

Upton Westlea Primary School

Weston Grove, Upton-by-Chester, Chester, Cheshire West and Chester CH2 1QJ

Inspection dates 29–30 September 2015

Overall effectiveness **Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Standards at the end of Year 6 have declined because some pupils do not make enough progress from their starting points.
- The outcomes for different groups are too varied across the school. Disadvantaged pupils and less-able pupils make slower progress than their peers.
- Pupils' gains in writing are weaker than in reading and mathematics. Many have weaknesses in basic skills and not all have the opportunity, or ability, to write at length and with flair.
- Some pupils tread water when they move into a new key stage because teachers do not build on what pupils already know and can do.
- Not all teachers have a firm grasp of how to check pupils' progress accurately.
- The extra help pupils receive in class and during small group sessions is not helping them to catch up quickly enough.
- Checks on pupils' progress do not pick up those who are not learning as well as they should from their different starting points.
- Although there are some signs of success, leaders have not made quick enough in-roads in tackling the variation in pupils' achievement.
- Governors do not ask enough searching questions about pupils' outcomes. They have not ensured pupil premium funding is used effectively to boost the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Children get off to a great start in the early years. Teachers pay close attention to the gaps in children's learning. This means they start Year 1 on a firm footing.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel free from teasing and hurtful name-calling.
- Pupils in the resource base provision and the most-able pupils make strong progress from their different starting points.
- The support for pupils from service families is second to none. As a result these pupils make the move into school seamlessly and do as well as their peers.
- Leaders have an honest view of the school. Plans to tackle weaknesses are already underway. Weaker teaching does not go unnoticed and effective support for teachers has helped them to raise their game when teaching mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, particularly in writing, by:
 - helping teachers to build on what pupils already know and can do, so pupils do not lose ground when they transfer into a different key stage
 - reviewing the whole-school programme for teaching writing to make sure that there is a systematic approach to building pupils' writing skills as they move from class to class
 - ensuring that teachers have the skills and subject knowledge to help pupils understand the writing process so they produce well-structured work that appeals to a reader
 - making sure teachers tackle weaknesses in pupils' spelling, handwriting and punctuation skills as soon as they appear
 - helping all teachers to measure pupils' progress accurately.

- Improve outcomes for pupils, particularly those pupils who are disadvantaged or less able by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what less-able pupils can achieve
 - reviewing the use of pupil premium funding and making sure everyone has a role in championing the success of disadvantaged pupils
 - reviewing the different strategies in place for supporting pupils who fall behind to ensure these programmes have a greater impact in closing achievement gaps.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring governors are well equipped to ask searching questions about pupils' outcomes and challenge leaders on the underachievement of any group
 - making sure all information on pupils' outcomes is accurate, reliable and enables senior leaders to spot any gaps in the progress different groups make from their starting points.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

