

Audlem St James' Church of England Primary School

Heathfield Road, Audlem, Crewe, Cheshire, CW3 0HH

Inspection dates

27–28 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher's outstanding leadership has transformed the school by bringing rapid improvement to key areas of its work.
- She has inspired the drive for improvement among governors and staff at every level.
- From being an area for concern at the time of the previous inspection, the Early Years Foundation Stage is now a strength.
- Pupils throughout the school make good progress and achieve well. Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 have risen and are currently above average.
- Pupils' outstanding behaviour in lessons and their highly positive attitudes to school underpin their good achievement. They feel entirely safe in school.
- The quality of teaching is good and some is outstanding. Activities are planned well. A good variety of methods is used to capture pupils' interests and make learning interesting.
- Highly effective management of teaching and learning has brought rapid improvement to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, work is not well enough matched to pupils' varying abilities.
- Marking is not as good in all subjects as it is in English.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in different ways in order to improve their good understanding of the subject even further.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons and part-lessons during the inspection. One lesson was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings took place with pupils, staff members and members of the governing body. There were also discussions with representatives from the local authority.
- Also taken into account were 29 responses from parents via the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as questionnaires completed by members of staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and examined a wide range of documentation that included: national assessment data and the school's own assessments; samples of pupils' work; local authority reports; the school's own view of its work; curriculum information; minutes from governing body meetings and safeguarding documents.

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Pamela Davenport

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is also below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard for primary schools which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Pre-school provision and after-school care are available on a site adjacent to the school. These are not managed by the governing body and are reported on separately. The reports for these settings may be viewed at www.ofsted.gov.uk.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning to outstanding by:
 - providing work that consistently brings the best from all ages and abilities in all classes and especially challenges the most able
 - making sure that marking in all subjects is of the same good quality as that seen in literacy books.
- Improve pupils' good understanding of mathematics by giving them more opportunities to use their knowledge and skills in different practical ways, for example by using the outdoor environment.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are given a very good start in Nursery and Reception, where there have been significant improvements since the previous inspection.
- A vastly improved learning environment has changed the way that teachers plan and assess children's development, and has, consequently, lifted the quality of teaching and learning to consistently good.
- Children's abilities are typical for their age when they enter Nursery. All reach at least a good level of development in all that they do and are fully prepared for the challenges of Year 1 by the time they leave Reception.
- Good progress continues in Years 1 and 2. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics (letters and sounds) screening test was above average in 2013. This means that pupils read confidently by the end of Year 2. They read regularly at home and at school, enjoy books and achieve well. Standards in reading are improving.
- Standards in writing and mathematics also show a rising trend over time at the end of Year 2. Pupils' current work shows good progress and school assessments indicate an improvement in standards over previous years.
- There was a dip in overall standards in Year 6 in 2013, caused by disrupted teaching and sometimes ineffective learning for that group earlier in the key stage. That led to some underachievement by some pupils.
- The situation was tackled head on by the headteacher on her arrival in the school. Although evidence shows that most pupils made good progress over the short term from their individual starting points, some did not attain the expected standards in English and mathematics, because there was not enough time for them to make up all the ground they had lost.
- Currently, standards in English and mathematics in Year 6 are on track to be above average by the time they leave. Pupils' progress has improved rapidly since the previous inspection, due largely to the headteacher's highly effective leadership in improving teaching and systems for checking progress and setting targets for pupils.
- Pupils in Year 6 read to a high standard. They have very positive attitudes to reading and strive to reach the school's high expectations of them as fluent readers who enjoy books.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress from their individual starting points. The school sets ambitious targets for these pupils and provides good additional teaching support for them so that this group of pupils achieve well. Progress is checked very carefully and individual case studies help teachers to measure the impact of the help that is given.
- Most-able pupils are also given additional help so that they can achieve their best. There are 'booster' teaching groups for pupils who are potentially capable of reaching the highest Level 6 in national tests. That number is increasing. This level of support, which is outside usual lesson times, is not always reflected as strongly in pupils' learning in lessons and sometimes teachers play 'too safe' by not letting pupils get to the real challenges quickly enough.
- Very few pupils in the school are supported by pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals. Analysis of the group's current progress shows almost no differences in Years 3 and 4 and only slight differences in reading between groups in Years 5 and 6. There are too few pupils known to be eligible for free school meals to make a comparison of their attainment in English and in mathematics. There is regular discussion between the headteacher and governors about the impact of pupil premium spending, so that pupils who are supported by the funding continue to have equal opportunities to achieve their best.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching throughout the school has improved at a very good pace since the previous inspection, because of the positive ways that teachers have responded to the high expectation set by senior leaders.
- Training to improve teachers' subject knowledge and skills, with a special focus on writing, has been a main feature of improvement over the past year.
- There is effective promotion of pupils' speaking, listening and literacy skills. Pupils are encouraged to talk or to use drama as an introductory activity in order for them to produce some of their best writing.
- Pupils in Year 1, for example, acted out the adventure of a sea voyage after listening to a poem and were on their toes with excitement by the time it came for them to write. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 wrote some very moving poems about the First World War after discussing the feelings that soldiers may have experienced and re-enacting scenes from the trenches.
- The range and quality of writing generally across different subjects is commendable.
- Mathematics is also taught well. Pupils benefit from the good knowledge that staff have of the subject and so make good progress in their understanding of number and calculation skills.
- Pupils frequently apply those skills to solving number problems, but have fewer chances to test their knowledge and skills in more practical ways across different subjects.
- One successful mathematics activity took place outside of the classroom during the inspection, but this approach to mathematics learning does not feature often enough.
- There is also good teaching in other subjects. During the inspection, pupils were seen to do well in physical education and science lessons, as well as in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The quality of topic work in pupils' books is impressive.
- While work is generally suitable for the age-ranges and varying abilities of pupils, there are times when work is not hard enough, especially for most able pupils. In a science lesson for example, not enough was expected of some pupils when recording observations and drawing conclusions about the growth of seeds.
- Similarly, in a mathematics lesson, the most able pupils made slower progress than they were capable of because they spent time completing relatively simple tasks before starting more challenging work.
- Teaching resources are used well, including electronic whiteboards and laptops to help pupils learn.
- Teaching assistants contribute well in lessons and when working with individual pupils. They work effectively with class teachers, know the pupils' abilities well and deal sensitively with their particular needs.
- Assessments are used well to plan work and set new targets for pupils. Good questioning of pupils clarifies their level of understanding and gives pupils a say in planning their own learning. Marking in literacy books is good. It shows pupils clearly how to improve their work and pupils respond quickly to speed up their progress. This kind of effective marking is not seen in other subjects, however, so pupils are less able to re-think their work and take their learning to the next step.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- In lessons they are attentive and very keen to learn. They work hard and are always willing to share problems with each other. Pupils say, 'Lessons are always fun because we do lots of different things.'
- Pupils also behave exceptionally well around the school. They are extremely well mannered in the dining room, for example, and their behaviour during school assemblies is impeccable.

