

Smith's Wood Primary Academy

Burton's Way, Smith's Wood, Birmingham, West Midlands B36 0SZ

Inspection dates

3–4 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Smith's Wood Primary Academy is exceptionally well led. Leaders and governors have unwavering determination. A culture of high expectations permeates the school.
- The principal leads with passion and drive. His enthusiasm for learning is shared by fellow leaders. The leadership team constantly looks for ways to improve its own effectiveness.
- Governors are skilled and provide an equal measure of challenge and support. They work collaboratively with leaders to secure exceptional outcomes for children, staff and families.
- From starting points that are often below typical levels, pupils thrive. Outcomes in almost every phase are above national levels. Pupils' progress is rapid. No one is left to fall behind.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported. By the time these groups of pupils leave school, their progress exceeds that of other pupils nationally.
- The curriculum is inspirational. Pupils are immersed in wide-ranging topics that fascinate and enthral them. There are opportunities for pupils to attend clubs and visit places they might not ordinarily see at such a young age.
- Teachers love their roles. They speak with passion and pride about what they do. Teachers are highly skilled practitioners who are committed to developing what they do and learning from one another.
- Assessment systems and procedures are robust and are used well to ensure that no pupils fall behind. However, the systems could be developed further to make the analysis of progress even more precise.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils love coming to school. Pupils say that they feel safe and that they value the fantastic menu of learning and extra-curricular activities available to them.
- Though pupils' progress is rapid and outcomes are strong, there is scope for even greater challenge on occasion. This is particularly the case in the wider curriculum.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the early years. Teachers know children exceptionally well. However, opportunities for children to make choices about how they learn can sometimes be limited.
- The school's learning environment is highly engaging and very child-centred. Pupils learn in inspirational spaces including the 4D room, specially designed mezzanines and even underneath rollercoasters!

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine assessment systems so that leaders and governors can analyse the progress made by different groups of pupils even more precisely.
- Ensure that teachers consistently challenge pupils, particularly those that are most able, to demonstrate the depth of their learning and understanding in all subjects of the curriculum.
- Further develop provision within the early years so that children have even more opportunities to make decisions about how they approach tasks.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders and governors are relentlessly focused on improving outcomes for pupils. They are determined to nurture the whole child and help pupils overcome any barriers to learning. As a result, outcomes for pupils are exceptional.
- Leaders are rightly proud of their work. They have a very accurate awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders do not shy away from identifying areas for further improvement. They are receptive to feedback and to learning from other schools. They embrace change.
- Leaders and governors work in a highly collaborative way. They discuss and debate the effectiveness of the school. Leaders and governors acknowledge that they have engaged in many challenging conversations over the years in order to find the right path for the school and secure the best possible outcomes.
- Performance management is robust and fair. Teachers welcome the ambitious targets that are set for them. Teachers say that they are very well supported at Smith's Wood. They speak with pride and enthusiasm about their leaders. One member of staff commented 'I feel privileged to be part of such an inspirational team who are committed to changing the life chances of our children.' This view typifies the attitude and approach to work of staff at the school.
- Improvements in teaching and learning are a result of the open and forward-thinking approach of leaders. Teachers are encouraged to share what they do best and provide one another with open and honest feedback. As a result, teachers progress quickly in their roles and many go on to secure promotions in other schools. Teachers at the start of their careers are very well supported. Newly qualified teachers flourish as a result of excellent induction procedures and close attention to staff well-being.
- Middle leaders and those with responsibility for leading the development of key areas such as reading, writing and mathematics are highly effective in their roles. They write action plans that secure rapid improvements. Leaders also establish timetables for monitoring the impact of teaching on learning. Teachers are regularly provided with accurate and concise feedback to help them improve. Above all, middle leaders are passionate about what they do. They replicate the drive of senior leaders; they learn from outstanding role models.
- The school's curriculum inspires the pupils to want to learn. Topics and activities are bold and interesting. Topics across the curriculum include: pupils in key stage 2 exploring Victorian diseases, using make-up; an in-depth study of the work of Charles Dickens through an examination of the novel and the original film adaptation of 'Great Expectations' from 1946; an exploration of 'Holes' (the mystery comedy novel by Louis Sachar); and an impending cultural visit to Paris for pupils in Year 6. The curriculum is without doubt broad and balanced. It contributes significantly to pupils' overall development and progress.
- Pupil premium funding is effectively used to bring about very strong outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The school has designed and delivered a wide range of strategies to address identified barriers to learning. In 2013, the school was recognised