An external review of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- The education in the school has declined since the last inspection. This is because leaders, including governors, have not been relentless enough in championing the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, in tackling weaknesses in pupils' writing skills and making sure less-able pupils catch up quickly.
- Pupils' progress is checked frequently, but leaders have not gone far enough in using this information to find out how well different groups, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are faring against their starting points. Some of the information is not completely reliable; it is overgenerous in some areas of the school. Consequently, leaders have not been able to pinpoint all of the pupils who need extra help to catch up. Moreover, this extra support is not looked at closely enough to make sure it is doing all it should in closing achievement gaps.
- The systems to check whether pupil premium funding is making a difference to the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils lack rigour. As a result, this extra funding has not provided value for money. The funding to support pupils from service families is being used to greater effect. These pupils settle into school quickly and do as well as their classmates due to the strong support they receive for their personal development and well-being.
- Checks on teaching happen frequently, but they do not always get to the heart of the matter. Too much is centred on how teachers follow whole-school policies, rather than on the pupils' learning. The process for managing teachers' performance has been successful in rooting out weaker teaching in the past. It ensures successful teaching is celebrated and rewarded. However, the targets set for teachers do not go far enough in making sure the progress of disadvantaged pupils is everyone's business.
- Subject leaders do their bit to support teachers and ensure different subjects are covered in depth. Some are leading the way; the work to lift the quality of teaching in mathematics is bearing fruit. Not all leaders are following suit. No one is making sure that teachers follow a whole-school systematic approach to writing so pupils can build on, and extend, their skills as they move throughout school.
- Teachers who are new to the teaching profession are being brought into the fold quickly. The welcome and support they receive is setting them up well for their future career.
- The school uses sports funding to develop teachers' skills in teaching physical education, to purchase equipment and to pay for external coaches. This is having some success. Participation rates in after-school activities are increasing and more pupils are taking part in inter-school competitions.
- The work to develop pupils' skills and knowledge in subjects other than English and mathematics is strong. Subjects are linked together into exciting topics, which harness pupils' enthusiasm and make their learning meaningful. The educational opportunities in the local area are squeezed dry to enhance pupils' enjoyment and learning. Younger pupils can relate to Roman times because of the extensive fieldwork they do in Chester. Similarly, older pupils gain an insight into rivers and canals because of the opportunities to find out first-hand what it is like to work and live on a canal. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and residential visits pepper pupils' rich experiences during their time in school. Pupils gain a good understanding of diversity, celebrating different cultures and religions within the school and the world. This work, plus opportunities for pupils to visit Parliament, to meet local Councillors and to set their own goals for the future sets them up well for life in modern Britain. It also promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- Despite a decline since the last inspection, no one has lost sight of the fundamental building blocks that make Upton Westlea a caring, inclusive and harmonious community. Almost all of the parents who responded to Parent View would recommend the school to others. There are very few instances of harassment and pupils have equal access to all of the exciting learning opportunities. Nonetheless, equality of opportunity is no better than adequate because some groups are not as well prepared for the next steps in their education as others within the school and across the country.
- The headteacher has wasted no time in getting to grips with her new role. Her insightful views of the school are spot-on. None of the inspection findings are a surprise because weaknesses have been picked up and appropriate action is underway to return the school to its former glory. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have formed a tight-knit team who speak as one in their desire to bring about improvement. They are ably supported by staff who are open to change and willing to play their part. Some areas of the school are getting better. Children's outcomes at the end of Reception are going from strength-to-strength, Scores in the Year 1 phonics check (the sounds that letters represent) are increasing and the quality of mathematics teaching is stronger. This signals the capacity of leaders and

teachers to bring about further improvement.