- They are invariably polite and respectful and have very trusting relationships with others, including the adults in school who look after them.
- Their excellent behaviour stems from the strong Christian values that are taught by the school.
- Pupils speak enthusiastically about their 'good to be green awards' which make them think harder about how to avoid losing 'golden time'.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils feel that they are extremely well cared for and parents' views confirm that.
- Pupils comment that, 'Nobody feels unsafe because of bullying', and they report that there is no name-calling in school. They also say that if there is a 'falling out' people forgive, but that such disagreements do not happen very often. Care and respect are very much part of pupils' thinking and they know that there is always help at hand when it is needed.
- They know about potentially dangerous situations outside of school, including those linked to cyber-bullying and they know how to deal with them if they occur.
- A wide range of responsibilities enables pupils to make an excellent contribution to the life of the school. They arrive in school punctually, dressed smartly, and their attendance is typically above the national average. They keep the school and playground tidy and are particularly proud of 'the shack' which is the outdoor classroom that the very active school council helped to plan and have built.
- There are reading buddies to help younger pupils, and all contribute to local, national or world-wide charities.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's leadership has had an enormous impact on the school's rapidly improved performance.
- In the relatively short time since her appointment, she has taken the skills and expertise of senior leaders, teachers and governors to a higher level and gathered around her a team whose only focus is to continue to improve on what they do.
- Since the previous inspection, all staff and governors have fully, and successfully, embraced both local authority help and that of external consultants to improve teaching and pupils' progress. The local authority now has every confidence that the school's leaders can continue to manage further improvements on their own.
- Excellent management of teachers' performance, driven by the headteacher's determination to tackle the underachievement from before her time here, has paid off.
- Successful new appointments, training to improve subject knowledge and skills, very robust checking of teachers' work and systems for teachers to reflect on and share ideas about their own teaching have significantly improved the quality of teaching and learning. Confidence levels are high and teachers know what is now expected of them. All are fully committed to raising the quality of their work to outstanding.
- Middle leaders in charge of subjects make an excellent contribution to school improvement. Their very good subject knowledge and capacity for teamwork ensure that there is an enjoyable and challenging curriculum that helps pupils to achieve well. Enrichment through clubs, residential and non-residential visits and themed weeks that have a particular curriculum focus are strong features.
- The use of the primary sport funding is enhancing pupils' chances for active outdoor learning and physical education effectively. Teachers are currently improving their skills through training and there are longer-term plans to extend the range of activities for pupils in order to further improve their health and physical well-being.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are highly ambitious for the school and are fully aware of how good it can become. Their very accurate analysis of school and national assessment data gives them a clear picture of the school's progress. Rigorous training has raised their understanding of school leadership and management to new levels and equipped governors well to challenge and support the school very effectively. With school leaders, teaching and learning is high on the governors' agenda. They have contributed very well to its improvement and understand how advancement in teachers' salaries is underpinned by their performance in the classroom.
- Governors actively check the school's performance with the headteacher and staff. They focus especially on the impact of pupil premium spending to make sure that there is equality of opportunity for all pupils and that any gaps between the achievement of groups are closed. Governors are watchful, also, over the use of sport funding and the benefits that it brings for pupils. Statutory duties are fulfilled efficiently. All policies are reviewed and updated regularly and safeguarding procedures meet all of the government's 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	111267
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	432094

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	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Furber
Headteacher	Rebecca Jewitt
Date of previous school inspection	25 September 2012
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