

Chester Blue Coat Church Of England Primary School

Walpole Street, Chester, Cheshire, CH1 4HG

Inspection dates 30–31 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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.

- The attainment and progress of the vast majority of pupils are rapidly improving with examples of outstanding performance in mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Senior leaders are sharply focused and have generated a rapid momentum which has led to significant improvements in a short period of time. The headteacher has galvanised the staff of two different schools in the common aim of raising levels of attainment for all pupils and improving the quality of teaching.
- The quality of teaching is good. Many teachers have high expectations of pupils and ensure that most make good progress.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and speak highly of the new senior leadership team and teaching staff. They are especially appreciative of the good communication that they have with the school, the regular homework provided and the enriching experiences that the increasingly culturally diverse nature of the school provides.
- Pupils are calm and thoughtful and their good behaviour contributes to well-ordered and productive lessons. They feel safe, form strong friendship bonds and are very proud of their school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not yet outstanding. Achievement by the end of Key Stage 1 has not been as good as in Key Stage 2 and not enough opportunities are available in the nursery for children to learn through exploration, investigation and play.
- Governors' understanding of what the school needs to do in order to improve is still developing, particularly in relation to how the pupil premium funding is spent and the impact that this is having on raising pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons as well as small-group teaching activities and parts of lessons. Two lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher, and an assembly was observed.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 1, 2, 3 and 6. Discussions were held with three groups of pupils focusing on behaviour, safety and learning.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised during lessons and separately with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Three meetings were held with individual members of the governing body including the Chair of the Governing Body, a parent governor and a foundation governor. A meeting took place with the school's education consultant.
- A number of documents was scrutinised, which included the school's self-evaluation and its development plan, teachers' monitoring files and records of teachers' performance, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance records, behaviour logs and safeguarding documents.
- Telephone conversations took place between inspectors and two local authority school improvement partners and two parents. Inspectors met with a group of 11 parents.
- Inspectors took account of four responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the school's own surveys of parents' and pupils' views. Account was also taken of 46 questionnaires completed by members of the school staff.

Inspection team

Lenford White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Geoffrey Lawrence

Additional Inspector

Gillian Hunter

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average sized primary school with a large nursery.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, mainly from eastern European countries, is below average but increasing. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives funding through the pupil premium is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has gained the Religious Education Quality Bronze Mark.
- The school has a breakfast club and provides after-school care.
- This is a new school created from the amalgamation of a junior and an infant school. Since its inception in September 2011, the school has had a number of changes in its school leadership including a new governing body, a new headteacher and a new deputy headteacher. There have been significant changes in staffing, with four teachers on maternity leave and many teachers changing year groups. The school is due to move into its new premises towards the end of February 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to improve pupils' overall achievement further in Key Stage 1 and children's achievement in the nursery, ensure that more teaching is outstanding by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to be involved in a stimulating and exciting curriculum
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum, to do research and find things out for themselves
 - creating a more exciting environment for children in the nursery so that they are able to learn more through exploration, investigation and play.
- Improving the impact of leadership and management on pupils' achievement through further developing the governing body's understanding of how the pupil premium funding is spent and the impact it has on raising pupils' achievement.

Achievement of pupils**is good**

- Achievement is not outstanding because pupils have performed better in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. The majority of children join the school with skills and abilities which are just below the expectations for their age and they make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and through Key Stage 2. In this academic year, pupils in Key Stage 1 are making accelerated progress and are on target to reach standards which are at least in line with national expectations.
- The vast majority of pupils reach expected standards by the end of Year 6. Mathematics is a strength, especially for boys who make outstanding progress to attain significantly above the national average by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress, although they reach below average standards by the end of Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 6, their attainment is higher than the national average. Many are able to be involved fully in lessons after short periods of time despite having little or no English when they start school. The school provides excellent specialist language teaching and carefully targeted support through well-trained teaching assistants and small-group teaching activities.
- Across the school, pupils' performance in writing has recently not been as good as in mathematics or in reading. To tackle this, improvements have been made in the way writing is taught and a number of writing strategies have been employed, including small-group teaching, to challenge all groups of pupils. The senior leadership team has made professional development and training a priority in this area and this year significant improvements in pupils' performance have been made.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals attain as well and make the same good progress as that of all other groups in the school.
- As a result of good teaching and well-directed support, disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs make good progress. They achieve broadly average standards in English, and better than average in mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Reading is strength, pupils read often and widely and guided reading sessions are led well and enjoyed by pupils. Weaker readers use their knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics) well to help them to read unfamiliar words.
- Boys and girls have equal access to good learning experiences and teaching; any gaps between the performances of these groups in 2012 are effectively being narrowed.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- The majority of lessons is good, with a small minority which is outstanding. Some lessons still require improvement. Teaching is good overall because most teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils; they know them well and work towards ensuring that all are confident learners. However, the whole-school focus on improving literacy and numeracy has meant that the curriculum is not always as stimulating as it could be.
- Pupils' work is marked well, with teachers using an agreed whole-school system. The majority of pupils, including older pupils in Key Stage 1, can say what their targets are, and what they need to do to improve.
- Many pupils are used to assessing their own work and the work of their classmates, they are used to reading teachers' comments and adding their own thoughts. The majority of lessons starts with teachers giving pupils the opportunity to summarise what the class has been learning. In such lessons, teachers are clear about what will be learned and objectives are shared and discussed with pupils.
- Higher-attaining pupils use their language and communication skills very effectively and can articulate their ideas succinctly. However, not enough lessons provide opportunities for pupils to develop further their ideas though finding out things for themselves, for example, through research using ICT.
- Teaching assistants are well-trained and are deployed effectively. Teachers plan carefully across

year groups and discuss plans with teaching assistants and other adults before lessons are taught.