- The local authority has provided light touch support for the school. Local authority officers have supported governors with the appointment of a new headteacher. Their work with the early years team has been useful in making sure that the indoor classroom and outdoor area are shaped well to children's needs.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have not asked enough searching questions about pupils' outcomes. They have been too quick to accept reasons for a decline at the end of Key Stage 2 without probing the information they receive deeply enough.
 - Governors have not championed the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. They have had a say in how pupil premium funding is spent, but they do not keep a check on the difference this is making in closing achievement gaps.
 - They ensure that all statutory duties are met and they fulfil their role in making sure pay rewards are only offered to teachers with a proven track record of success.
 - Despite the weaknesses in governance, there is no denying the commitment and loyalty governors have for the school. They give their time generously, visiting classes regularly and meeting with leaders to find out for themselves how well pupils are faring. The inspection findings have been a bolt out of the blue, but no-one is arguing about the outcome or refusing to accept responsibility. Governors are eager to take part in an external review of governance because they share a common desire to do their best for the good of the pupils who attend Upton Westlea.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Keeping pupils safe is everyone's business so staff, including those who are new to the school, are trained well to spot any signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. Any concerns are reported to external services and followed up thoroughly. School evidence points to some notable examples of the successful steps school staff have taken to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not been successful in helping all pupils to do their very best. This has led to some groups, such as the most-able, excelling while others lag behind.
- Teachers do not always demand enough from less-able pupils. These pupils are given too much leeway because they find their learning challenging. This means the quality, quantity, and sometimes the presentation, of their work is not as good as that of others in the class.
- Teaching assistants are confident in their roles because of good relationships and communication with class teachers. However, they sometimes hamper the progress of less-able pupils and pupils with special educational needs because they limit opportunities for pupils to try out new ideas and to learn from their own mistakes.
- Some teachers do not pay enough attention to what pupils already know and can do when they move into a different key stage. As a result, some pupils mark time going over old ground. Not all teachers have got to grips with checking pupils' progress accurately. This means some activities do not help pupils to move forward quickly enough.
- There is too much variation in the teaching of writing. Some teachers are very successful in helping pupils to write with flair, imagination and purpose. Others lack the subject knowledge to make sure pupils gain the right grounding as they move from class to class. This accounts for pupils' bumpy ride across school. Weaknesses in basic skills are not tackled decisively. Not all teachers give pupils the opportunity to put their skills to good use through longer pieces of writing. Some teachers do not provide enough guidance in their marking or oral feedback to help pupils improve the quality of their writing.
- Weaknesses in teaching are not deep-rooted across all subjects or classes. Recent improvements in mathematics' teaching show teachers are willing and able to take change on board. Pupils are enjoying greater success with mathematics because teachers follow whole-school plans and give pupils lots of opportunities to practise and deepen mathematical skills and ideas.
- Across the board, teachers are creative and imaginative. Most lessons are lively. Teachers are willing to take risks, bringing out exciting resources and letting pupils work in groups or move around the classroom to make learning fun. Teachers do not worry about noise levels increasing or pupils taking advantage of their freedom because they have fostered warm relationships built on trust and respect, so pupils behave well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **are good**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are happy to cross the school threshold because they feel safe, free from harmful name-calling and because they know adults care for them. All groups of pupils attend school regularly, so absence levels are in line with national averages. Few pupils miss large chunks of their time at school.
- Pupils have few worries about bullying and they know staff will listen to, and act on, any concerns which they raise. Pupils know how to spot different types of bullying and they know what to do about it. The 'worry boxes' in each classroom mean pupils can still flag up any issues even if they are less sure about approaching an adult. Pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds, pupils who find learning difficult or those who are most able are allowed to enjoy school without any danger of unkind words from their peers. Success and differences are celebrated, so everyone is happy to voice their opinion.
- A whole-school approach to helping pupils decide on their own goals for the future is reaping rewards in developing confident youngsters who know their rights and are willing to take responsibility in order to reach their dreams. They are becoming well equipped to understand money and learn how to deal with their own finances when they are older.
- A well-planned teaching programme plus a range of visitors help pupils to build their understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The sex and relationship policy is helping older pupils to know how to tackle unwanted physical attention while all pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe online and to keep cyberbullying at bay.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their positive attitudes to learning mean they are willing workers who are keen to do their best. Pupils show respect to each other and to adults. They follow instructions without question and very few have to be reminded how to behave or to get on with the job in hand. On the odd occasion, some pupils' attention wanes when activities fail to ignite their interest. However, they are quickly brought back into the fold. As a result, classrooms are calm and welcoming. Learning goes ahead with little disruption and poor behaviour does not get in the way of pupils' progress.
- Pupils work well together. They are happy to share ideas and to take critical feedback on their work from their classmates. It is common to see pupils step in if they see someone struggling; helping to read a new word or offering support with spelling. No one takes offence at this because the relationships are just right. Caring about and helping each other is an invisible thread that runs seamlessly throughout the school.
- Pupils' behaviour outside of the classroom is equally good. Playtimes are positive as pupils from different backgrounds and ages play or chat together. They know how to behave and can control their own behaviour. As a result, they need little intervention from the adults who supervise. This is not always matched during lunchtimes. Noise levels rise in the dining hall as pupils become more bubbly and excitable.
- Pupils say behaviour is good, but not perfect due to the occasional falling out between friendship groups or disputes over football. Nonetheless, they are adamant that adults are on top of any weaker behaviour to stop any minor incidents escalating. Almost all parents agree that behaviour in school is good and bullying is dealt with effectively.
- Pupils are proud of their school. This shines through in their smart appearance and their desire to talk about all that they enjoy each and every day. They have few complaints; there is nothing they would change to make their time at Upton Westlea more enjoyable or safer.

