

Spinney Avenue Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Spinney Avenue, Hough Green, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 8LD

Inspection dates

23–24 January 2018

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' actions have yet to impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Many staff changes in recent years have slowed the pace of school improvement. Leaders and governors have not ensured that teaching is good in the early years and in key stages 1 and 2.
- Information from assessing pupils' skills and knowledge is not used effectively by some teachers to pitch activities at the right level for most-able pupils. Some tasks lack challenge.
- Some pupils do not always present their work to the best of their ability.
- Some leaders are very new to their roles and therefore have had limited time to demonstrate their influence on standards.
- Work to develop and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding across different subjects is at an early stage of development. Writing skills across the curriculum also remain underdeveloped.
- Reading is not given sufficient emphasis. Leaders are yet to ensure that pupils read widely and for a variety of purposes.

The school has the following strengths

- The interim executive board has been instrumental in beginning to address the school's weaknesses.
- The executive headteacher and interim headteacher have a clear and open view of where school improvement is needed. More settled staffing provides a more secure base for this work.
- Effective support for teachers to improve the quality of their mathematics teaching is having an impact.
- Pastoral care and safeguarding systems are effective.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved. They behave well and display good manners and positive attitudes to learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make rapid progress, by ensuring that:
 - all staff have high expectations of how pupils present their work
 - tasks are set for the most able pupils that help them to accelerate their progress and achieve their potential
 - the quality of activities to support the development of reading comprehension skills are consistently effective in all classes.
- Enhance the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - strengthening the quality of monitoring to ensure that all leaders focus on the impact of teaching and learning on pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility
 - further developing assessment procedures to specifically check that the most able pupils make at least good progress as they move through the school
 - strengthening the curriculum so that pupils develop greater knowledge and understanding across a wide range of subjects
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to practise and apply their writing skills in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, significant changes in staffing have slowed down the pace of school improvement. Leaders have found it difficult to ensure consistent approaches to teaching because staffing has lacked continuity.
- Recent strengthening of leadership at all levels has greatly improved effectiveness. The interim executive board quickly ensured that a school development plan was in place to help the school move forward. Members hold leaders to account through regular meetings, significantly increasing expectations and the pace of improvements.
- The interim headteacher is supported effectively by the executive headteacher. They are ambitious for the school and have an honest and open view about where the school needs to be better. They know that teaching varies too much from class to class and that, over time, pupils have not achieved as well as they could.
- More recently, the development of a new leadership team, together with more stable staffing arrangements, has provided a stronger platform on which to build a more effective school. Standards were low at the end of the early years and in key stages 1 and 2 in 2017. The current leadership team has already strengthened assessment procedures, and these, along with regular monitoring, are beginning to raise standards. However, development is at an early stage and the full impact of actions is yet to be seen.
- Levels of accountability have risen. Performance management is fully in place. Staff, particularly those in their first year of teaching, appreciate the support and training opportunities provided.
- Middle leaders are all new to the school and are developing in their role. They regularly monitor the quality of work in books and check that teachers adhere to new policies. At the moment, there is a lack of focus on pupil progress in the monitoring carried out by middle leaders. As a result, while there have been improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, there is still inconsistency.
- Systems to assess pupils' attainment and progress are developing. Leaders have a sound grasp of attainment at each key stage. However, leaders do not fully track the progress of the most able pupils as they move through school.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding effectively. The funding has been used to develop significant pastoral support. This includes appointing a family support worker to ensure high-quality engagement and links with parents whose home circumstances might impinge on pupils' attendance and learning. Direct adult support within the classroom is carefully targeted to improve the outcomes of the small number of disadvantaged pupils.
- The physical education and sport premium is used effectively. Staff work alongside experts and so improve their own skills. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in a range of sports, including netball and football. Involvement in these activities has a very positive impact on their general well-being.
- Funding to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities

is well managed. Effective work with individuals or small groups means that these pupils generally achieve well.

