

Neston Primary School

Burton Road, Little Neston, Neston, Cheshire, CH64 9RE

Inspection dates 4–5 December 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

- Progress is uneven across the school because teaching is not consistently good enough to enable pupils to make the progress expected of them from their different starting points.
- Too few pupils consistently reach the levels expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In some lessons, pupils do not have time to complete enough work independently and tasks are not hard enough.
- Some teachers lack depth of subject knowledge when developing pupils' mathematics skills. The teaching of basic literacy skills is not yet developed consistently across school.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their skills in mathematics or to write at length in other subjects.
- Targets and timescales in improvement plans are not sufficiently precise to enable leaders to check if the school is improving quickly.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and follow up actions are not yet securing improvements in teaching rapidly enough.
- Teachers have not had enough opportunities to learn best practice from each other.
- The skills of subject leaders to check on pupils' learning are not yet fully developed.

The school has the following strengths

- Over the last year, standards have improved at the end of Key Stage 2 and progress is beginning to speed up in most year groups.
- Because of the leaders' determination to improve the school, some teaching is now good, particularly that in the Reception class, in Years 1 and 2 for the teaching of phonics and in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils feel safe and happy in school. They behave well and enjoy learning and helping others. They happily welcome newcomers into the school and help them to settle in.
- Governors ask robust and searching questions of the more detailed information they now receive on pupils' progress and quality of teaching and this is helping the school to improve.
- The pupil premium grant is being used well to improve the attainment of eligible pupils and to enable them to take part in all after-school activities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 15 lessons or parts of lessons, including two joint observations with the headteacher. The inspectors also looked at examples of pupils' work, listened to pupils read. They observed the teaching of reading skills and talked to pupils about the books they have enjoyed and those that they are currently reading.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils and inspectors spoke to pupils about their work. Inspectors held meetings with two governors. They spoke to two representatives of the local authority, the independent school adviser who works with the school and met with members of the school staff.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start and end of the school day. They took account of the school's own questionnaires to parents and pupils and the 21 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Responses to staff questionnaires completed during the inspection were also considered.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and 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