as a regional winner in the Pupil Premium Awards. In 2016, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils exceeded that seen nationally in every subject at the end of key stage 2. This is a considerable achievement, given the often very low starting points of pupils. Strategies for improving outcomes are rich and varied and include: additional support to develop pupils' speech and language skills; a 'phonics factory' to improve early reading; targeted monitoring of attendance; musical tuition; focused outdoor learning and the opportunity to attend the school's rock band. These are just a few of Smith's Wood's initiatives.

- The school has invested considerable capital, along with the physical education and sport premium funding, to enhance staff training and increase pupils' participation in sports. As a result of high quality coaching, Smith's Wood's pupils have been regional rowing champions for the last three years. The school has also appointed a director of sporting opportunities to support teachers in their teaching of gymnastics, dance and boccia (a precision ball sport, similar to bowls). In 2016, the school achieved team of the year at the Solihull Sports Awards.
- Special educational needs funding is used well to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The special educational needs coordinator is highly skilled and meticulously plans additional sessions to support pupils. As a result, this group of pupils makes very strong progress during their time in school. By the time they leave at the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress is well above average.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the promotion of fundamental British values are key strengths of the school. Leaders and governors understand the importance of ensuring that pupils develop tolerance for other faiths and religions. Pupils demonstrate their understanding very well. Many pupils participate in a 'passport activity'. This new scheme, designed by a member of the teaching staff in conjunction with other schools, supports pupils to identify and recognise British values. The passport invites pupils to explore the strands of British values through different activities and record their understanding.
- The school has retained a very purposeful and productive relationship with the local authority since becoming an academy in 2014. The local authority adviser visits the school termly. The adviser supports the school by testing out the accuracy of leaders' self-assessment. The local authority also recognises that the school is high-performing. Other settings within the borough are signposted to the school as a beacon of leading practice in many areas.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is highly effective. Governors:
 - are led by a skilled and knowledgeable chair who is uncompromising in his ambition for staff, pupils and families
 - know the school and its leaders exceptionally well
 - are committed to collaborative working
 - will sharply challenge leaders if they need to
 - are focused on relentlessly improving the school
 - look to the future and recognise the importance of ensuring that their work is sustainable.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is a priority at Smith's Wood.
- When staff join the school they are left in no doubt about their responsibilities. Staff that inspectors spoke to know exactly what to do if they have a concern. They are also clear about the actions they would take if they ever felt their concerns had not been acted upon.
- Staff are fully aware of the risk factors associated with different forms of abuse. They have received specialist training in relation to specific aspects of child protection such as female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation and guarding against extremism and radicalisation.
- The designated safeguarding leaders are highly reflective people. They keep detailed records and act upon any concerns they may have. They regularly review caseloads to check on the progress that they and other agencies are making with families. The school engages effectively with parents to promote children's personal development and safety.
- Leaders are highly attentive to the needs of children who are looked after. Special education plans detail pupils' specific needs. Additional funds are well used to increase pupils' participation in extra-curricular activities and trips. Children looked after also receive a wide range of additional classes to help improve their skills in English and mathematics. Participation in these sessions boosts pupils' confidence and helps them make rapid progress.
- Pupils that inspectors spoke to overwhelmingly feel safe in school. Pupils even seemed surprised when aspects of safety were explored with them; being safe in school is the norm. Pupils have exceptional relationships with staff. These strong relationships are at the heart of the culture of safety and trust within the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers have very strong relationships with pupils. These relationships, coupled with high expectations, help to ensure that pupils' progress is substantial and sustained. Pupils' progress is evident in the results of tests and assessments in the past, the school's own assessment information and work in pupils' books.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and lead learning with energy and enthusiasm. In a Year 5 class, pupils were learning comprehension skills through a study of Charles Dickens' 'Great expectations'. At a critical moment in the novel, one of the main characters, Estella, is encouraged by Miss Havisham to play with the emotions of a young boy called Pip. Pupils entered into a lively debate about the characters' actions and demonstrated considerable maturity and critical thinking. In other lessons across the early years and key stage 1, inspectors routinely found teachers fostering a love of learning in their classes.
- In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, pupils were learning how to maximise profit in a café. The teacher's creative approach to planning and insightful questioning helped pupils to practise and apply their reasoning skills. As a result of highly effective support and an

engaging activity, pupils made rapid progress.

