

Frodsham Weaver Vale Primary School

Ship Street, Frodsham, Warrington, WA6 7PZ

Inspection dates 11–12 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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' rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics are not consistently good across the school.
- Although standards in English and mathematics have started to rise, currently too few pupils reach the higher levels. Too few pupils achieve well enough in both the reading and writing elements of English by the end of Key Stage 2.
- The overall quality of teaching is not yet consistently good or better.
- Teachers do not always move the most-able pupils on to more demanding work quickly enough.
- Spelling and grammar skills are not taught systematically across the school and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length or apply their mathematics skills to solving problems.
- Leaders do not analyse the outcomes of action plans rigorously or often enough and, as a result, evaluations of how well the school is doing are sometimes overgenerous.
- In the past, governors have not challenged the school's leaders strongly enough about why some pupils do not make better progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Pupils who join the school at other than the normal times are helped to settle quickly.
- Pupils with special educational needs, including those in the resourced provision, make at least good progress because they are provided for well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They feel very safe and they enjoy school.
- The drive and determination of the new headteacher, supported by the highly committed staff and governors, is helping to move the school forward.
- Parents are very positive about the care their children receive at the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 10 lessons. They also carried out ‘two learning walks’ which involved spending short periods of time in a number of lessons. The inspectors also looked at examples of pupils’ work, listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of reading skills.
- Inspectors held meetings with two groups of pupils and spoke to pupils about their work. Inspectors held meetings with three members of the governing body, spoke to a representative of the local authority and met with members of the school staff.
- Inspectors met with a group of parents and spoke to parents at the start of the school day. There were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to generate a summary of parents’ view. Inspectors took into account the views of staff expressed in the questionnaire completed during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work. They looked at a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, records of current standards and progress, the school development plan and documents relating to pupils’ behaviour and attendance. Minutes from governing body meetings were also considered.

Inspection team

Lyn Pender, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Marilyn Massey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The number of pupils on roll is rising. Year-group sizes currently vary from 12 to 23 pupils.
- Most pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. A larger-than-average proportion of pupils are of Traveller or Irish heritage. A very small proportion of pupils are from a range of other backgrounds and heritages.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above the national average. A well-above average proportion of pupils are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- Four pupils currently access the specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs provided by the local authority at the school. The resourced provision caters for pupils on the autistic spectrum.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium funding is well above the national average. (This additional funding is provided for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.) In this school most of the pupils who receive support from the pupil premium are those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Many pupils join the school at other than the normal time in the school year, often during Years 5 and 6.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the last inspection, the school has experienced a period of considerable turbulence in staffing, with changes to personnel including the appointment of an interim headteacher, then a substantive headteacher, followed by an interim headteacher until the current headteacher took up post in September 2012. Other staffing changes include a period of secondment to the local authority of the resource base manager, who returned to school in September 2013.
- The governing body manages the registered childcare provision on site. This provision is subject to separate to a separate inspection and its report can be read on Ofsted's website at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better to enable pupils to make rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics and to meet or exceed nationally expected standards across the school by ensuring:
 - basic literacy skills, including grammar and spelling, are taught systematically across the school
 - teachers always provide work that regularly challenges most-able pupils
 - teachers provide frequent and regular opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their mathematical skills when solving problems and to write at length.
- Improve school leaders' effectiveness by:
 - sharpening the focus of strategic plans so that they have specific targets for improvement linked to the progress of groups of pupils and tighter timescales for completion so that they can be monitored more closely and more often
 - developing further governors' skills, including their understanding of national assessment data, so that the governing body can challenge the school robustly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' progress since the last inspection has not been consistently good. By the end of Key Stage 2, not enough pupils have made as rapid progress as they should.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 in English and in mathematics improved in 2013 but are still lower than those expected nationally and not enough of the most-able pupils who are capable of reaching the higher levels do so. The proportion of pupils reaching the national average in both reading and in writing is below average.
- Attainment at Key Stage 1 also remains below average and too few pupils reach the higher levels in national assessments. However, the school's records, supported by inspection evidence, show that progress improved rapidly in Years 1 and 2 during the last school year.
- A significant proportion of pupils in the 2013 Year 6 cohort joined the school at other than the normal times. Many of those pupils joined during Key Stage 2 and nearly a third entered the school as late as Year 6. This has been the typical picture over recent times and has had an adverse effect on the overall picture of pupils' attainment. Overall achievement in Key Stage 2, in relation to the progress pupils make from their starting points, is slowly improving because of actions taken by school leadership to improve the quality of teaching.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including the pupils who attend the resourced provision, do at least as well as other pupils in the school given their abilities and starting points. Because of the good support they receive, many of these pupils do well and make the progress expected of them; some do even better than this.
- The attainment in English and mathematics of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is in line with other pupils in the school and the gaps are narrower for these pupils than those seen nationally. The rate of progress made by these groups of pupils has increased this year. The small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups, including pupils from Traveller families or of Irish heritage, do well in relation to their starting points.
- Pupils who join the school at times other than the usual transition points often demonstrate lower attainment than would be expected for their age on their entry to the school. However, their progress is at least similar to others in the school and some make rapid progress.
- The focus on teaching letters and sounds (phonics) has been strengthened recently and this is enabling pupils to now make better progress in reading. School data show that improvements in Year 1 in 2013 are evident and most pupils met the required standard in the national reading check on phonic skills.
- Most children's skills, particularly in communication and language, are well below those typically expected for their age when they join the Nursery class. Children usually leave Reception Year with skills that have improved but are still below the national average. However, improvements in teaching and the curriculum in 2013 have helped to ensure that children now make faster progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. More children now reach a level of development that is typical for their age and this is giving them a better start in Year 1.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving, it is still judged to require improvement because not all pupils are making fast enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics. While mainly good teaching was seen during the inspection and none was inadequate, pupils' work, including that in their books, shows that the overall quality of teaching is not yet consistently good enough or better across the school.
- Where teaching requires improvement, the most-able pupils are not always moved on to work that stretches their thinking and demands more of them quickly enough.
- Opportunities for pupils to produce extended pieces of writing are not provided regularly enough

and this is limiting pupils' progress in writing.