Jennifer Platt

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Neston is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school at other than the usual times is above average and is much higher than at the time of previous inspection. Some year groups are taught in mixed-age classes.
- Most pupils are White British and speak English as their home language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those supported through school action is well above average. An average proportion of pupils are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion for both of these categories has risen since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through pupil premium funding has risen since the previous inspection and is now well above the national average. This additional funding is provided for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There have been a number of changes to staffing arrangements since the previous inspection.
- The governors provide a breakfast club for pupils run by school staff. Privately managed pre-school provision is provided on school premises. This provision is subject to a separate inspection and its report can be read on the website at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, to further raise standards and rates of pupils' progress by:
 - making sure all teachers provide work which meets the needs of all pupils, keep introductions to lessons sharp and expect more from pupils when they work independently so that learning for all can move at a brisk pace and pupils are able to complete more work in the time available
 - developing the skills and confidence of teachers and teaching assistants in the teaching of mathematics
 - ensuring that the basic skills of literacy, including spelling, punctuation and handwriting, are taught effectively and are built on as pupils move up the school
 - offering pupils more opportunities to apply their skills in real-life problem solving activities in mathematics and in writing imaginatively and at length in other subjects.
- Increase the impact leaders at all levels have on pupils' attainment and progress by:
 - ensuring that improvement planning identifies precisely key outcomes that are required from actions being taken and that timescales are tightly managed
 - making sure that middle leaders and subject leaders are able to contribute fully to the checks on teaching
 - rapidly following through outcomes from monitoring activities to ensure that training is provided if needed and the best practice that exists in the school is shared quickly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils' progress, from their individual starting points, is uneven across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because the quality of teaching is not consistently good or better in all classes.
- Many children join the Reception class with knowledge, skills and understanding below those typical for their age and in some aspects, such as reading and speech and language, well below. Some disruption to teaching in 2012 and 2013 meant that progress was slower than that seen at the time of the previous inspection; fewer children than expected entered Year 1 working in line with expectations, particularly in reading and writing. Teaching is now good in the current Reception class and children are making faster progress.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 have been broadly similar to the national average for a number of years. However, at the end of Year 2 in 2013 standards overall were below average. The school has taken steps to reverse this trend. School records and inspection evidence indicate that Year 1 and Year 2 pupils are now on track to reach nationally expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' knowledge of phonics (letters and sounds that they make) in Year 1 in 2013 was lower than that expected for their age. However, the recent focus by leaders on improving teachers' skills in teaching phonics has made a difference and pupils are now making good progress in acquiring phonic knowledge.
- Overall standards of attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2012 fell to below average levels. Although attainment improved in 2013 in all subjects, standards for pupils, including the most-able, in reading, mathematics and basic skills in writing were still lower than those expected for their age. Current school data and work in pupils' books indicate that improvements are continuing. More pupils are reaching at least the expected levels for their age and some are doing better than this, because of a tighter focus on ensuring pupils are provided with opportunities to develop and improve their basic skills in literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils' progress is quickest in the older classes in Key Stage 2; it is particularly strong in Year 5 and Year 6 where teaching is more challenging. The most-able are making expected progress and some are making better than expected progress in line with the national average in all subjects.
- In some lessons, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. This is because of well planned activities provided by teachers and helpful support from teaching assistants. However, over time, their progress is similar to that of other pupils.
- Since the time of the previous inspection nearly a third of pupils in the school have joined at other than the normal times. In addition, around a fifth of pupils left the school, mainly due to families moving out of the area. In some classes nearly half of the pupils joined the school at other than the normal times. These changes disrupt learning for some and have had an effect on the school's data concerning standards.
- New pupils are welcomed warmly by all. Any additional educational needs or gaps in knowledge are identified quickly to help pupils get off to a good start. As a result, some make rapid progress on arrival, but overall they make similar progress to that of other pupils in the school.
- The pupil premium funding is being used well to improve the achievement of eligible pupils. At the end of Year 6 in 2013, the attainment of pupils who were eligible for the pupil premium, all of whom were known to be eligible for free school meals, improved. The gaps in attainment between these pupils and that of others in the school narrowed. Attainment in writing is similar to that of other pupils in the school, however, attainment in mathematics and reading remains around a term behind.
- The school's arrangements for pupils to read at home have contributed to how much pupils enjoy reading. They particularly appreciate the range of books provided for them and the texts provided as part of topic work.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Not enough teaching is good or better to ensure that pupils make good or better progress through the school. Over time teaching in Years 1 to 4 has not been consistently good enough to ensure that pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy have increased year-on-year.
- Some teaching is good, and a little is outstanding. The most effective teaching is usually in the older classes in Key Stage 2. Good teaching was also seen in the Reception class.
- In one outstanding Year 6 lesson, where the teacher used role-play to capture pupils' imagination, the challenge for all pupils was evident throughout. All were able to make brisk progress and produce very creditable written work.
- In less effective lessons, the level of challenge is not always high enough to meet the needs of all learners. As a result, the progress made by some pupils is not fast enough. Teachers' introductions are also sometimes too lengthy and this means that there is not enough time for pupils to work independently.
- Some lack of subject knowledge in teaching the basic skills in mathematics and those of grammar, spelling and punctuation in literacy has resulted in pupils' skills developing inconsistently across year groups. However, the school is now focussing well on providing the training necessary to raise teachers' confidence in all aspects of mathematics and literacy.
- The recent effective changes introduced by school leaders have led to secure improvements in the teaching of early reading skills. Pupils are beginning to make faster progress and become more confident in using phonics (letters and the sounds they make). Teachers and teaching assistants use increasingly effective questioning skills to regularly check pupils' understanding.
- Pupils enjoy lessons and the good relationships which exist with their teachers and teaching assistants. Adults encourage pupils to use their targets to check how well they are doing and pupils say that they find the 'next steps' advice shown in marking helpful.
- The learning mentor and teaching assistants contribute well to the learning and support of pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs and enable pupils to participate fully in their lessons.
- The teaching for pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is well managed. Some of this funding is providing extra support from teaching assistants which is helping pupils make faster progress from their individual starting points.
- The outdoor learning environment, both within the Early Years Foundation Stage and within in Years 1 to 6, enriches pupils' learning experiences well.