- Leaders are working hard to develop a curriculum that interests pupils and is designed to meet their needs. Leaders are committed to improving the curriculum to support pupils in their progress in writing, mathematics and reading. Leaders understand that pupils need more opportunities to develop knowledge and skills in their geography, history and science work. Similarly, they are aware of the need to give pupils more opportunities to practise their writing skills across a range of subjects. There are a number of additional activities offered by the school to support the curriculum. For example, pupils enjoy a whole range of after-school clubs, including multi-sports, Irish dancing and science club.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils have good opportunities for reflection and have the opportunity to take on a variety of responsibilities. For example, at lunchtime there are 'buddy busters', who proudly take the younger pupils out onto the playground after they have finished their lunch. Members of the school council help to make decisions about the school. In addition, there are effective opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to learn about other faiths and cultures as well as British values. This means that the pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders make use of a number of partnership organisations to compare standards and develop good practice. The school receives effective support from a 'maths hub' and a local teaching school alliance.
- Some parents expressed concerns at the large number of staffing changes. However, many parents are pleased with the recent improvements that have been implemented since September 2017.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. The local authority and diocese recognised the previous weaknesses in the governance of the school. They created an interim executive board and appointed experienced governors, including a national leader of governance.
- Members of the interim executive board are well informed because they are provided with high-quality information from the executive and interim headteacher. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching across the school. The governing body holds the senior leaders to account and challenges them over the school's performance.
- Governors scrutinise the use of the pupil premium effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well. However, they have been less robust about ensuring that the most able pupils achieve as well as they should.
- Governors have put in support where teaching has been weaker to ensure that the quality of teaching for all pupils is consistently good across the school.
- Governors are fully conversant with their statutory duties for safeguarding and ensuring that staff are recruited with careful consideration.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Recruitment procedures are thorough and meet statutory requirements. A named governor visits to review safeguarding training and practice.
- Induction arrangements are well planned so that all new staff know how to raise concerns about pupils who may be at risk of harm. Inspectors spoke with several members of different staff groups and all were very clear about the procedures. Leaders ensure that they update staff on policy and practice through weekly briefings, annual training and at senior leadership meetings.
- Leaders are alert to potential safeguarding issues raised and pupils learn about keeping safe online.
- Pupils have responded well to the caring environment and behave well. There is a calm atmosphere around the school and in lessons.
- The site is maintained in a safe, clean and tidy condition.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent. Teaching has not been good enough to help pupils make good progress. There is evidence of good teaching and learning that is accelerating the progress of some pupils, but this is not consistent in all classes.
- The most able pupils, in particular, are often given work that is not hard enough for them. They are also not given enough opportunities to learn more quickly. Consequently, these pupils do not reach the high standards of which they are capable.
- Teaching assistants have improved their role since the last inspection. They now ask useful questions, especially when they are working with individuals or small groups. This provides good classroom support, especially for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This allows these pupils to play a full part in lessons and to make progress.
- The teaching of phonics is beginning to make effective use of a newly introduced commercial scheme, and pupils remember the rules about which letters are paired up as 'best friends'. Activities are generally engaging for pupils, but the full impact of the new approach is yet to be seen. Nevertheless, the current progress made by pupils in phonics is consistently good.
- The development of reading across the school is variable. Pupils do not have significant opportunities to engage in comprehension activities that are pitched at the right level of challenge. This limits pupils' progress in reading.
- In mathematics, following training over the last year, teachers are improving their own subject knowledge. Teachers provide more opportunities for pupils of all abilities to solve worded problems and explain their reasoning. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils made some good progress in understanding the relationship between different fractions. The teacher encouraged them to think about strategies and to share their reasoning with their friends.

- Work in pupils' books shows an increase in the quality of learning and progress. However, the quality of work varies and does not always challenge pupils. There is evidence that pupils do not always present work to the best of their ability and do not always complete tasks set for them.
- The teaching of writing has shown improvement since the last inspection. However, pupils do not have the opportunity to practise key writing skills in subjects other than English.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff provide dedicated support to help pupils develop self-confidence and become successful learners.
- Pupils learn about a variety of other faiths. They demonstrate good cultural awareness when talking about different religions and countries. Relationships across the school are harmonious. One pupil said, 'We are all good friends and get on really well.'
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Pupils learn about a wide range of ways to keep safe, including road safety, safer cycling, 'stranger danger' and how to keep safe when using the internet.
- Pupils say there are rarely incidents of bad behaviour or bullying, but when there are, these are dealt with swiftly. Pupils have a mature understanding of bullying, including bullying related to race and gender.
- All the pupils who spoke with inspectors were able to talk at length about how to stay healthy. They are given some good experiences within the curriculum related to healthy living.
- Parents agree that the school keeps their children safe and that pupils are well looked after. They are very appreciative of the work that the early staff do to support their children.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Leaders have made this a major area for improvement and it is a growing strength of the school. Pupils behave well in lessons and move calmly around the school. They are sensible in the dining area and enjoy playing safely and supportively on the playground.
- Pupils show respect for staff and each other. Pupils behave well at all times and there are no interruptions to learning. However, some pupils do not always take enough pride in their work.
- Pupils are well mannered and confident to initiate and engage in conversation with peers and adults. They listen well to each other and show consideration for views that may be different from their own.

