

Neston Primary School

Burton Road, Neston, Cheshire CH64 9RE

Inspection dates	4–5 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is a happy and caring community. Leaders have created a purposeful atmosphere where pupils learn well because they feel safe and nurtured.
- The outstanding headteacher has a clear vision of what the school should be. He is well supported by the deputy headteacher, other staff and governors. Together their skills are driving improvements in teaching and the achievement of pupils.
- Teaching is good. As a result, pupils engage well with adults and learn at a good pace.
- Achievement is good. Pupils' progress has improved strongly since the last inspection, including that of the most able, the disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs or disability.
- Children settle quickly into Reception and make excellent progress because of outstanding teaching and leadership.
- The culture of the school is helping pupils to develop a strong sense of responsibility and an understanding of tolerance and equality which are at the heart of British values. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. They are proud of their school and appreciate the work of their teachers.
- Parents indicate how pleased they are with their children's progress and the stimulating curriculum which ignites pupils' enthusiasm. Many visits and after-school clubs enrich learning.
- The governing body supports and challenges the school effectively.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not make as much progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.
- New systems to track pupils' progress are not fully established.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve teaching and accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in writing, by ensuring that:
 - the new assessment system is firmly established
 - teachers use assessment information effectively to measure small steps in pupils' learning so that additional support can be given to make sure that any gaps in pupils' understanding are swiftly addressed.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher is unwavering in his determination to secure an excellent education for pupils in the school. The governing body share this vision. Senior leaders have secured improvements in the quality of teaching, and in pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour.
- Commitment and dedication to every individual child is a striking feature of this school. The headteacher's vision has created a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment where pupils are encouraged to aim high and achieve well. The barriers some children face in their learning are not allowed to impact negatively on their future. The work of two learning mentors very effectively supports the personal development and emotional well-being of children who are most at risk of underachieving.
- The school's plans for improvement are comprehensive and based on a sound understanding of its strengths and the further improvements needed. Good progress has been made against the areas identified at the previous inspection. For example, the teaching of mathematics is now strong and middle leaders are fully involved in school improvement.
- All teachers are keen to improve their practice and have benefited from high-quality training and development. The school has carefully chosen the right consultants, with the support of the local authority, so that the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, as well as the wider curriculum is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. Staff morale is high and all those who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire indicated that they were proud to work at Neston.
- The school recognises that new assessment systems are not fully established and need to be refined to be able to track progress more closely.
- A major strength of the school is the imaginative curriculum, which is developing a strong sense of responsibility for others. It is substantially enriched by a wide range of visits to places of interest and visitors to the school. Recent visitors have included musicians, theatre groups, storytellers, a space ambassador, authors and the local member of parliament. Pupils in Years 2, 4 and 6 go on residential trips to enjoy outdoor pursuits, try activities they might not otherwise experience and develop skills beyond the classroom. Staff run over 40 different clubs at lunchtimes and after school across each academic year. The beautiful outdoor areas of the school promote a love of the environment and an appreciation of the natural world.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well through the many opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as raising funds for local and national charities. The school has close links with the two local churches. Pupils have visited a nearby synagogue and listened to speakers talking about Islam. Pupils' awareness of fundamental British values such as tolerance and fairness is fostered well.
- The sports funding for primary schools has been used very well to encourage all pupils to take more exercise and participate in many sports. There has been a yearly increase in the number of pupils taking part in after-school sports and sporting competitions.
- Leaders and governors have carefully managed the pupil premium funding. It is used to provide one-to-one support for individual pupils, to promote attendance and to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are able to take part in all school activities regardless of cost. The impact of these actions is seen in the much better progress these pupils are making in every year group.
- The special needs coordinator ensures that identification of additional needs is rapid and that children receive the best support available from outside agencies and the school's talented team of teaching assistants.
- The school makes sure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to do well and that any pupil who falls behind receives extra support.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are highly professional and clear about their role. They enjoy visiting the school to look at pupils' books, talk to pupils and take learning walks to see what is happening for themselves. Most recently, learning walks have focused on behaviour, the teaching of reading and writing and the impact of the sports funding.
 - Governors receive monthly reports on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making. They check on the impact of the funding for disadvantaged pupils. A particular focus at the moment is the progress of the most-able pupils. They ensure that responsibilities are shared so that not too much falls on the shoulders of individual teachers or leaders.