Outcomes for pupils **require improvement**

- Leaders, including governors, have held onto a belief that a higher percentage of pupils with special educational needs and a greater number of pupils leaving and joining the school in Years 5 and 6 is the main reason pupils do less well by the end of Year 6. There is some truth in this assertion; Year 5 and 6 teachers have faced some unusual challenges in the past few years. Nonetheless, this is not the whole story. Pupils' achievement in reading is holding firm across the school and their gains in mathematics are

improving. In contrast, pupils' outcomes in writing are falling. Almost every group, in every class, makes slower progress in writing. Pupils' books confirm too many pupils are hampered by weak spelling, handwriting and punctuation skills. Not all pupils soar as accomplished writers because they do not know how to structure their work to appeal to the reader.

- At first glance, the school's own information paints a positive picture of pupils' progress. However, this masks the underachievement of different groups. Disadvantaged pupils have not fared well. Gaps open up early on in the school and do not close quickly enough because pupils in this group often make slower progress than their peers. There are signs that the tide is turning; gaps are narrowing in most classes. The 2015 provisional data from national assessments indicate that disadvantaged pupils left Year 6 over a year behind others in school in reading, writing and mathematics. They were behind other pupils in the country by two terms in each of these subjects. This is an improvement on 2014, when disadvantaged pupils were behind by almost two years when compared to their classmates. They were lagging behind pupils in other schools by over a year in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Lower-attaining pupils make slower progress than their classmates in almost every year group. Despite the extra attention they receive, this group does not catch up quickly enough. Disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs fare slightly better. Their books indicate they are making the progress they should from their different starting points. Their gains in mathematics are stronger than in writing. However, this group does not achieve as well in the main school as those pupils who attend the resource provision. These pupils make good progress because adults are very skilled at shaping activities closely to the specific needs of each individual.
- Pupils from different ethnic minorities and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well compared to others in the school and nationally. Children from forces families do as well as others in the school due to the quality care they receive which helps them to settle quickly and get on with their learning.
- The most-able pupils flourish. Their well-honed reading, writing and mathematical skills mean they access new learning with ease and they can rise to the challenges set by teachers with confidence. As a result, there are more pupils who work beyond the levels expected for their age than the national average.
- Pupils' success in making sense of the sounds that letters represent is improving. Firm foundations are laid in the early years and improved teaching in Key Stage 1 means that the number of Year 1 pupils gaining the phonics check improved in 2015. This is above average and the best result for the school in recent times. Standards in reading at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly average. This positive picture hides some variation between lower and higher achievers. Some pupils read with ease and enjoyment, lapping up the words on each page. Others have weak phonic skills or limited strategies for tackling unknown words. This means they cannot read with fluency, expression or understanding.
- Pupils' books show mathematical skills are improving steadily. They have ample opportunities to work with mathematical equipment, which sets them up well to complete calculations. They are beginning to deepen their understanding through more frequent chances to apply their skills to solve mathematical problems.
- Pupils' achievement in subjects other than English and mathematics is stronger. Their pleasure in studying the wide range of exciting topics is evident in their beautifully presented books. They are gaining a good sense of the world around them because of the broad experiences they gain across the school. Pupils are particularly skilled in art. This is because they develop a good understanding of different techniques and tools and they are able to practise and hone their skills before completing pieces of art work. The outcomes speak for themselves in the high quality artwork in pupils' sketch books and around the school.
- Pupils are full of praise for their teachers and the work they do to make learning fun. Pupils say that they work hard and all feel they are making progress towards their goals.

Early years provision

is good

- Early years is a strength of the school. Children's outcomes are improving steadily each year; they were above average for the first time in 2015. The early years has not floundered since the last inspection because leaders spot weaknesses quickly and waste no time in bringing about change to make sure that children get off to the best possible start. This is reaping rewards as children are happy, safe and emerge from Reception with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to succeed in later life.
- Children have a range of different starting points when they enter Nursery. A few are ready to hit the

ground running, but over half have a greater distance to travel because of their weaker communication, reading and writing skills. Some children need extra help with their social and personal skills to make sure that they are ready to learn, to play and to share with others. During their time in the early years, children catch up quickly. They are ready to fly in Year 1 because almost three out of every four children meet or exceed the standards expected for their age. Nonetheless, they still bring some weaknesses in writing with them when they transfer into Key Stage 1. Close attention to disadvantaged children and effective use of additional funding mean that these children are no longer lagging behind from the start but have the same chance of success as their friends.

