

Ashton Hayes Primary School

Church Road, Ashton Hayes, Chester, Cheshire, CH3 8AB

Inspection dates 17–18 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 make good progress from their starting points. By the time they leave school at the end of Year 6 their standards of attainment in English and mathematics are well above average.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers know pupils well and plan interesting work to ensure that they enjoy learning and make good progress.
- Pupils behave very well. They show interest and try hard in lessons and work and play together amicably.
- The pupils have a good awareness of how to stay safe. They take on responsibilities willingly and carry them out diligently.
- Regular staff training and meticulous record keeping supports the high profile given to keeping pupils safe.
- The headteacher leads the school with passion and determination. He receives good support from his deputy and other leaders in his relentless drive to improve teaching and pupils' achievement.
- There are rigorous and effective procedures to check on how good the teaching is and how well pupils are learning. Every pupil is known as an individual and their needs are well met.
- The curriculum is enriched by very good opportunities for pupils to undertake practical work outdoors and develop independence and creativity.
- There is a good range of expertise on the governing body and many governors frequently visit the school and support its work in a variety of ways.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching and a small amount of teaching still requires improvement.
- Pupils' understanding of cultural diversity is narrow because the curriculum does not provide them with sufficient opportunities for pupils to learn about the different cultures that exist in modern Britain.
- Too few governors have a good enough understanding of how well pupils are achieving to enable them to hold senior leaders to account and evaluate the school's effectiveness as well as they should.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, five of which were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector listened to pupils read, analysed their work and the school's data about their attainment and progress.
- The inspector held two formal discussions with pupils and spoke to others informally in lessons and at breaks and lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders and with eight governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- The inspector held a discussion with a representative from the local authority and briefly met with the School's Improvement Partner.
- The inspector looked at a range of evidence including: the school's own evaluation of its work, the school's data for tracking the progress of pupils and documentation relating to teachers' performance, safeguarding procedures, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector took account of 39 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and a small number of written comments from parents.

Inspection team

Margot D'Arcy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is low. No pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A relatively large number of pupils join or leave the school other than at the usual times of admission or transfer.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced some significant disruption in staffing.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement to outstanding by ensuring that all of the teaching is at least good and more is outstanding. To do this the school should ensure that:
 - in all lessons the work is matched precisely to the range of pupils' needs so that all make at least good progress
 - teachers' explanations are clear and lesson time is used effectively to maximise learning.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to learn about cultural diversity so that they are well prepared for life in a diverse society
 - more governors understand the data about pupils' achievement so that they are able to hold the school to account by asking incisive questions about the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils in different subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children's attainment on entering the Reception class varies considerably. Their knowledge and skills are generally at least typical for their age, but often a small minority are below age-related expectations. Regardless of their starting points, the children make good progress. They settle quickly and enjoy the exciting range of activities indoors and outside. Children become confident and independent learners and by the time they begin Year 1 their attainment is above average. Skills in literacy have not always been as high as in other areas, but improvements have occurred in the last year and children are currently attaining better in this area.
- Most pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 2 attainment in reading and mathematics is above average. Attainment in writing has been average for the past two years. However, a greater focus on developing pupils' writing, including their use of phonics (the sounds that letters make) has had a good impact. Pupils' current work shows that standards in writing have improved and pupils are making good progress in this aspect. Pupils' skills and understanding of number, shape, space and measure develop well through the many opportunities they have to discuss and explore these ideas in practical activities.
- The effect of staff changes and, historically, variable teaching has been more acutely felt at Key Stage 2. However, incisive staffing decisions minimised the impact and ensured that progress in this key stage remained good overall. Staffing is now stable and pupils' current work reflects more consistently good progress in English and mathematics.
- Although the most recent (2012) Year 6 test results and Year 2 statutory assessments reflected some variations in the achievement of boys and girls, over time there is no pattern of underachievement by gender. Inspection evidence found no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls that was not attributable to individual pupil's needs or capabilities.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their capabilities. Close tracking of how well each pupil is doing enables the school to provide tailored support for these pupils in lessons and in specifically designed work programmes. These strategies are having a good impact on promoting pupils' good progress.
- The school is successful in reducing the attainment gaps between pupils in receipt of the pupil premium and others. In the most recent Year 6 test results for reading and writing, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals did better or almost as well as other pupils. The gap was wider in mathematics, but this represented a very small number of pupils who did not attain the expected standard. From their different starting points, all pupils in receipt of the pupil premium made good progress in English and mathematics, and some made outstanding progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Since the last inspection teaching has varied and pupils' progress has not always been consistently good. However, the headteacher's uncompromising drive for quality teaching secured improvements. While teaching still occasionally requires improvement, these instances are rare. The overall quality of teaching across the school is now more consistent and there are clear examples of outstanding teaching at Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Reception children are taught well. Staff ensure a good balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities. They provide good opportunities for the children to learn through play and intervene well in this, using what they know about individual children to move their learning on.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers' secure subject knowledge, high expectations and knowledge of pupils as individuals are reflected in thoughtful planning and astute questioning. Lesson time is used well to explain new learning and ample time is given for pupils to discuss and investigate ideas and practise skills. Importantly, teachers set challenging work in contexts that capture and maintain pupils' interest and get the best out of them.

