

Hurst Knoll St James' Church of England Primary School

Ladbrooke Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire, OL6 8JS

Inspection dates 22–23 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils feel happy and safe in this caring school. They develop confidence and respect for themselves and others.
- Achievement has improved since the last inspection. Most pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards have risen at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers plan well for the needs of different pupils. They make lessons interesting and fun, and have good relationships with pupils, who are eager to learn.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and behave well. They willingly take responsibility and look after each other well.
- The curriculum is focused well on developing pupils' basic skills. It also gives pupils rich experiences which prepare them for the future, raise their aspirations and contribute to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leadership is strong. The headteacher's determination to give all pupils the best opportunities has led to improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement over the past three years.
- Governors are supportive and well informed about the work of the school. They have helped to drive improvements since the last inspection. The school is well placed to improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding and the best practice seen is not consistent across the school.
- Although pupils' progress in writing is accelerating, standards in writing remain lower than those in reading and mathematics in both Key Stages 1 and 2.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 16 lessons, including two joint lesson observations with the headteacher. Inspectors listened to pupils reading and observed the teaching of early reading skills. They also looked at examples of pupils' work to get a view of teaching and progress over time.
- Discussions took place with pupils, parents, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, a representative from the local authority, senior leaders and other staff.
- Inspectors took account of seven responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), the school's analysis of the most recent parent surveys carried out by the school, and 15 staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including data on pupils' progress throughout the school, the school's evaluation of its effectiveness and its development planning, records of the quality of teaching and learning, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documentation in relation to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Christine Potter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Carol Machell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a slightly smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through the pupil premium is well-above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is above average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides a breakfast club each morning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is all at least good and more is outstanding, by:
 - making sure that all lessons move quickly enough to keep all pupils interested and involved
 - ensuring that when leaders watch lessons they give teachers clear individual guidance on how to improve their teaching
 - sharing more fully the outstanding practice that already exists.
- Raise standards in writing throughout the school, by:
 - giving pupils time to talk about and practise what they are going to write
 - improving the quality of teachers' marking and feedback in all classes, so that pupils are always clear on exactly how to improve their writing, and are given the opportunity to respond to teachers' written comments
 - making the best use of opportunities for pupils to develop specific writing skills in other subjects
 - giving pupils more responsibility for assessing their own and each other's writing, and to find out what they need to do to reach the next level.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below, and sometimes well below, those typically expected for their age. From these low starting points, most pupils make good progress. By the end of Key Stage 2, they reach levels in English and mathematics which are broadly average overall. Pupils' achievement has improved steadily over the past three years.
- Children are given a good start to their school life in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is a wide range of exciting things for them to do, which the children help to plan, and they make good progress in all areas of their learning. Teachers talk with them as they play, so they develop their skills in language, and they quickly learn to share and take turns. They enjoy learning outdoors. Children who were pretending to be 'polar explorers' in the snow, chattered excitedly as they investigated ice balloons.
- The school has successfully focused on improving pupils' reading skills, and standards in reading have risen quickly. Early reading skills are taught well, and there are special programmes for pupils who find reading difficult, so that by Year 1, an above-average proportion of pupils reach the expected standard in reading words. Pupils love story books and enjoy using books to find things out. Pupils of all ages have been involved in making a DVD to show their parents how they learn to read in school.
- Pupils' progress in writing is improving and increasing numbers are working at the higher levels, but standards across the school remain lower than in reading and mathematics. The school is now taking concerted action to improve pupils' writing, through systematic teaching of grammar, punctuation and handwriting at all stages. Work in pupils' books, however, shows that pupils do not always practise specific writing skills when they write in other subjects.
- The school identifies at an early stage pupils who are at risk of falling behind in their learning. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good, and in some cases, outstanding progress from their individual starting points because of the good support they are given.
- Pupil premium funding is used well by the school to provide additional staffing and support for eligible pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals. They make similar progress to other pupils. The attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than that of other pupils because a higher proportion of them have complex special educational needs.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make particularly good progress, especially in mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is mostly good and some is outstanding. In all lessons, teachers praise and encourage pupils so they are eager to learn. They ask questions to check that pupils understand what they are doing and to help them develop their ideas further. Teachers make sure they plan work for the pupils that is at just the right level for all of them, and pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn.
- Highly skilled teaching assistants play an active part in all lessons and provide good support for particular pupils to help them make good progress. They provide pupils with lots of practical activities and keep checking that they understand what they are learning.
- Where teaching is at its best, pupils are actively involved. Children in the Reception class jumped over scarves to help them remember how to count to twenty. Year 3 pupils were excited as they swapped football strips and chose bags of crisps to make as many different combinations as possible.
- Examples of outstanding teaching ensured that lessons moved at a good pace, with a balance