- Children are highly motivated. They are keen to take part because activities harness their natural curiosity. They settle quickly and are willing to stick at tasks until they succeed or the activity reaches its natural end. They play together well but are equally content to follow their own interests, completing models or sitting quietly to enjoy a book. They are happy to share their ideas with adults and each other, but, from time to time, they do not always listen well enough. They gain a good grounding in basic skills because adults are adept at exploiting opportunities for children to practise reading, including phonics, writing and mathematics. Nursery children 'sign' in and out when they go outside while Reception children count and record how many children get on and off the bus, which they have made out of tyres, as a matter of course. Pupils at the early stages of learning English as a new language do very well because of the close support they receive. Similarly, children with learning difficulties are included fully so that they thrive along with their peers.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. The early years team do sterling work in making sure children get the most out of their time in Nursery and Reception. The secret to their success is simple. They know the children's learning needs inside out due to close observations and the information which they glean before children set foot in the school. Adults use this information well to shape their teaching; any barriers that are getting in the way of children making progress are tackled head-on. For example, staff know many children struggle to hold and use writing tools. Activities abound to help children get to grips with this skill, whether the children choose to work indoors or outside. Adults are very skilled at asking questions. They pick up on children's interests and encourage children to have a go and solve problems for themselves.
- Children flourish because of the good care which they receive; all welfare requirements are met. Behaviour is good. Children follow instructions and routines without any fuss. Even those children who find it hard to manage their own behaviour settle down because of the gentle and calm reminders from adults. Adults relentlessly model respectful behaviour to encourage children to listen to others, to take turns and to be polite.
- Leadership and management of the early years are good. Positive relationships are fostered well with parents through opportunities for parents to 'stay and play' each morning, to contribute to children's learning journeys and to communicate with staff through the virtual learning environment. The early years staff are willing to go the extra mile. They visit the families of service children at the nearby base to make sure all parents have access to information about children's learning. Training for staff is effective in keeping them abreast of current issues and helping them improve their teaching. Close and accurate observations of children's strengths and weaknesses help staff to identify the next steps in learning. The well-presented Learning Journeys show the care that staff take to make sure all succeed.

School details

Unique reference number	111100
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10002589

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Councillor Jill Houlbrook
Headteacher	Mrs K Carruthers
Telephone number	01244 981215
Website	www.uptonwestleaprimary.co.uk
Email address	admin@uptonwestlea.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 April 2008

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school, although it is growing over time.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly average as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is similar to the national average. (Pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free schools meals or who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is above average.
- The school has resource provision for pupils with autism. It offers 10 places. There are currently 10 pupils, ranging from Reception children to Key Stage 2 pupils, in this class.
- More pupils enter and leave the school part way through their education than found nationally. This is linked to the number of pupils from service families who attend the school. Presently, the school receives additional funding from the government for 26 pupils from service families.
- The school meets the government's floor standards (these are the minimum standards and rate of progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics of pupils in Key Stage 2).
- There is before- and after- school provision on the school site, which is managed by the governing body.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a considerable turnaround of staff. The previous headteacher has retired. A new headteacher took up her post in September 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited every classroom on several occasions to observe teaching and learning. The headteacher and deputy headteacher took part in most of these visits.
- Inspectors observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at playtime and lunchtime. They met formally with three groups of pupils and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with staff, senior leaders, newly qualified teachers, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding, information about pupils' outcomes and pupils' books.
- Inspectors spoke informally to a small group of parents and carers at the start of the school day. They also took account of the 26 responses on Parent View (the online questionnaire) to inform the inspection.

Inspection team

Joanne Olsson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Doreen Davenport	Ofsted Inspector
Lenford White	Ofsted Inspector

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