- In the vast majority of lessons, pupils make good progress. In a Year 5 English lesson, all pupils enjoyed the challenge of writing interesting sentence openers. Pupils were very familiar with identifying which connecting words were the most challenging and how these related to their individual targets; some pupils even set their own targets for future lessons. In such lessons, pupils of all abilities participate and are challenged, including those still in the early stages of acquiring English.
- Pupils work well together in lessons in pairs and in small groups. In a Year 4 history lesson, pupils took great delight in working together in groups and demonstrated good negotiation skills to create written descriptions of three different drawings of Egyptian pharaohs. This is an example of one of the strategies that has helped to promote pupils' higher achievement in writing this year.
- All teachers are clearly focused on raising pupils' attainment in English and mathematics, however, a few pupils say that work is not always challenging enough.
- Communication skills are taught well in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is especially the case in the Reception class where good language development and excellent relationships ensure good achievement. However, the learning environment in the Nursery class is not sufficiently developed to ensure that all children learn through investigation, exploration and play.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils say that they enjoy their school. They say that teachers and friends make them feel safe and that they are proud to be a member of their school. They are welcoming to visitors and behave well in and around the school and when at play.
- Teachers promote good behaviour at all times, foster good relations between pupils and effectively tackle any discrimination. Pupils know what is expected of them both in class and when moving around the school.
- Pupils have great confidence in talking to adults about any concerns that they may have and say that they are always listened to. The vast majority of pupils, parents and staff say that behaviour is good in the school.
- Pupils' behaviour in class is exemplary, they are keen to engage in lessons and listen carefully to what their teachers have to say. They enjoy getting together for assemblies. In an assembly which focused on the history of the school, pupils behaved impeccably before engaging in topical collective worship. This was linked to the theme of change and the imminent move of all staff and pupils to their new premises.
- Pupils say that behaviour is good most of the time and that there are very few instances of bullying. Inspectors' observations confirmed this, as did the few recorded incidents of bad behaviour in the school's incident log.
- The school makes sure that pupils know how to stay safe and provides information to both pupils and parents on staying safe while using the Internet. Pupils have a good understanding of the dangers of talking to strangers and have benefited from a number of visitors who have come into the school to talk about dangers; these include Child Line, Chester Phoenix and local Community Police Officers.
- Pupils are made aware of road safety and personal safety through personal, social and health education. The school makes sure that pupils are aware of the harms caused by drugs and the benefits of healthy eating.
- Pupils are very familiar with the school's traffic light behaviour system and know that bullying or using racist or homophobic language are taken seriously and dealt with immediately.
- The school has worked hard with the local authority Education Welfare Officer and families to improve attendance and is able to demonstrate that, although still just below the national average, it is improving.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a clear vision for driving through school improvement. In a short space of time, with the support of an able senior leadership team, committed teachers, governors and parents, he has raised achievement for most groups of pupils successfully. Good leadership has improved the quality of teaching and learning, for example, in mathematics, to secure outstanding levels of attainment for boys at the end of Year 6.
- Leaders of English, mathematics and special educational needs evaluate the effectiveness of their subjects, and ensure that any pupils who are not achieving to the best of their ability are identified and supported.
- Senior leaders assess the quality of teaching accurately through regular observations and visits to classrooms focusing on specific areas such as the quality of marking. Observations of teachers overtime show that the quality of teaching has improved.
- The curriculum develops pupils' knowledge and understanding in a broad range of subjects and helps to refine their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils learn from first-hand experiences through, for example, residential visits to Beeston Outdoor Education Centre, and visits to Beeston Castle, Castleside Farm and Chester Cathedral. Pupils also benefit from specialist German teaching in Key Stage 2, and from a range of extra-curricular activities, including Spanish, fencing, dodge-ball, football and cricket.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced through the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils treat each other and staff with respect and show an understanding and appreciation of the experiences of people less fortunate than themselves. Their understanding of the culturally diverse nature of British society is less well-developed and the school is currently developing links with local schools and schools in other parts of the world, including China.
- Teachers have benefited from training which has helped to improve their teaching and to develop their specific areas of responsibility. The school is an active member of the Dee Schools partnership with which it shares a development programme of peer support to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- The school has benefitted from support and advice from the local authority and a National Leader of Education (appointed by the government through the National College of School Leadership) since its inception. It has found this helpful in moving the amalgamated school forward successfully, raising standards and managing the move to new premises.
- The governing body and school staff ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed and regularly monitor the effectiveness and impact of these procedures.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The new governing body was formed in September 2011, with a new Chair of the Governing Body appointed in December 2012. In a short time the governing body has managed a long-standing and complicated amalgamation successfully. Governors have been fully involved in the recruitment of several members of staff, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher. All governors have taken advantage of training in a number of areas, including recruitment and selection, safeguarding and effective governance. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are coming to grips with the school's data on the performance of different groups of pupils and what it needs to do to improve further. The Chair of the Governing Body holds the headteacher to account and sets challenging targets. Governors play an active role in the life of the school and are regularly involved with pupils in lessons. Governors monitor actions taken to improve the quality of teaching and tackle underperformance. The governing body is still in the early stages of understanding how the pupil premium funding is spent and the impact that it has on raising pupils' achievement.

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	136806
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	400285

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	344
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Russell
Headteacher	Vincent O'Brien
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01244 981098
Fax number	–
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