- Pupils are not given enough regular opportunities to develop their mathematics and thinking skills through solving problems.
- School leaders have correctly identified that spelling and grammar are not yet taught systematically enough across the school. This restricts pupils from improving and building on their understanding in reading and writing.
- All teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge. Strong teamwork between teachers and well-trained teaching assistants ensures learners, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs, those entitled to the pupil premium funding or known to be eligible for free school meals, and those who access the resourced provision, are well supported.
- Recent improvements in the quality of teachers' marking mean that it now often provides useful guidance about the next steps pupils need to take to improve their work.
- In all lessons, good relationships exist between pupils and adults. Pupils are generally keen to learn. They enjoy lessons and are encouraged to develop independent skills and 'have a go'. Staff throughout the school are skilful in providing sensitive and unobtrusive support for some pupils who find it difficult to behave well at times.
- The most effective teaching is currently in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Here, children are helped to settle in very quickly. During the inspection, children, some of whom had spent only a few days in the school, were happily and confidently playing with the well-thought-out resources provided. For example, Nursery children were camping in the tent in the classroom using their imaginations to pretend they were on a trip and Reception children were busily rowing their boat made from blocks across an imaginary sea. All were fully engrossed and gaining much from this experience because of the way the adults helped them with carefully phrased questions and gentle encouragement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Frodsham Weaver Vale is a friendly and welcoming place to learn. Pupils are proud of their school and are keen to tell visitors all about it. Behaviour in class and around school is good.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and that behaviour has improved; everybody knows the school rules and adults apply these consistently and fairly. Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying including discriminatory language, prejudice-based and cyber-bullying. They say that bullying does not happen often and any incidents that do occur are dealt with swiftly.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsible roles such as that of school councillors. Older pupils enjoy helping the younger ones on the playground and pupils say this helps make playtime a happy time of day.
- New pupils who join at other than the normal times are made to feel very welcome and are helped to settle quickly and feel part of the school. Pupils recognise that all have different needs and they treat each other with respect.
- Parents are very positive about the school. Those with children who have special educational needs, including pupils who attend the school in the extra places provided by the local authority in particular, appreciate the level of support and care their children receive.
- A small number of pupils have inconsistent attendance. School leaders are extremely proactive in promoting good attendance and the school works sensitively to support families for whom regular attendance is an issue and improvements are ongoing as a result.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management are not yet good because, although improvements in teaching have been secured and more pupils are making faster progress, there is still more to do to ensure consistency of good or better teaching across the school to enable all pupils to achieve

well.

- Governors and staff share the headteacher's resolve to move the school forward rapidly and to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils and the school. The leadership team established by the headteacher on her appointment has begun to improve teaching and raise standards but there is still work to be done on the aspects for improvement identified in the last inspection report. The school has the capacity to continue to improve further.
- The school's evaluation about its performance is thorough; however, some judgements are overgenerous. Leaders have planned a number of actions to bring about improvement with some success, for example in the teaching of phonics and improvements in marking. However, not enough attention is given to providing clear statements against which to check progress and timescales are too long.
- Systems to monitor and track pupils' progress are in place and are used to identify pupils who are underachieving. The information about how well groups of pupils are doing is now shared with the governing body. However, this is a relatively recent development and governors are not yet fully skilled in using this information to hold leaders to account.
- The curriculum brings subjects together into interesting topics and pupils say how much they enjoy their lessons. Visits, including residential trips, visitors and after-school clubs all add to enrichment. Provision for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good.
- Regular physical education sessions, some of which are led by external sports' coaches, and the wide range of well-attended, active after-school sessions enable pupils to develop increasingly healthy lifestyles and enhance their physical well-being. For example, during the inspection boys and girls attended a fun and lively football skills' session led by an experienced football coach.
- The local authority has recognised that the school needs some extra support to help it improve quickly and has provided leadership support and training for staff. The school is an active member of the local schools' Education in Partnership group.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Some members of the governing body are regular visitors to the school and gain first-hand views of the school's work which they share with fellow governors. The headteacher and other leaders provide regular information about the performance of pupils; however, governors do not yet have all the necessary skills to ask the probing questions required to hold leaders fully to account. Nevertheless, governors have carried out an audit of their skills and have identified suitable training to address any gaps.
 - Governors ensure that performance-management systems are in place and that leaders and staff are set targets linked to pupils' progress and school priorities.
 - Governors oversee the school's finances, including the new primary school sports funding, and ensure that the pupil premium grant is used appropriately. They also ensure that appropriate safeguarding requirements, particularly regarding safety of pupils and staff appointments are in place. They ensure that equal opportunities are promoted well and that discrimination is not tolerated in this inclusive school.

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	111115
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	426288

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	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicholas Smith
Headteacher	Suzanne Mills
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2010
Telephone number	01244 981115
Fax number	01928 732695
Email address	admin@weavervale.cheshire.sch.uk

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