

Over St John's CofE Primary School

Delamere Street, Winsford, Cheshire, CW7 2LU

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2014

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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From their individual starting points, pupils make good progress. Standards are rising and pupils leave school with achievement that is above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy learning because teaching is good and activities are varied and imaginative.
- Pupils behave extremely well. They are polite, friendly and make a massive contribution to the friendly atmosphere in the school.
- Staff care for the pupils very well; pupils feel safe and know how to look after themselves.
- Checks on pupils' progress are rigorous and action is taken if pupils fail to reach the ambitious targets set for them. As a result, achievement is improving.
- The new senior leadership team is already clear about the future. Teaching is stronger because it is closely checked and support is readily available.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Writing in Key Stage 1 is below average and pupils do not always write neatly and accurately.
- Activities do not always fully match pupils' abilities, especially for the most able pupils in Key Stage 1.
- Marking includes many useful comments on how pupils can improve but opportunities for them to respond are not always provided.
- The role of subject leader is not fully developed and priorities and actions are not always clear.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in 11 lessons.
- Discussions were held with staff, members of the governing body, the local authority and pupils.
- Pupils read to the inspector.
- Pupils' work was analysed with a focus on writing, mathematics and the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's development plan, records checking on pupils' progress and teaching, the minutes of meetings held by the governing body and information about safeguarding.
- The views of 25 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were analysed. The inspector also responded to concerns expressed by parents, and spoke to parents as they dropped their children off at the start of the school day. The results of the school's most recent consultation with parents were also reviewed.
- Eighteen responses from staff to the inspection questionnaire were analysed.

Inspection team

Jennifer Platt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- An average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The great majority of pupils are White British. The few pupils from minority ethnic groups all speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Following two years of acting headship, the acting headteacher became the permanent headteacher in September 2013. Two teachers are new this academic year and the deputy headteacher takes up her role formally in September 2014.
- The school has been involved in the Lesson Study Project at Edge Hill University, based on raising attainment for pupils with a focus on the use of the pupil premium.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, especially in writing in Key Stage 1, by:
 - ensuring that tasks – including when learning letters and their sounds – are consistently pitched at the correct level so that pupils always make as much progress as possible
 - improving the teaching of writing at Key Stage 1 with a focus on handwriting and accuracy in basic literacy skills
 - giving pupils an opportunity to respond to teachers' useful comments when their work has been marked.
- Developing the role of subject leaders, other than for English and mathematics, now that staffing is more stable so that closer attention is given to planning future actions linked to pupils' attainment.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The school is making up lost ground caused by some recent staffing disruption that especially slowed progress in Key Stage 1. Results of national assessments vary because of the small size of cohorts but have risen steadily at the end of Key Stage 2 and are now above average. From starting school with skills that are below, and sometimes well below, those typical for their age, pupils' achievement is good.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Assessment is used successfully to check on progress and examples of work are kept in the children's individual profiles. These show an imaginative range of experiences. Children enjoy being creative and trying out their own ideas. Pictures of poppies as they shared the nation's celebration of the D-Day landings were beautiful. Children practise their numbers and writing throughout the day. One child had written on her picture, 'for all the soldiers'. Many reach the levels expected by the end of Reception, although this varies and achievement is lower in aspects of literacy and numeracy.
- Progress is improving in Key Stage 1, with closer checks on how well pupils are doing and more stimulating experiences. Most make good progress in reading and mathematics to reach the levels expected. Progress is slower in writing and attainment is below average. Good progress in Key Stage 2 reflects the consistency in teaching, which is good and, at times, outstanding.
- Results of the screening check in phonics (letters and their sounds) in Year 1 were below average in 2013. Teaching of phonics has been adjusted with more focus on learning through activities to help pupils remember these skills. However, tasks are not always set at the correct level for pupils to ensure they make as much progress as possible. Older pupils are confident and fluent readers. They read a wide range of texts with very clear ideas of how authors weave a plot to capture their imagination.
- A clear system to develop pupils' expertise in mathematics as they move from class to class is in place. As a result, they have a good range of skills which they draw on effectively to solve problems. Test results last year revealed some highly skilled mathematicians who reached the very high Level 6.
- There has been a sharp focus on improving pupils' writing skills by providing an emphasis on stimulating pupils' imagination. Examples of work from older pupils are interesting to read, neat and structured well with good understanding of how to use paragraphs. In Years 1 and 2, pupils often include creative words but there are examples of untidy work and errors in basic punctuation skills.
- The most able pupils make good progress overall. This is most obvious in Key Stage 2, where a growing proportion of pupils are attaining the higher levels in national tests. Although pupils in Key Stage 1 are now making better progress, at times activities do not challenge them enough to always give of their best.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make good progress. They used to lag behind others but this has improved as leaders and governors check more closely that their needs are met. There are too few eligible pupils to report on their overall attainment in national tests.
- Disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They ask for advice when they need it and receive good support in class and in small-group sessions.
- Staff welcome pupils who are newcomers and the few who speak English as an additional language. They flourish in the welcome they receive from staff and pupils and make good progress.
- Pupils' art on display, their efforts in physical education and amazing singing show a breadth in pupils' talents. There is no significant difference in the progress of pupils of different abilities or backgrounds, showing that the school promotes equal opportunities successfully.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils say that they enjoy learning. Although a few parents expressed some concern about recent, unavoidable staffing changes, the vast majority think teaching is good and appreciate the way leaders have tackled the difficulties.
- Pupils are full of praise for their teachers. The variety of activities captures pupils' interest and sustains their learning. In a Year 6 lesson observed, pupils were very keen to write their own play scripts following role play from the teacher and teaching assistant. This entertaining activity made clear to pupils how stage directions inferred the character's feelings, and they used this most successfully when they performed their own scripts.
- Teaching is becoming much more precise in checking on pupils' progress and setting activities that match their abilities. However, at times teaching is directed too much towards the middle range of ability and this leads to the most able and those with special educational needs finding the activities either too easy or too difficult. In Key Stage 1, activities in pupils' books are not always hard enough for the most able pupils and this slows down their learning.
- The teaching of reading is good, with regular time allocated to guided reading sessions. These sessions include opportunities to read with an adult and a range of purposeful activities that extend successfully pupils' ability to extract information from books.
- Daily mental sessions in mathematics are taught well. These sessions include healthy competition and practical, challenging activities that consolidate basic skills.
- Teaching of writing is stronger in Key Stage 2 than Key Stage 1, where expectations of the presentation of work and accuracy in the use of punctuation are not always high enough. Some pupils do not produce their best work.
- Teaching is becoming increasingly effective at pointing out to pupils exactly what they need to do to improve. Comments are easy for pupils to understand and often include additional examples for pupils to practise. In many cases, pupils respond and so learn from their mistakes. However, the opportunity for this response is not always provided and some requests go unanswered.
- Classrooms are warm, friendly and displays include many prompts to guide pupils. The management of pupils' behaviour is firm but friendly, leading to an atmosphere conducive to effective and enjoyable learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The benefits of a small school are fully exploited as all pupils, whatever their age, play together. Older pupils are excellent role models to the younger ones who look up to them. One younger pupil described her favourite event as walking to church with the older ones. Attention in assembly is excellent. Pupils rise to the challenge to take an active part. They reflect on the messages given and prayers are said reverently.
- Around the school, pupils conduct themselves very well. Their behaviour at play, especially when resources are available, is exemplary. They share equipment when skipping and take it in turns in small games often organised by the pupils themselves.
- In lessons, pupils are attentive and there is always a good show of hands to answer questions. Older pupils' answers to the teacher's question about the skills they need when working without adult intervention made it very clear they could rise to the challenge. They said, 'to be responsible and not rely on teachers telling us what to do', 'to make decisions' and 'not to be afraid to take a chance'. These mature responses from Year 6 pupils show that they are prepared well for their secondary education.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is excellent. Pupils have a well-developed appreciation of how to stay safe. They recognise different types of bullying and say that it is very rare in their school. They include name calling, falling out and upsetting others by not letting them join in their activities and try to avoid this. They say staff and visitors provide many important messages about keeping safe, including when using the internet. Above all, pupils

