

Springwell Community College

Middlecroft Road, Staveley, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S43 3NQ

Inspection dates

27–28 November 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching is improving. However, leaders have overestimated the extent of the improvement.
- The quality of teaching is still inconsistent. In particular, the quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science varies too much.
- Leaders' expectations of what pupils can achieve have been too low. They have not challenged the most able pupils to reach the top grades at GCSE.
- The curriculum has improved. It offers a range of learning opportunities for pupils of different abilities. The content, however, does not consistently enthuse and engage pupils.
- Teachers do not always check that pupils have understood a teaching point before moving on. Sometimes teachers' questions are too superficial to encourage good learning.
- Some pupils lack the wide vocabulary and ability to write at the length needed to be more successful in the subjects they study.
- Governors understand the needs of the local community. They challenge leaders, but this has not led to significant school improvement in all areas. School systems have not always made it easy for governors to hold leaders to account.
- Over time, pupils have not made as much progress as they should. Their examination results have not improved quickly enough. Some pupils are now making better progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils have made less progress than other pupils nationally. However, their progress has started to improve. Leaders' use of the pupil premium funding is still not fully effective.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour, attitudes to learning and attendance have improved. They are safe and cared for well. Because of this, pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good.
- Careers education has improved. This has helped more pupils to make good choices about what to do when they leave school.
- Teaching in the performing arts, humanities and in languages has improved. Pupils are now progressing well in these subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who need to catch-up with their peers, progress well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils, particularly the most able, and disadvantaged, make better progress by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of the work pupils can and should produce
 - improving the quality of teachers' questioning, so that pupils think more deeply about their learning
 - ensuring that teachers check pupils' understanding before moving on
 - developing the school's approach to literacy, so that it also focuses on pupils' vocabulary and extended writing skills
 - making sure that teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is consistently good.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance by:
 - setting targets for pupils' achievement that encourage them to aim high
 - making sure that the school's self-evaluation focuses more closely on pupils' progress
 - continuing to enrich the curriculum, so that it inspires pupils to learn
 - presenting governors with prioritised plans that make it easier for them to track the school's progress and hold leaders to account
 - sharpening the use of the pupil premium to speed up improvements in the progress of disadvantaged pupils
 - refining leaders' judgements on teaching and learning to make sure these are accurate.
- 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 may be improved.
- An external review of governance 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

- Leaders have a highly inclusive ethos. For example, some pupils excluded from other schools successfully manage to complete their education here. Leaders set high standards for pupils' conduct. The school is calm and orderly. School leaders have made sure that there is now a very good environment for learning.
- The overwhelming majority of staff, parents and carers believe that leaders are effective. Leaders have made sure that the school is a friendly and welcoming place. The headteacher and the team have increased the appeal of the school in the local community. The school roll is now rising quickly.
- The headteacher has improved the way in which the school works with parents through a parents' forum and by using parental questionnaires. Leaders gave inspectors instances where the school has listened to parents and taken their views into account. This includes parents' ideas on homework arrangements and the cost of school uniform. When parents have concerns, there is a fair complaints process in place.
- Staff morale is high and this includes among newly qualified teachers, who are well supported. Teaching staff trust school leaders. They value the training they receive. This professional guidance is starting to improve the quality of teaching.
- Recent subject-leader appointments are beginning to improve learning in individual subjects. Senior leadership appointments are also improving the quality of teaching as a whole. The sustainable improvements already made indicate that leaders have the necessary capacity to improve the school's performance further.
- School leaders are over-optimistic about the progress they have made in improving the quality of teaching. This is because they have placed too much emphasis on individual observations of teaching. Leaders have not focused enough on what pupils' progress and outcomes say about the quality of teaching over time.
- Leaders prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils who attend the school are often from White British backgrounds. School leaders make sure that pupils learn about the wide range of ethnic groups, cultures and traditions that contribute to British society. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is prioritised within the curriculum and is effective.
- The local authority has given some helpful support to the school to develop leadership and teaching. Leaders are strengthening their capacity to improve the school by developing stronger educational partnerships. The school is currently applying to join a multi-academy trust, with the aim of enriching teaching and learning.
- In the past, the school's curriculum offered a wide range of subjects, but individual courses did not always match pupils' abilities. This meant that pupils' progress was not as strong as it could have been. Pupils now take distinct types of courses, including technical options at key stage 4. These extra options are helping pupils to learn more effectively. Leaders are currently looking at the detail of individual courses to make teaching more appealing to pupils.