- Teachers' planning leads to inspirational lessons. Pupils are highly engaged in their studies and are keen to share their learning with visitors. Activities are closely matched to the needs of pupils. When teachers spot a pupil falling behind, they work with leaders and support staff to plan additional support to help them catch up quickly. Teachers also acknowledge the strong support that they receive from leaders in the planning process. All staff work collaboratively to construct exciting and imaginative activities.
- No time is wasted at Smith's Wood. From the moment pupils arrive in the morning, they are given activities that support the development of their basic skills in English and mathematics. Pupils value the support that they receive and thrive within the carefully devised structure that staff have created.
- Support staff are key to the success of the school. They are well trained, highly committed, and make a significant contribution to the high standards within the school.
- The teaching of phonics is the bedrock of the school. Pupils are taught how to read in a highly structured and efficient manner. Pupil premium funding is used to increase staffing and make it possible for pupils to learn in small groups. This affords high levels of interaction and support from staff. Pupils learn to read with confidence from an early age and this helps them access other areas of the curriculum with ease.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are well embedded across the curriculum. Pupils routinely practise their basic skills in a range of subjects. This careful planning supports pupils to make rapid progress. Pupils have the necessary skills to move confidently through different phases of the school. This is particularly the case at the end of key stage 2 as pupils move to secondary school.
- Assessment systems track the improvements made by groups of pupils, and individuals, across different subject areas. The systems are used in a highly effective way to target additional support and ensure that no pupils fall behind. However, they do not allow leaders and governors to precisely compare the progress of all groups. Though there is no obvious underachievement within the school, some trends in performance are not fully known.
- On occasion, learning in the wider curriculum is not as challenging as that found in English and mathematics. This is particularly the case in key stage 2. There is scope for activities to be adjusted further to ensure that the most able pupils are routinely challenged. Presentation is also a little variable in some pupils' topic books.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is outstanding.
- As a result of exceptional support from all staff, pupils are confident, self-assured young people. Pupils commit to doing their very best and waste no time in lessons. Working hard and staying focused on learning is the norm. Pupils are not distracted from their studies. They have respect for staff and want to achieve.

- Relationships are strong. As a result, the culture of the school is positive and forward-thinking. Pupils say that they feel well supported.
- The emotional well-being of pupils is a recognised priority. Great care is taken in ensuring that pupils are equipped with the skills to manage their feelings and emotions. The strategies used by the school are highly effective. If leaders identify a barrier to learning for a pupil, a personalised strategy is devised to help get them back on track and ready to learn.
- Pupils are given considerable opportunities to take on additional responsibilities. Some pupils belong to the Smith's Wood Academy Government (SWAG). These elected pupils make important decisions about school life and coordinate key fundraising events.
- Pupils have an excellent knowledge of safety. They talk with confidence about the school's firewalls (computer filtering systems that block inappropriate material from the internet). Pupils know exactly how to stay safe online. Pupils raised no concerns about bullying. Pupils trust their teachers; they know that if a problem arises, it will be sorted out very quickly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils have absolute confidence in the school's behaviour management systems. This results in an orderly environment where pupils readily comply with staffs' high expectations. Pupils' movement around the school and conduct at social times are excellent.
- Inspectors found no incidents of disruptive behaviour during the inspection. Pupils understand the importance of their education and are keen to achieve.
- The diverse and rich curriculum allows pupils to learn about moral values and the importance of the rule of law. Pupils respect one another and the environment that they learn in.
- Pupils are industrious. There is a palpable sense of busyness throughout the school. There is no low-level disruption because pupils are focused on learning.
- Smith's Wood is not without its challenges. Some pupils join the school at short notice and require additional support. Some pupils have complex needs and require high levels of care. Leaders and governors are unwavering in their support. Leaders' responses to pupils' needs are sharp and accurate. The school is rightly proud of all that it does for pupils, particularly those that are more vulnerable.
- Attendance is rising for all pupils and persistent absence for specific groups has also reduced. The attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been low in previous years. The school meticulously tracks this group of pupils and offers additional support. As a result, pupils' attendance is rising and there is no negative impact on pupils' overall achievement.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Outcomes continue to improve at Smith's Wood. In 2016, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 was well above national levels. Pupils make more progress in key stage 2, in every subject, than all pupils nationally from their different starting points.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception has risen over the last three years. The proportion matches that seen nationally. Children make rapid progress from often very low starting points.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 has been high for several years. There is very little variation between the performance of different groups of pupils.
- In 2016, a very high proportion of pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1. Again, this represents excellent progress given pupils' different starting points.
- The school's own assessment information shows that rates of progress for pupils currently on roll are strong. Assessment systems carefully track the improvements that pupils make. Any underachievement is quickly acted upon.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including those that are most able, make very strong progress. Any barriers to learning are tackled head-on. Pupil premium funding is having a profound impact on outcomes for this group of pupils. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 made considerably more progress than other pupils nationally in every subject. This performance is also matched by pupils currently on roll.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive excellent support. The special educational needs leader knows pupils well and monitors the progress that they make continually. Systems used to identify needs are well established and pupils receive the right support at the right time.
- Most-able pupils make strong progress. The design of the curriculum ensures that this group of pupils receives high levels of challenge. However, there is some variation in levels of challenge in topic work, particularly in key stage 2.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children get off to an excellent start in the early years. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has risen considerably in recent years. Children's current attainment represents exceptional progress from their different starting points. As a result, children are very well prepared for continuing their learning journey into Year 1.
- Staff are passionate about what they do and receive very strong support from leaders. Staff at the start of their careers receive an excellent induction programme and rapidly become effective practitioners. The quality of teachers' questioning and the teaching of phonics are particular strengths.
- Expectations are high in the early years. Children have very positive relationships with