were completely adamant that they trust the staff to keep them safe and know they can approach them with any worries. Pupils who met with the inspector said they enjoyed school because 'Teachers are kind and young and old work together in a friendly atmosphere.'

- It is not surprising that attendance is rising to above average despite an episode of chicken pox!

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leadership and more stable staffing are already having a profound impact on improving the school.
- Improved systems to assess pupils' progress provide very detailed information on the progress of individuals as well as that of specific groups. This is used with increasing success to provide, for example, more support for pupils in receipt of the pupil premium support to close the gap with their peers.
- The headteacher has taken primary responsibility for checking the quality of teaching. This has been done with the clear purpose of gaining insight into aspects that need improving. The process has effectively ironed out some weaknesses and has resulted in staff being deployed to have the maximum impact. Training is linked closely to the needs of the individual and the school's priorities. This is reaping benefits in the teaching of phonics although more remains to be done.
- Teachers and leaders now meet together termly to discuss pupils' progress. This has been a successful move on the headteacher's part to share the ownership of progress with staff. They attend meetings prepared with outlines of actions to take when a pupil is not doing as well as expected.
- Staff have targets based on their performance and pupils' progress. They are aware that only by achieving these will salary awards be put in place.
- The leaders' thorough appraisal of what is working well and what requires attention leads to an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. This information is used effectively to set accurate priorities and precise actions in the school's development plan. These are reaping benefits.
- The headteacher and substantive deputy for September lead the development of mathematics and English well. In a small school, most teachers have a middle management role and roles have not been fully reorganised after the staff changes. Most subject leaders have carried out an audit but their role in monitoring is not fully established and planning is not yet precise enough.
- The curriculum includes a breadth of experiences to whet the appetites of all. Pupils appreciate the wide range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities that are provided for them. Often visits are at the core of a topic and this adds extra relevance to pupils' learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully. They celebrate their own faiths alongside an understanding of other cultures. Pupils value the beliefs of others; they show compassion for others and share a focus on support and care.
- Parents value what the school provides. Although some concern was expressed about communications, this was not supported by the majority. Staff are available at the start of the day and many parents take the opportunity to discuss concerns with them.
- The new primary school sport funding is used most effectively. Staff training has been a priority and evaluations have been very positive, with phrases such as 'raised my confidence' and 'brilliant activities'. Clubs have increased with different experiences such as tri-golf and quick shot cricket, adding significantly to pupils' adoption of healthy lifestyles.
- The local authority provides light-touch support, responding when contacted by the school. Checks on teachers' assessments, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage, have ascertained that teachers make accurate judgments. This has given staff confidence in their assessments.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are more challenging, showing a desire to get to the bottom of the dip in attainment in Key Stage 1 and to ensure that good progress is maintained. Training has improved their analysis of data and they know that improving pupils' achievement in writing is

the school's priority. They understand how the pupil premium funding is spent, have checked that progress is accelerating and that gaps are closing. Some governors check on teaching following walks around the school and others have responded to invitations to lessons. They are well informed by the headteacher and know that past difficulties have been tackled successfully. They are aware that staff targets link to salary rewards and check that these are met. The governing body ensures that safeguarding fully meets 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	111263
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	444320

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah McClellan
Headteacher	Emma Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2010
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