- Governors keep in regular touch with parents through newsletters, reading parental questionnaires and meeting parents at school events.
- The governors oversee the performance management system and are proud of their careful management of finances, which ensures that the school keeps within its budget.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school is proactive in all aspects of child protection. A culture of safety pervades the school. Pupils have a strong awareness of how to respond in a variety of circumstances and how to keep themselves safe. Governors have effective links with parents which enhance arrangements to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Pupils enjoy school and this is shown in the excellent relationships with teachers and teaching assistants. They persevere when faced with difficulties and are resilient in tackling challenges. Pupils listen carefully to each other and adults and are strongly motivated to learn. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem is high because their achievements are regularly celebrated. Parents believe their children are well taught and make good progress.
- Teachers are adept at asking probing questions which help pupils think and work things out for themselves. This was evident in both writing and mathematics lessons. For example, in English, Year 6 pupils were using their skills of observation and inference to try to work out the theme and plot of a book just by looking at the illustrations. In mathematics, pupils were solving two- and three-step challenges based on a very few clues provided by the teacher.
- Pupils can identify why their work has improved in mathematics. They say that they now work more quickly and appreciate the interesting ways that they experience mathematics, for example through orienteering. Teachers have addressed the previously weaker performance of some girls in mathematics by organising an enterprise club for girls only and showing how women use mathematics constantly in daily life.
- Every effort is being made to improve pupils' writing skills. Teachers plan interesting and stimulating activities. For example, Year 2 pupils looked at aerial photographs and imagined what Jack would see, hear and feel when he reached the top of the beanstalk. There is plenty of 'talking for writing' and pupils who lack confidence in speaking benefit from recording their words and hearing them come alive in playback. Pupils use dictionaries and thesauruses regularly as they practise many different writing genres. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across the curriculum.
- The school has successfully adopted a range of strategies to accelerate pupils' progress in reading and has created a language-rich environment where reading is positively encouraged and valued.
- Teaching assistants are all effectively deployed to support groups and individuals. They work in close collaboration with teachers and follow their example by continually intervening to check understanding or correct misconceptions. They build up pupils' confidence by allowing them to work at their own pace and gently prompt them when they face problems.
- Teachers consistently follow the school's marking policy and provide effective guidance to pupils on how they can improve. Pupils enjoy responding to this guidance and carry out corrections regularly. This attention to written English has resulted in a rise in the proportion of pupils achieving average and above-average standards in grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- In addition to class homework, every term the school sets 'whole-school homework' for pupils to tackle with their parents. Prizes are awarded for the best results. This has been well received by parents and nearly every family has responded to the challenge. Recent whole-school homeworks have included research into famous Britons and Easter bonnets. Pupils are free to choose how they interpret the challenge.
- Teachers are still working to develop and establish the new assessment system. At present they feel less confident in being able to track progress than they did under the previous system of national curriculum levels.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is outstanding.

- Pupils are extremely proud of their school, value their education and demonstrate highly positive attitudes to learning. They take care with the presentation of their work and are eager to improve. They are enthusiastic when working in pairs or groups and enjoy new challenges.
- Many pupils take on roles of responsibility within school, for example, acting as buddies to help new pupils settle in. Some serve on the school council or take on roles such as e-safety leaders, sports leaders, junior safety officers and house captains. The school's Rotakids group has made presentations to the north of England Rotary conference and is working hard to raise funds for its chosen charities: Scope, Northern Lights and cancer research. Pupils have been commended for their charitable contributions to the eradication of polio programme as well as numerous other charities.
- Pupils are able to explain well what they understand by British values. They have all contributed to a large display which shows what they are and how they are promoted in school and beyond.
- Staff actively promote all aspects of personal development, health and welfare so that pupils are trained to be aware of hazards such as fire risks, road safety, e-safety and substance abuse and how to respond to risky situations.
- Pupils feel safe and well looked after. Emotional well-being has a high profile in school. Staff work closely with individual pupils and families and with external agencies when necessary.
- Pupils say there is no bullying in school and parents confirm this. They know what to do if they experience bullying but insist that it doesn't happen. Pupils appreciate the 'worry box' which is there for them to ask for help in confidence, if they need it.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are courteous, friendly and polite. The many pupils who join the school later in the school year are immediately befriended and made welcome.
- Pupils' behaviour during the school day is excellent. Pupils say that lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour and records confirm this.
- Pupils respect the school environment and keep classrooms tidy and pick up litter. They appreciate the many beautiful displays and their superb outdoor grounds.
- Attendance is rising and is now just above the national average. The school sets a high priority on attendance and rewards good attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The proportion of pupils achieving expected standards in the phonics check in Year 1 has risen consistently over the last three years and is now above average.
- Over time, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics has improved so that all pupils are now making good progress from their starting points.
- In 2015, in Year 6 standards in reading, writing and mathematics declined. This was because of the high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability in a very small year group and large numbers of pupils joining and leaving the school at different times. The school's information for pupils currently on roll shows that the good start that pupils are making in Reception and key stage 1 is raising standards by the end of key stage 2.
- Disadvantaged pupils supported by additional funding are making good progress and achieving as well as others in the school. Any gaps in their achievement are small. They receive well-targeted support.
- The most-able pupils are making good progress in mathematics. Boys achieved significantly well in 2015. Progress in writing is slower, as it is for other pupils, but the school has a wide range of strategies to improve writing, which are beginning to have an impact. The writing in pupils' books shows good progress this year.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are very well supported by learning mentors, teaching assistants and class teachers. Their progress is carefully tracked by the coordinator for special needs to make sure that they received the right level of intervention to help them learn and make progress in line with other pupils.
- The school actively promotes reading and writing by inviting authors to talk about their books, providing many books in enticing displays around the school and a 'treasure chest' of books in the entrance hall. Most pupils read with confidence. Examples of pupils' best writing adorn the walls

