Children typically enter the Nursery with a level of development which is much lower than what is expected nationally. Although progress is made from these very low starting points, it is not sufficient to provide children with the necessary skills and knowledge to be well prepared to enter key stage 1.
- The most able pupils in the early years are not consistently given work that challenges them, and, therefore, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Children's progress in language development is not sufficient. Adults do not routinely take the opportunities available in their interaction with children to extend vocabulary and lengthen sentences and, as a result, poor language habits are reinforced.
- Behaviour is inconsistent across the classes in the early years. Routines are not consistently reinforced across the provision and, consequently, learning time is lost. Children are not as independent as they could be. Adults do not consistently check that all children are looking and listening when adults are delivering instructions or leading discussions. Consequently, children sometimes miss valuable input from adults and learning opportunities are lost.
- The communication and language intervention which was introduced into the Reception Class is beginning to have a marked impact on children's communication skills. However, it is not being used in the Nursery and, consequently, children continue to enter Reception with levels of communication which are well below where they should be.
- Resources within the early years are plentiful and of high quality, creating a stimulating learning environment in which the children feel safe to explore. Children enjoy the activities provided. However, they are not consistently encouraged to develop

sustained concentration. Consequently, children are not routinely able to deepen their understanding of concepts.

- The leader of the early years was appointed in September and now has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the early years. She has demonstrated a clear capacity to improve the provision as the changes she has made are beginning to have a positive impact on children's outcomes.
- Teachers' planning in the early years is beginning to harness children's interests. Consequently, the curriculum on offer to the children is more exciting and children are becoming more engaged in their learning.
- The relationships between the staff and the children are strong. A high level of trust is developed and children feel secure in their environment. There is also a strong relationship between staff and the parents of children in the early years.

School details

Unique reference number	140628
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10087384

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	450
Appropriate authority	Academy improvement board
Chair	Barbara O'Brien
Principal	Alison Hawkes
Telephone number	01604 631 383
Website	www.stimpsonavepri.co.uk
Email address	admin@stimpsonavenue.northants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is a sponsor-led academy in the East Midlands Academy Trust and governed by an Academy Improvement Board.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been considerable changes in staffing, including a new chair of the academy improvement board, the principal, two assistant vice-principals and several teachers and teaching assistants.
- This school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is over double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much higher than the national average for all schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in twenty one lessons across all classes, nine jointly with an assistant vice-principal. A learning walk to observe interventions was also completed with the leader of SEND. Work in pupils’ books, covering a range of subjects, abilities and year groups, was looked at together with a school improvement partner from the East Midland Academy Trust.
- Inspectors met with the principal, assistant principals and with leaders responsible for English and mathematics, SEND, pupil and sport premium and the early years. Inspectors also met with a range of middle leaders, and a newly qualified teacher as well as two unqualified teachers. They also met with the pastoral and family support leader.
- An inspector met with members of the Academy Improvement Board and the Chief Executive Officer of The East Midland Academy Trust.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils, including the junior leadership team, formally to consider their views of their school. They also spoke informally with pupils during lessons and during breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered the 37 responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, written comments from five parents and spoke informally with 17 parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including improvement plans, academy improvement board minutes, the academy’s most recent information on pupils’ progress and achievement and information relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Heidi Malliff, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Mitchley	Ofsted Inspector
Janis Warren	Ofsted Inspector

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