- Leaders provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. These include enjoyable options in sports and the performing arts. During our visit, for example, pupils were highly enthusiastic about the production of 'Little Shop of Horrors' that was about to start. Pupils benefit socially from a number of the activities open to them.
- Senior leaders' use of extra funding is variable. Leaders' use of funds to support pupils with SEND and those in Years 7 and 8 who need to catch up in English and mathematics has been effective. The allocation of the pupil premium funding has had less effect on disadvantaged pupils' progress.
- Leaders now track pupils' achievement more carefully. They use this information to support underachieving pupils to do better. Yet their expectations of pupils' achievement are still not high enough. The targets that leaders set for pupils' progress are sometimes too low. Few of the most able pupils, for example, are expected to reach the highest grades at GCSE. Some pupils have targets that are below their current level of performance.
- When assessing how well pupils are doing, leaders have put a lot of emphasis on attainment, rather than on pupils' progress. This can be misleading, as the average ability of different year groups varies.
- Leaders' plans for improvements now deal with the main barriers to becoming a good school. Despite this, these plans have not led to consistently strong progress by pupils. In part, this is because leaders' plans are somewhat inaccessible to a layperson, such as some governors. This makes it more difficult for the governing body to focus on the things that really matter and hold leaders to account.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the challenges pupils in the area face. They care a great deal about the education and welfare of the school's pupils. Governors are part of the school community. For instance, they contribute well to the school's careers education programme.
- The school's governors use public monies carefully for the intended purposes. The minutes of the governing body meetings show that it challenges leaders consistently, especially on spending decisions. Up to now, this challenge has not been effective in bringing about the necessary improvements in disadvantaged pupils' outcomes or in achieving consistently good quality teaching throughout the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders check carefully that staff and volunteers are safe to work with children. They have developed strong links with parents and carers in order to make sure that pupils experiencing difficulties get the help and support they need.
- Staff and governors are highly trained. They use this knowledge well to protect pupils. They know the signs that a child might be at risk or may need extra help to thrive. The safeguarding lead has considerable expertise in the dangers of child sexual exploitation and uses this knowledge well to help keep pupils safe.