- In 2015, pupils in Year 6 attained the national average in spelling, grammar and punctuation because of teachers' high expectations of pupils to write accurately at all times. Pupils in both Years 5 and 6 feel they are well prepared for high school. Their very positive attitudes to learning and secure progress in reading, writing and mathematics confirm this. Good progress is evident in subjects such as science and the humanities.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the early years has significantly improved and is now above average.
- Children are eager to learn. The air of excitement and anticipation is striking as children explore the wide range of stimulating activities both inside and outside the classroom. A sense of urgency among the staff pervades the classroom, driven by the knowledge that most children enter Reception with skills which are below, and often well below, those typical for their age. Expectations are high.
- All children make excellent progress. This includes girls and boys, children who have special educational needs or disability, who are identified very quickly and given the extra help they need, and children new to English. There is no gap in the achievement of disadvantaged children and others. The proportion achieving a good level of development is above average and the impact of this is seen in the improving outcomes in phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) at the end of Year 1 and attainment at the end of Year 2.
- Children's work and play is creative, lively and imaginative. Adults skilfully intervene in order to develop their learning through play and enrich their use of language. All children are expected to write down what they are doing, even when using the building bricks, sand or other equipment so that writing becomes a constant part of learning.
- Children make excellent progress in literacy because important key words are displayed every day, phonics is taught every day and extra reading sessions are provided for the children who need them. The learning environment is changed every half term to provide a varied and rich experience. The work in children's learning journeys is impressive and shows excellent progress for all.
- Rigorous, accurate assessment of children's learning is used well to plan activities that capture children's interest and build on their existing knowledge and understanding. Staff have an acute awareness of the unique learning needs of each child.
- Children are very well behaved, keen to talk about their learning and share toys and equipment with each other willingly. They are friendly and kind and no one is left out. They are highly motivated and keen to join in all activities.
- The school's work with parents is excellent. Parents are supported so that they can play a real part in their children's learning and are invited to review learning journey books every fortnight so that they see progress for themselves. Parents are helped to understand how phonics is taught so that they can reinforce learning at home. A newsletter is sent home every fortnight and celebration phone calls made when children achieve something special.
- Children's health, safety and well-being are given a high priority. Staff are vigilant to ensure that policies, procedures and practices are consistently implemented.
- Outstanding leadership is at the heart of this relentless pursuit of excellence. The leader sets the highest expectations for children, staff, parents and herself. Transition arrangements are excellent. Staff have developed excellent links with the pre-school providers in the area so that children are known even before they join Reception. The leader tracks children's progress to the end of Year 2 and works closely with the key stage 1 teachers to ensure continuity of support for children who need extra help.

School details

Unique reference number	110987
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10002273

This inspection 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	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Trotman
Headteacher	Rob Golding
Telephone number	0151 338 2500
Website	www.nestonprimaryschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@nestonpri.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 December 2013

Information about this school

- Neston is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds, although the number of pupils who speak English as a second language is increasing.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. This additional government funding supports pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- A large number of pupils join and leave the school other than at the usual times.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school holds a number of awards in recognition of its work. These include Sainsbury's school games mark gold and the Eco-schools green flag, which recognises the school's work to make pupils aware of the importance of preserving and protecting the natural environment. The school was recently identified as an attachment friendly school, which is awarded in recognition of the school's excellent work in providing for children who have been adopted from care.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in all year groups, both in class and when working in smaller groups. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector listened to pupils reading in Years 2 and 6. She also met pupils formally and informally at playtimes and attended a school assembly.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, other members of staff, governors and parents who came in to school. The inspector had a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at development plans, records of pupils' progress, arrangements for safeguarding and systems to check on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Pupils' books were scrutinised in a range of subjects, including writing, mathematics and topic work.
- Views of parents were gained from the 52 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, and from the school's own recent parental survey.
- The views of staff were gained from meetings and from the 16 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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