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

- Pupils are happy in school. Inspection evidence and school records show that behaviour is typically good in class and around school. It is not outstanding because in some lessons pupils' attention sometimes drifts and they are not fully engaged in their learning.
- Behaviour management systems work very effectively. School rules and rewards are adjusted to reflect the age and ability of pupils. They are understood by all and are applied fairly by staff. A few pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are helped to do so sensitively and calmly by the adults.
- Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying, such as name-calling, discriminatory and cyber-bullying. They say that bullying is rare and any issues are always sorted out quickly and fairly by staff.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsible roles and the older ones enjoy helping the younger ones for example, as play leaders at break times. This is a strength of the school.
- The school provides sensitive support for pupils and their families whose circumstances might

make them vulnerable. Strong partnerships exist with a range of external agencies, including those who support children in the care of the local authority. This ensures pupils and their families receive all the help they need.

- Attendance is close to the national average due to the concerted efforts of pupils, parents and staff. New pupils are quickly helped to understand that the school considers it very important to attend regularly and on time.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

In previous years, the school has not been quick enough in identifying when pupils' progress has slowed. Its plans for improvement have not been focused tightly enough on outcomes for pupils and what needs to be done to ensure that improvements are swift and effective.

The headteacher has high aspirations and expectations for himself, staff and pupils. He has communicated his determination to improve the school well, so that all now share his commitment. However, although checks on the quality of teaching are carried out and performance management is in place, follow-up actions have not yet been robustly reviewed in the light of greater achievement for pupils.

- Leaders have ensured that the needs of the increased number of pupils entering at other than the normal times are identified as soon as possible; this helps those new to the school to settle quickly. There has also been effective training for teachers and support staff to ensure that all pupils are given the support they need to manage their own emotions and behaviour, ensuring good behaviour. These actions demonstrate the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- Leaders understand what constitutes good teaching and offer clear advice to staff about how teaching can be improved. Training is provided to bring about improvements, for example in developing early reading skills. However, although a good start has been made, training in mathematics is not yet complete and some teachers still lack confidence in teaching this subject.
- Opportunities for teachers to learn about what works well from observing each other's practice still needs to be developed further. Senior leaders have a wealth of information about the progress made by pupils and are using this to gain an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The plan to bring about improvements is focused on correct priorities. However, the criteria used by leaders to check how successful they have been are not sharp enough and timescales are too long to bring about improvements swiftly.
- Middle leaders and subject leaders are not yet fully involved in checks on the quality of teaching to enable them to contribute fully to improvements.
- The school has good plans for teaching basic skills but these are not yet carried out consistently by all teachers. Opportunities for pupils to apply their problem-solving skills in mathematics or to write at length, imaginatively and creatively in other subjects are not frequent enough. The curriculum includes many enrichment activities which all pupils enjoy and spiritual, moral and social development is promoted well. The recently reviewed Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum responds well to children's needs and interests so that they become happy, independent learners. The breakfast club helps pupils who attend get their day off to a good start.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors, the school's own parental questionnaires and parents who responded to Parent View indicate that they hold very positive views about the school leadership and staff and appreciate the care provided for their children.
- The local authority has supported the Early Years Foundation Stage and provided advice and support with behaviour management and attendance issues.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body understands that the school needs to improve rapidly. Governors have intensified their scrutiny of pupils' progress and impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Regular training and visits to the school which provide them with first-hand views of the school have helped governors to see how to challenge the school further. This has enabled the governing

body to be more demanding in terms of moving the school forward. Governors ensure that the performance management of the headteacher is rigorous and teachers' progression through the pay scales increasingly relates to their levels of responsibility and pupil outcomes. The governing body have been effective in ensuring that the achievement of those pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is improving. Governors have a clear overview of the school's finances, including the recent Primary School Sports funding which is successfully enabling more pupils to participate in sports activities and promoting more active and healthy lifestyles for all. The specialist coaching provided through this funding is helping to increase the performance of pupils in physical education lessons. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

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	110987
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	426311

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	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lindsey Hinks
Headteacher	Rob Golding
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2011
Telephone number	0151 338 2500
Fax number	0151 353 0992
Email address	admin@nestonpri.cheshire.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

