

# Victoria Road Primary School

Victoria Road, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 5BN

**Inspection dates** 7–8 November 2012

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory                | 3        |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Good                        | 2        |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement. For the past three years, attainment at the end of Year 6 has been well below average; pupils' progress has been uneven and, for some, has been too slow.
- The quality of teaching, although recently improved, is not yet always good. Pupils are not always given the help they need in lessons because teachers do not always carefully check pupils' understanding of what they are being taught.
- Although leadership and management systems are now better, there has not been enough time for all of the recent improvements to have a full impact on improving pupils' achievement or to make sure that the quality of teaching over time is always good or better.
- Governors have not fully held the school to account for the school's performance in recent years.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's analysis of what needs to be done to improve the school is detailed and accurate. She provides a strong lead in driving improvement.
- The overall quality of teaching has already improved. Some teaching is now often good and there is no inadequate teaching. As a result, pupils' achievement is starting to speed up and their attainment is now rising.
- Staff morale is high. They, and the governors, share the headteacher's determination to take the school forward.
- Good systems for checking the quality of teaching and for tracking and measuring pupils' progress are now in place.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a good start to their education and their progress is good.
- Pupils are happy, safe and secure in school; their behaviour is good and they attend regularly.
- Governors now have an accurate overview of how well the school is doing.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 17 lessons. They listened to pupils read in Years 1, 2 and 6 and they observed the teaching of letters and the sounds they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1.
- Meetings were held with four members of the governing body, with staff, with a group of pupils and with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed information from eight responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered responses to a questionnaire the school sent to parents in the summer term 2012 and met with a group of parents to hear their views about the school.
- They took into account the views that staff expressed in the questionnaires they completed.
- They observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance records and the school’s own data on pupils’ progress.

## Inspection team

Diane Auton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mark Hilton

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British. A few pupils are from other heritages and speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action, at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher was appointed in April 2012. Two new middle leaders joined the staff in September 2012.
- Before-and after-school care are provided on site by an independent company. These provisions are subject to a separate inspection and reports can be found on the Ofsted website.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching is always good or better, so that pupils make better progress and so that their achievement improves quickly, by:
  - ensuring that teachers always keep a careful check on pupils' understanding during lessons, so that those pupils who have not fully understood the work are always given the help they need
  - ensuring that all teachers question pupils to help them extend and develop their thinking about what they are learning.
- Improve the contribution of the governing body so that they can effectively hold the school to account for its performance by:
  - making sure that they take full account of the progress of pupils of all ages
  - asking leaders and managers more challenging questions about pupils' achievement
  - making sure they know about the quality of teaching across the school and about the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Since September 2012, progress has started to improve, but these improvements are still at an early stage. Although some year groups are still working below the expected levels for their age, such as in Year 3 and 4, their progress is now speeding up because the quality of teaching has improved. Even so, there is more to do to make up for some weak teaching in the past.
- Pupils listen well to their teachers and work hard in their lessons. They are keen to offer their ideas in discussions and they work well with a partner or in a group. In an effective mathematics lesson in Year 3, for example, pupils made good progress in practical measuring activities, working with a partner to solve problems, achieving accuracy and growing in confidence. Pupils' books, across the age groups, show that they try hard to present their work neatly.
- Most children start school with the skills that are similar to those expected for their age. A minority of children have immature skills, however, especially in speaking and listening. Children do well in the Reception class and they start Year 1 with very positive attitudes to learning, although aspects of their communication skills are still weaker.
- In recent years, pupils did not make enough progress in Key Stage 1. However, because teaching has improved, pupils' progress is now speeding up in Years 1 and 2 and there are some early indications that attainment is also rising, especially in reading.
- Pupils in Year 1 in 2012 did well in the screening check of their skills in letters and sounds in the summer term. Regular guided reading sessions are helping to foster pupils' increased enjoyment in reading. Pupils are gaining more confidence as readers because letters and the sounds they make are being taught systematically. Attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is now broadly average.
- In Key Stage 2, improved teaching is starting to close some gaps in pupils' learning that have resulted from weaker teaching in the past; pupils are showing themselves to be receptive learners and have begun to make much more rapid progress. The attainment of pupils in Years 5 and 6 is now close to where it should be for their age. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to meet national expectations for their attainment by the end of 2012/13. Furthermore, the proportion of pupils currently in Year 6 on track to reach a higher level than expected nationally has increased considerably on the previous year, and is also now close to average.
- Pupils who have special educational needs, those who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding and those who have English as their additional language all progress at a similar rate to other pupils, because of the support they are given.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- In recent years, teaching did not make enough impact on promoting pupils' achievement. This picture is changing. Teaching was good in most of the lessons seen during the inspection and there is now no inadequate teaching in the school.
- Typical features of the most successful teaching seen during the inspection include:
  - well-planned lessons with activities that interest the pupils and that are matched to their varying abilities and needs
  - clear explanations, so pupils know what they are expected to do and to learn
  - good attention to timings, so that pupils learn quickly and their interest is sustained throughout the lesson
  - good teamwork between teachers and skilled teaching assistants, so that all pupils are given the support they need.
- Some teaching requires further improvements so that the quality of teaching is always good or better. Where teaching requires improvement, sometimes, teachers miss opportunities to check on pupils' understanding. This can mean that those pupils who have not fully understood the

work are not always given the help they need. At other times, it is because teachers' questioning is not probing enough and does not lead to pupils extending or developing their thinking about what they are learning.