- Leaders have raised pupils' awareness of the dangers of extremism. They make this work relevant through clear connections to pupils' lives. For example, pupils were interested to learn about the links between right-wing extremism and football.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is improving, but still varies across the school.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Their assessments of pupils' work are more accurate than in the past. This improvement is the result of cross-checking the standard of pupils' work with other schools. Teachers' assessments are now beginning to help them better understand pupils' strengths and weaknesses, and plan for these.
- Inspectors saw teachers asking consistently challenging questions in the performing arts, humanities and languages. Teachers in these subjects asked questions that really made pupils think about the topics about which they were learning. In some other subjects, teachers' questioning was less challenging, particularly for the most able pupils. At times, teachers accepted too quickly the first answers pupils gave, without encouraging them to consider different possible responses and deepen their learning.
- In some subjects, including English, mathematics and science, teachers did not always check that pupils had fully grasped an idea before asking them to use this knowledge in a task. This made it difficult for pupils to move on to the next step in their learning.
- Pupils generally enjoyed their English lessons. The books they study match their interests well. English teachers encourage pupils of all abilities to improve their reading skills. As in some other subjects, English teachers do always set tasks that make enough demands on pupils or hold their interest.
- Mathematics teachers plan some activities where pupils apply their learning. Pupils in key stage 3, however, have limited opportunities to use their learning to solve difficult mathematical problems. Without these, pupils will not have the foundation they need to do well at GCSE.
- Pupils regularly learn about the needs of people with characteristics that are protected by law. Inspectors saw pupils design disability aids in technology, for instance. Here, pupils had carefully produced aids after first-hand market research. Pupils understood that the needs of disabled people could be very individual.
- Inspectors saw some examples of detailed, thoughtful writing, especially in Year 9. Too often, though, pupils' written work was much weaker than their spoken responses. Teachers' expectations of pupils' writing were generally too low. Pupils, especially at key stage 3, did not express often enough their understanding through detailed writing. Some pupils lacked the wider vocabulary they needed to enrich their writing and explain their ideas in depth.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are self-confident and join in their lessons well.
- Pupils look smart and wear their uniforms correctly. They care about their work and present their books well. Most pupils do their homework and bring the right equipment to school.
- Leaders' work to prevent bullying is exemplary. Pupils' anti-bullying ambassadors have a high status in the school. They take their roles seriously. Pupils told us that bullying is rare. Staff deal with these uncommon occurrences quickly.
- The well-used 'Health Shop' on the school site helps support pupils' physical and emotional well-being. It provides a good example of the staff's work with outside agencies to encourage pupils' welfare.
- Leaders have made sure that pupils recognise when they are at risk. Pupils know how to get help when they need it. They have learned about online threats and how to take steps to reduce these risks.
- Parents are positive about the care their children receive. Several families wanted to share their stories with inspectors, so that we knew about the quality of the school's work to support pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved since the last inspection. They now conduct themselves well, in and out of classrooms. Pupils usually stay focused on their schoolwork, even in subjects they enjoy less.
- There is little disruption to learning. Staff deal swiftly with any poor behaviour that does happen. Leaders exclude very few pupils compared to the national average.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. They balance their use of sanctions and rewards carefully. Pupils value the school's reward system. For example, they enjoy collecting the points that lead to prizes for them.
- Pupils' arrive to school punctually. Their attendance is slightly above the national average. Relatively few pupils at the school are regularly absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Previously, pupils' progress was not good enough. In the 2018 GCSE examinations, for instance, pupils made almost half a grade less progress on average than pupils nationally. Current pupils are making better progress, overall. However, the progress of the most able pupils has not improved as quickly as that of others.
- Pupils' progress varies too much between subjects because the quality of teaching is still inconsistent. Examination results in 2018 reflect this, with stronger results in subjects such as humanities and languages, where teaching has improved.

- Disadvantaged pupils made slow progress in previous years. Currently, disadvantaged pupils are making faster progress, but overall their progress is still not as good as other pupils nationally. Leaders make sure that children looked after are supported well to achieve their potential.
- Pupils who start secondary school with lower than average attainment make progress that is broadly at the national average. Middle-ability pupils are now making more progress than previously. Their progress is now closer to the national average for pupils of their ability.
- Pupils with SEND are making good progress towards attaining the expected standards for their age in a range of subjects. School staff are particularly aspirational for this group of pupils. Teaching assistants contribute well to the progress of pupils with SEND.
- Careers advice and guidance is of a high standard. The careers education programme has improved and meets all government requirements. This service helps prepare pupils for the next stage in education and employment. The proportion of pupils who go on to appropriate placements when they leave school has improved and is now high. In the past, fewer disadvantaged pupils took successful next steps at the age of 16. Leaders have recognised this and are taking appropriate action to improve the careers support for disadvantaged pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	112966
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10048050

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	840
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kay Bonnett
Headteacher	Ian Wingfield
Telephone number	01246 473 873
Website	www.springwellcc.org
Email address	headteacher@springwellcc.org
Date of previous inspection	26–27 April 2016

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school receives support for aspects of leadership and the curriculum from the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school and in a range of subjects. Some lessons were observed jointly with school leaders. Inspectors also made a number of short visits to lessons to evaluate pupils' progress and behaviour in a range of classrooms.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in books, during lessons and at other times during the inspection.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, a representative of the local authority, other senior and middle leaders, and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, school complaints file, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors looked at the 66 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 29 free-text responses from parents.
- The inspection team listened to the views of pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4, during meetings, in classrooms and around the school.
- Inspectors considered 44 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and talked with teachers after lessons to seek their views.

Inspection team

Ellenor Beighton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Sweeney	Ofsted Inspector
Gulbanu Kader	Ofsted Inspector
Gill Martin	Ofsted Inspector

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