- For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 reinforced their understanding of place value by creating increasingly complex multiplication and division calculations, including decimals, for their classmates to solve. The activity generated a great sense of fun as pupils moved around the classroom posing their questions. In Years 2 and 3, carefully planned discussion games deepened pupils' understanding of key vocabulary linked to their topic. The more-able pupils rose to the challenge of using dictionaries to choose correct descriptions for words that had more than one meaning, when compiling their own glossaries.
- In less effective lessons, teachers do not explain tasks clearly enough and work is not matched precisely to pupils' needs to enable them all to make good progress. Occasionally, teachers do not recognise that pupils' understanding is insecure and move them on to new work too quickly.
- In lessons and through marking, teachers give pupils clear information about the levels at which they are working and how to reach the next level. Pupils are given time to reflect on their work and respond to the 'next steps' the teacher has identified to improve it. Excellent examples were seen in which younger pupils made their sentences more complex by adding conjunctions, while older pupils accurately 'levelled' different pieces of writing, identifying the features preventing it from being awarded the next level.
- The teaching of basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills has a high profile and occurs in a range of subjects. For instance, pupils have created power-point presentations of their residential visit to London and have thought of enterprising ways to generate money to purchase more chickens for the outside chicken area.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to helping groups and individuals in class and in specific catch-up programmes. They record pertinent comments about pupils' work, attitudes and progress in the class intervention books, which help teachers to plan the next steps in pupils' learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils show pride in and enjoyment of school. They feel secure and confident that the adults will help and look after them.
- Pupils are exceptionally well behaved. They have good manners and are very respectful to the adults who work with them and to visitors. The tangible 'family feel' is exemplified well by the affable relationships pupils have with each other as they work, play or chat in the dining room over lunch.
- Pupils reflect a realistic view of behaviour. They say that while everyone can have an 'off day' or 'overreact' now and again, most of the time behaviour is good. They appreciate the difference between general misbehaviour and bullying and know about different types of bullying. Pupils say that bullying is rare and trust the school to deal with any issues that do occur.
- Pupils feel that teachers are patient and that the school's rules for behaviour are fair to everyone. They say that they feel safe and it is clear that they have a good understanding of how to spot and avoid dangers, including those that can occur when using the internet.
- Pupils are mature in many areas of their personal development, taking on responsibilities such as play buddies, eco warriors and school councillors. However, while they find learning about different world religions interesting, their appreciation of and attitudes towards cultural diversity are not well developed.
- In lessons pupils show good interest and try hard with their work. They were keen to point out that lessons 'are not all about writing and maths' and that teachers plan lots of fun things for them to do in class and outdoors. They talked about exciting 'envelope lessons', explaining that envelopes may contain investigations or challenges involving a range of subjects.
- Pupils are punctual and their attendance is well above average. There have been no exclusions.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides an excellent lead for school improvement. During times of staff disruption he has taken on many additional responsibilities, but his drive and determination have been unflinching. Improvements have continued and the school has remained effective in promoting pupils' good achievement.
 - There is a constant focus on improving teaching to enable pupils to achieve their best. Rigorous and effective systems are in place to manage the performance of teaching staff who are clear that nothing less than good teaching is acceptable or will be rewarded by salary progression. Within this robust system the staff nevertheless appreciate the headteacher's supportive and developmental approach and feedback. Staff development training is linked closely to school priorities and individuals' targets.
 - The headteacher receives good support from his deputy who provides good leadership of English and oversees the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Other senior and middle leaders also contribute well and the headteacher provides good support for leaders who have taken on new roles this year. Leaders of English and mathematics are effectively involved in conducting checks on how well teaching is promoting effective learning.
 - The curriculum has many good features. These include plenty of opportunities for pupils to learn through practical tasks, French from Reception upwards, opportunities to learn to play an instrument and a good range of extra-curricular clubs. Noteworthy are the opportunities for pupils from Year 1 upwards to go on residential visits, which provide great enrichment for their learning and personal development.
 - While the curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development well and they learn about their own culture and world religions, it does not enable pupils to gain a good enough appreciation of cultural diversity in modern Britain.
 - Safeguarding pupils is given a high priority. The school's arrangements in this area are rigorous and meet all statutory requirements. Parents are very supportive of the school and the vast majority hold it in high regard.
 - The school's learning platform is used well to support homework, provide pupils with a safe environment to communicate with each other and to keep parents informed.
 - The local authority provides light-touch support for this successful school. However, the school has benefited from good quality support and training for aspects of literacy that have enhanced the school's provision.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - governors ensure that there are good policies to promote equal opportunities and tackle discrimination. They are vigilant in checking on how effectively the pupil premium funding has been used and ensure that procedures for managing staff performance are rigorous
 - there is some good expertise among governors that enables them to support aspects of the school's work very effectively. However, too few governors understand the information that is available about pupils' performance. This prevents them from evaluating the school's performance as well as they might, for example by asking incisive questions of school leaders about achievement in different subjects and for different groups of pupils
 - governors ensure that the school's finances are managed well.
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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

Unique reference number	111109
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	403138

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pauline Tilley
Headteacher	Chris Priddey
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2008
Telephone number	01244 981418
Email address	admin@ashtonhayes.cheshire.sch.uk

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