- Attendance has improved over time and is currently in line with the national average. This is a credit to the efforts of the family support worker, who works closely with parents to keep a tight rein on attendance and punctuality.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils have not made good progress from starting school in Reception to leaving in Year 6 over recent years. This is because there has been too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching over time across the school. Outcomes, therefore, require improvement.
- Some aspects of pupils' achievement are good. For example, pupils make good progress in phonics. While the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2017 remained below that seen in other schools, current pupils' progress is improving. Immediate action taken to address phonics attainment is beginning to improve standards.
- At key stage 1, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is below the national average. At key stage 2, attainment shows a similar picture. However, there are signs that pupils' progress is accelerating.
- The achievement of the most able pupils requires improvement because they are not always challenged well enough. Not enough attain the higher standard at the end of key stage 1 or key stage 2. When they are not challenged in their learning, their skills, knowledge and understanding do not improve quickly.
- While there is evidence of improved outcomes in phonics, this is not consistently supporting improvement in pupils' progress in reading. Opportunities for pupils to read independently and to practise their comprehension skills are limited. This has a negative impact on the progress made by current pupils in reading, which needs to accelerate.
- Disadvantaged pupils are starting to make better progress. However, they are still adrift when their attainment is compared with that of other pupils nationally, especially in reading and writing. More consistent teaching by a stable staff, coupled with closer checks on pupils' understanding, is beginning to move pupils on at a better pace.
- A stronger emphasis on SEN and/or disabilities provision is a high priority in the new school development plan. As a result, there are significant improvements to the way in which pupils' progress is being checked. Targeted small-group work and one-to-one activities ensure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities achieve in line with their peers.
- Across a broad range of subjects, including geography and history, progress is variable from class to class. The quality of pupils' writing in these subjects is not at the same standard as in their English books.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The early years leader has carried out all baseline assessments, which show that a majority of children enter the school with skills and abilities in line with those typical for

their age. Senior leaders plan to check that baseline assessment information is accurate and that assessments always provide a match with children's abilities.

- The newly appointed early years leader, in post from April 2017, has started to introduce the changes that she knows are needed. She has a clear sense of direction and accepts that immediate work is needed to ensure that provision is consistently good, particularly in the outdoor learning space.
- Clear records of the children's attainment and progress are kept which cover all the different areas of learning. They include annotations of what the children have achieved. However, leaders do not use this information to ensure that activities and new learning experiences are planned to accelerate the children's development. At the moment, too many of the children are entering Year 1 without achieving a good level of development.
- Standards in the early years have improved year on year. However, they are still below the national average. Given children's starting points, this does not represent good progress. Work is underway to improve the provision in early years. As a result, children have more opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- When the children are working in the outdoor area, their progress is limited. This is because children are over-reliant on the teacher to direct their play and there are not enough activities that encourage children to work together to investigate or solve problems. Occasionally, the learning focus lacks purpose.
- When supported by their teacher, children make good progress. During the inspection the children developed some good language and worked hard to write their letters correctly. The teacher offered good support and guidance which enhanced progress.
- Staff know the children well and have ensured that the welfare requirements of the early years are met. Children are supported to be ready and willing to learn. Rules and routines are established quickly so that children settle promptly and respond well to their teachers' expectations of behaviour.
- Leaders have established good links with parents. Home visits and regular meetings ensure that the parents are securely involved in their children's achievements. Parents are appreciative of the work of the early years team.

School details

Unique reference number	111293
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10043215

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Andy Kent
Headteacher	Laura Rynn
Telephone number	0151 424 4234
Website	www.spinneyavenue.org.uk
Email address	sec.spinneyavenueceprimary@halton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 March 2013

Information about this school

- Spinney Avenue Church of England Primary is an average-sized primary school.
- Since the last inspection the school has appointed 16 new teaching staff.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is higher than in most other schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum

expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in every class and attended an assembly. Several of the observations were carried out jointly with the interim headteacher and executive headteacher.
- A wide range of pupils' workbooks were looked at by inspectors throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors held meetings with the acting headteacher, executive headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the early years leader, newly qualified and trainee teachers, the chair and three members of the interim executive board and the local authority officer.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in class and also around the school at break and lunchtimes to seek their views about the school.
- Inspectors met with several groups of pupils more formally to discuss many aspects of school life.
- Inspectors heard some pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 read. Inspectors talked to pupils about their reading habits and looked at their reading records.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's website and a range of school documents, including: assessment information; the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness; improvement plans; and records about behaviour, safeguarding children and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the 16 parental free-text responses and 34 responses made by parents to the Ofsted online Parent View questionnaire. They also spoke to some parents before and after school and during the inspection. Additionally, inspectors looked at the 18 views expressed by members of staff in response to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Andrew Morley, lead inspector

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