

Inspection of Unstone Junior School

Main Road, Unstone, Dronfield, Derbyshire S18 4AB

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 November 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement
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What is it like to attend this school?

In the words of a parent: 'Unstone Juniors is a small school with a big heart and is almost like a family.' The staff care deeply for every pupil's academic development and emotional well-being. Pupils are excited, enthusiastic learners who are proud of their school. They know teachers expect them always to do their best and they rise to this challenge.

Adults around school model the positive behaviours and attitudes which are clear in pupils' relationships with each other. Pupils feel very safe in the knowledge they are respected by their peers, regardless of their background or ability. Pupils trust adults to deal with problems such as bullying, although they are adamant it doesn't happen.

The school's core values are evident as pupils are 'responsible, confident, respectful and aspirational'. Pupils enjoy their lessons and behave well when learning and around the school. They are courteous and considerate. There is a focus on pupils' personal development, with a wide range of enrichment activities available. Teachers encourage pupils to consider the views and opinions of others. For example, during an assembly, pupils debated maturely whether it was ethical for humans to swim with dolphins.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have planned the curriculum thoughtfully to help pupils catch up with any lost learning that may have emerged during the pandemic. They have prioritised pupils' learning in reading and mathematics. Skilled teachers recognise gaps in pupils' knowledge and address these quickly.

Pupils read, and are read to, each day. The vast majority of pupils read fluently, including when tackling unfamiliar and challenging texts. Skilled teaching assistants teach and reinforce early reading skills for pupils who find reading difficult. Pupils in both classes have particularly enjoyed their work on Shakespeare, with one pupil commenting: 'I just want teachers to let me carry on reading.'

Teachers assess pupils' knowledge frequently and accurately. They use this information to set work that is ambitious for pupils regardless of their ability. This has enabled pupils to secure a broader and deeper understanding of mathematics than in previous years. In a few subjects, the plans do not fully set out precisely what pupils should learn. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported to ensure they can access all aspects of the curriculum.

Pupils eagerly share the knowledge they have gained in subjects across the curriculum. They become increasingly competent in making connections between different aspects of their learning. For example, in the Acorns class, pupils talk about the importance of renewable energy while making electrical circuits to power a bulb.

In the Oaks class, pupils use their knowledge of the Tudors to enhance and expand on their understanding of Shakespearean plays.

Senior leaders have ensured that pupils' personal development is a central thread running through each pupil's education. This is a considerable strength of the school. Leaders have developed a curriculum that prepares pupils for life beyond school. Teachers plan regular opportunities for pupils to discuss, consider and reflect on social and moral issues. Pupils can access a wide and diverse range of enrichment activities. They speak enthusiastically about academic and sporting clubs, residential visits, and visitors, such as 'The Plague Man'. All pupils in the Oaks class receive weekly clarinet lessons. They have played with the Halle Orchestra, prior to the pandemic.

Leaders and governors have addressed the issues raised at the time of the last inspection. They have a good understanding of the school's performance. They know what is needed for further improvement. Sometimes leaders' plans for improvement are not precise enough to ensure they are as effective as they could be.

Leaders have monitored pupils' welfare and attempted to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on learning. However, some planned school improvement work has been hampered. In particular, pupils' expected learning in a small number of curriculum areas is not as clear as it needs to be.

A number of new governors have joined the school since the last inspection. They have prioritised safeguarding and induction training. However, they have not yet had the hands-on experience they need to support the strategic work of the school and federation fully.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture of care and support for children and families extends beyond accurate administrative procedures and record-keeping. All who work in the school use their up-to-date safeguarding training to inform their practice. They are vigilant for the signs of pupils at risk of harm. Leaders are tenacious in following up concerns with external agencies.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders are not precise enough in their planning for curriculum and school improvement. Plans lack the detail and precision to ensure clarity about the ownership of responsibilities and the necessary impact. Leaders should ensure that actions are precise and measurable. Responsibilities and timelines must be

unequivocal. Regular milestones will assure leaders and governors that actions are on track and having the desired effect on school improvement.

- Senior and subject leaders have not yet completed their planned overhaul of the curriculum. In a small number of subjects, there is not enough detail of the specific knowledge pupils should know and remember. Leaders should prioritise the completion of this work to ensure teachers are clear about what to teach and in what sequence. This will also assist teachers in assessing what pupils have learned in all subjects.
- Those new to governance have not yet had the full range of training and in-school experience they need. The pandemic has meant they have had only minimal contact with the school since starting. Their role in the strategic development of the federation of schools is significant and not straightforward. Leaders and governors should prioritise an action plan to accelerate the development of new governors. This will enable them to support school leaders, more fully and sooner, in addressing any barriers to further school improvement.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	112642
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10200159
Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Adlington
Headteacher	Rachael Fowlds
Website	www.unstone.derbyshire.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Unstone Junior School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school federated with Unstone St Mary's Nursery and Infant School in September 2016 to form the Unstone Schools Federation. The schools share the same headteacher and governing board.
- The school works with a local cluster of schools as part of the Partnership of Dronfield Schools.
- The school receives support from the local authority through an associate adviser.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and both teachers who also act as subject leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and science. They considered curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors heard individual pupils read.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke with leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered opinions expressed through the staff and pupil questionnaires.
- Inspectors spoke with designated safeguarding leaders and governors. They scrutinised the records that leaders kept and spoke with staff, pupils and parents.
- Inspectors visited the breakfast club and spoke with groups of pupils. They met parents at the beginning of the day and considered the views expressed through Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Stephen McMullan, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
George Huthart	Ofsted Inspector

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