adults. Children cooperate, take turns, learn and play together well.

- Leaders understand the strengths and areas for development of the early years well. Action plans address identified priorities. There is a clear structure to learning. While this serves to meet the children's early needs, inspectors noted that opportunities for children to make choices about how they learn are sometimes limited.
- Assessment in the early years is accurate and robust. Systems for collating evidence of progress are well designed and present a very clear picture of the rapid improvements that are made, term by term.
- The curriculum, as in Years 1 to 6, is exciting and engaging. During the inspection, children received a video from the school's assistant principal saying how upset he was that everyone seemed to have missed his birthday! Children wasted no time writing party invitations, making party hats and designing decorations. They were engrossed in what they were learning. The carefully planned activity developed a wide range of skills, including speaking and listening, writing and teamwork. Activities like this typify daily provision.
- Parents are very happy with the early years. The school's survey of parents' views shows that parents have no concerns about the setting. The school has established workshops for parents so that they can help children with their learning at home.
- Additional funding is used effectively to identify any early gaps in learning or specific needs. For example, the school employs a speech and language therapist who checks children's skills as soon as they arrive. Any needs are quickly acted upon. The therapist also trains support staff so that the school's capacity to respond to any speech and language needs is enhanced further.

School details

Unique reference number	140923
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10032643

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	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	463
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Henderson
Principal	John Talbot
Telephone number	0121 779 8050
Website	www.smithswoodpri.solihull.sch.uk
Email address	office@smithswoodsprpri.solihull.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school converted to become an academy in 2014.
- The school runs a breakfast club every morning.
- Smith's Wood Academy is a larger-than-average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is half the national average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities for whom the school provides support is above average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan or statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons or part lessons. The majority of observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' books in lessons and in separate meetings with leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders of the following areas: early years, reading, writing, mathematics, assessment, behaviour, attendance, special educational needs and the curriculum.
- The lead inspector met with the principal, deputy principal and assistant principal on day one of the inspection to review the school's effectiveness. During this meeting, the lead inspector and leaders agreed key lines of enquiry to focus inspection activity on.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the school gate and to pupils throughout the school day.
- Inspectors heard pupils read from Year 1.
- The lead inspector spoke with the school's local authority adviser by telephone and met her in person at a meeting at the end of the second day of inspection.
- Inspectors took account of a range of school documents including: school self-evaluation, action plans, assessment information, child protection files, the single central record, monitoring records, attendance information, pupil premium plans, information relating to performance management and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of four responses to Ofsted's free-text service, 22 responses to Parent View, 33 responses to the staff survey and 15 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Jonathan Keay, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda Brown	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Stone	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Harwood	Ofsted Inspector
Amarjit Cheema	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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