between thinking, talking and doing, so that pupils learnt very quickly. Pupils in Year 6 enjoyed 'mucking about' with sentences and sharing ideas together as they investigated more varied and interesting ways of writing. They were challenged at every opportunity to push their vocabulary to higher levels.

- However, in some lessons, pupils are not given opportunities to talk about what they want to write and to practise it before they start. In those lessons that still require improvement, the pace is slower, pupils become less interested and they do not learn so quickly.
- Although there are examples of good marking, not all teachers mark in a way that shows pupils exactly how to make their work better, especially in writing. Pupils do not always have opportunities to respond to teachers' written comments. Not all teachers give pupils enough responsibility for assessing their own and each other's writing, or to find out how to reach the next level.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. Pupils are considerate, polite and behave well. They enjoy being in school, feel that it is a 'giant family' and are particularly welcoming to newcomers, who quickly settle in and make friends.
- Pupils mostly have good attitudes to learning. However, in lessons which do not move along quickly enough, they become restless and there is some minor misbehaviour.
- Pupils are proud of their school and love opportunities to take responsibility. Older pupils support younger ones very well as 'lunchtime buddies' and 'reading angels'.
- Pupils feel very safe and well cared for in school. Incidents of bullying and racism are rare and are dealt with promptly and effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe in situations beyond school, including when using the internet. Parents agree that the school keeps their children safe.
- Pupils are respectful of differences. They know that any kind of name-calling is hurtful and wrong. As one pupil said, 'Everyone's different, everyone's a human being.' The school's support for a community in Uganda helps pupils to understand and empathise with the needs and difficulties of others.
- Attendance and punctuality have improved significantly over the past two years, due to a range of successful actions taken by the school, including the very personal support provided by the learning mentor for some families. Attendance is now broadly average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, who is ably supported by other senior leaders and the governing body, is ambitious for the school and the pupils. Senior leaders have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement since the last inspection. Staff share a commitment to giving all pupils skills for the future and developing their confidence and belief in themselves.
- Senior leaders are accurate in their judgements about the school. They know what still needs to be done and have set priorities to ensure that the school continues to improve. They carefully track the progress of individual pupils and different groups to ensure they are all doing well enough and take swift action in response to any concerns.
- Leaders regularly check the quality of teaching in lessons. However, sometimes they do not give teachers precise enough feedback to help them improve their teaching. Teachers do not have many opportunities to observe each other and share the outstanding practice that exists within the school.
- There is a strong emphasis in the curriculum on developing pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. There is also an extensive range of activities, such as chess, cookery and gardening,

which broaden pupils' horizons and give them additional interests and skills. Pupils join enthusiastically in whole-school singing sessions and share their musical talents with others at community events.

- The school has good relationships with parents, who appreciate all that the school does for their children. Parents know that they can talk to school staff if they have problems and they really enjoy the chance to be with their children at breakfast club.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority provides effective support for the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are involved in the life of the school and are proud of the pupils. They demonstrate a good understanding of the school's performance data and the quality of teaching. They are well informed about the outcomes of staff performance management and decisions relating to pay progression. They have not been afraid to make difficult decisions to tackle underperformance in teaching. They ask challenging questions and hold senior leaders to account for continuing to improve outcomes for pupils. They make sure that resources are used well and that pupil premium funding improves outcomes for eligible pupils.

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

Unique reference number	106229
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	405028

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracey Bennett
Headteacher	Susan Nelson
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2011
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