- Teachers provide constructive advice for pupils when they mark their books and this is helping them to know what they need to do to raise the standard of their work. Teachers set targets for each pupil that helps them gain a better understanding of how they can improve and what they need to aim for.
- Arrangements to support disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, those known to be eligible for pupil premium funding and those with English as their additional language have improved. These pupils are now given small group or individual support within the classroom, rather than taken out of the lesson. This helps to make sure that the school meets the needs of all its pupils. Pupils benefit from the better quality of teaching now evident and teachers have an improved overview of how well they are getting on. All of this is contributing well to their improving achievement.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good, in lessons and around the school; their positive attitudes to school and in lessons are contributing well to their improving achievement. They say they feel safe in school and that there is always someone on hand to help them if they have a problem.
- Parents' comments and their questionnaire responses show they have confidence in the care and safety the school provides for their children.
- Pupils understand about different types of bullying. They say that, even though they may sometimes fall out with each other, there is no bullying in school. They say that staff would not allow it.
- Pupils are actively involved in helping to make the school run smoothly and in making it a happy environment for everyone. They readily take on responsibility, for example as influential school councillors and as prefects and house captains, voted in by their peers. The school now has a head girl and boy, who are positive role models. Older pupils act as reading buddies for younger ones and also help to organise play activities and snack time.
- Pupils with additional learning, health, language and social needs are supported well. Parents commented on the school's inclusiveness and on the good collaboration with external agencies, saying all of this is helping their children to do better in school.
- The school provides sensitive and nurturing support for pupils and families whose circumstances might put them at risk.
- Attendance is improved and is now average.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Leadership and management are not yet good, principally because there has not yet been time for recent improvements to show their full impact on pupils' achievement at the end of each key stage.
- The headteacher, in her second term in post, is a strong leader and has already created a positive climate for improvement in the school. Staff at all levels understand and share the school's aims for pupils to achieve as well as they possibly can and there is positive 'can do' team spirit.
- During the inspector's discussion with a group of parents, one parent commented that the headteacher and the staff are 'getting things done'; all of those present agreed, saying that the school is welcoming and that they feel they are well informed and encouraged to get involved in their children's learning. Regular, well-attended workshops for parents are keeping them informed about developments in teaching and helping them to support their children's learning

at home.

- The assistant headteachers and the new middle leaders are helping the headteacher to keep a careful check on pupils' progress and on the quality of teaching. A formal and thorough review of pupils' progress takes place each half-term. The information from this is being used well to identify and support any pupils who may be underachieving. Improvements in teaching are supported by an effective and on-going programme of staff training. Staff share good practice across the team and work together well to ensure that teaching methods are effective and are well matched to pupils' needs. Teaching still requires further improvement to ensure it is always good or better across the school and actions by leaders have not yet secured this fully.
  - The school development plan has a sharp focus on raising attainment. The headteacher and staff know that progress will need to accelerate quickly this year to bring all pupils' attainment up to where it should be. New initiatives have already begun to help improve pupils' basic skills in mathematics, including mental calculations. Pupils are now expected to produce extended pieces of writing each week and the output and quality of their written work has already started to improve. A new literacy programme is supporting a systematic approach to teaching reading skills and this is starting to have an impact, especially in Reception and Year 1. All of this is still work in progress, however, at this early stage in the year.
  - The curriculum brings subjects together into interesting topics and this supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development increasingly well. Visits, including residential trips, visitors and well-attended after-school clubs all add enrichment. Staff have started to plan more frequent opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in their topic work.
  - The local authority, having previously taken a light touch approach, has given additional support to the school over the past twelve months, through input from advisers and consultants and through regular review meetings with school leaders. The local authority helped governors to recruit and select a new headteacher.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Until the local authority identified concerns about pupils' achievement last year, some governors had not realised that pupils' standards had slipped. This was because, at that time, governors did not know enough about pupils' progress and attainment; they had not asked sufficiently searching questions about the quality of teaching and its impact on how well pupils were doing. The headteacher now produces clear and regular summaries and reports for governors on pupils' achievement and on developments in teaching and the curriculum. As a result, they now have an accurate view of how well the school is doing. They are developing an improved understanding of issues around pupils' performance and they are now more able to hold the school to account. However, their skills still require improvement to ensure that they can do so with maximum effectiveness. Nonetheless, they now ensure that staff performance is managed appropriately and they are aware of the link between staff performance and salary progression. Pupil premium funding is being spent appropriately on providing extra support for targeted pupils and to help to pay for visits and enrichment activities for eligible pupils. The governing body gives good support to the headteacher in meeting safeguarding responsibilities, particularly regarding the safety of pupils and staff appointments.
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## What inspection judgements mean

| School  |                      |  |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| Grade   | Judgement            | Description  |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding          | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.   |
| Grade 2 | Good                 | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.   |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.   |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate           | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

## School details

|                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 110992 |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Halton |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 401163 |

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

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary                         |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community                       |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 4–11                            |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                           |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 234                             |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body              |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Edward Owen                     |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Sue Taylor                      |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 1 December 2009                 |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01928 574644                    |
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