

Bexton Primary School

Blackhill Lane, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 9DB

Inspection dates

31 January–1 February 2018

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead the school with passion and determination. They have developed a culture where only the best is good enough. Staff morale is high.
- Senior leaders' resolute focus on tackling the dip in pupils' achievements in key stage 2 since the previous inspection has proved successful. Pupils' progress is good.
- Teachers know their pupils well and have good subject knowledge. By the end of Year 6 pupils generally make good progress in their learning from starting points above those typical for their age
- The teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1 is a significant strength.
- The curriculum ensures that pupils develop their skills and knowledge in a wide range of subjects. It is increasingly well adapted to diminish the difference in outcomes between boys and girls. However, differences remain in some year groups.
- Leaders are aware that teachers need to move learning on quickly once concepts have been grasped, particularly for those pupils working below the level expected for their age. At times, pupils' independence skills are not fully promoted.
- A warm welcome greets everyone at Bexton. Pupils are friendly and display a high level of care and respect towards each other, adults and visitors. Parents hold highly-positive views of the education and care provided.
- Pupils work hard and take a great pride in their achievements. Pupils feel safe and valued. They enjoy school and their behaviour is exemplary.
- Children make an excellent start to school life in the early years. They enjoy learning in this safe, stimulating environment. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the early years is above the national figure and continues to rise.
- Governors share the senior leaders' high aspirations for pupils and hold leaders to account effectively. They visit school regularly.
- The emotional needs of pupils who attend the resourced provision are met well. However, expectations of what pupils can achieve educationally and personally are not high enough.
- Sometimes the work set for pupils, particularly those working below the level set for their age, does not meet their needs well enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching, learning and assessment in order to accelerate pupils' progress still further in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that teachers:
 - continue to increase pupils' ability to work independently
 - move learning on once new work has been grasped so that pupils can make the best possible progress
 - provide pupils, including those working below the level expected for their age and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities with tasks well matched to their needs
 - diminish any remaining differences in standards reached between boys and girls given their starting points.
- Provide work to challenge the most able pupils to make the best possible progress in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and skilled governors provides strong leadership for the school. Collectively they continue to drive improvements in teaching, learning and pupils' achievement. Since the previous inspection they have successfully managed significant changes in staffing and overseen the establishment of pre-school provision in the school.
- Morale is high because staff feel well supported and valued. A culture has been created where everyone is striving to do their best to help pupils make the most of the opportunities provided at the school. In turn, pupils show similarly high ambitions to do their best work and make good progress.
- Senior leaders and governors have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas that need further development. The quality of teaching and teachers' performance is managed effectively. Well-targeted training helps staff improve their practice. Senior leaders visit lessons, check on the quality of learning and analyse information about pupil progress carefully.
- Many subject leaders are new to their roles since the previous inspection. English and mathematics leaders provide strong support for their areas of responsibility. The support provided for colleagues contributes strongly to the improvements in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders of other subjects have a good understanding of their areas of responsibility and their support and guidance is valued by colleagues. They have an increasingly clear view of the progress made by pupils.
- School leaders make good use of the extra funding which the government provides to support the small number of disadvantaged pupils. As with all pupils, the leaders identify the personal and learning needs of these pupils, including the most able. A clear focus on improving the attendance of a few disadvantaged pupils who sometimes find it difficult to attend school regularly is evident.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has overhauled and strengthened the systems and procedures for managing the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Identification of pupils' emotional and pastoral needs in mainstream classes and the resourced provision is a strength of the school. However, often work set, particularly in the resourced provision, does not precisely meet pupils' learning needs and adults sometimes provide too much help rather than stepping back and allowing pupils to think for themselves. This can limit the progress made.
- Leaders and staff have planned the curriculum thoroughly. Known by all as the 'Ethical Enterprise' curriculum, subjects inspire pupils and offer them rich learning experiences that enhance academic progress as well as promoting personal development extremely well. In addition to focusing on reading, writing and mathematics, school leaders have ensured that pupils' learning in other subjects, including science, art and music have improved. The curriculum is further enhanced by a range of lunchtime and before-and-after school clubs. An exciting archery session was taking place in the hall when inspectors arrived before school on the first day of the inspection.
- The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. The development of British

values is underpinned by the 'Bexton' values which are prominently displayed throughout the school. Taking into account that the vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds the school seeks to make pupils aware of the diverse world we live in.

- The primary sports funding is used very effectively to improve the teaching of physical education (PE) and pupils' awareness of the need to develop a healthy lifestyle. Specialist coaching has developed the skills of pupils of all ages and engagement in sporting activities has increased significantly. The school are rightly proud of their achievements in local sporting competitions. The youngest Nursery children were having a great time in their PE lesson during the inspection. They learnt to repeat patterns and move around the hall developing their ability to co-ordinate and use space well. Year 6 pupils who act as sports leaders provide great role models for other pupils. They take great pride in organising activities to keep everyone active.
- Parents hold highly positive views about the senior leadership of the school and the improvements being made. Almost without exception parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire or spoke to an inspector stated that their children were happy and very well-cared for and kept safe. Many parents commented about how well leaders manage the transition points for pupils. This includes those joining and moving up from Nursery. Strong links with the local high school support Year 6 when they leave Bexton.
- The breakfast-and-after school clubs enable pupils of all age to mix together well. This provision, and the holiday clubs provided, are well-attended and valued by parents and their children.

Governance of the school

- Governance has been transformed in recent years. In the period since the previous inspection, governors undertook a review into their role in challenging the leadership of the school. They used the outcomes to ensure that school leaders are effectively held to account for all aspects of the school's work.
- Governors receive detailed reports from school leaders and undertake a range of well-planned visits to the school to gain first-hand views of its work. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the areas where it can improve further.
- Governors hold an accurate view of pupils' progress, including that of different groups. They diligently review performance information and keep a careful check on spending of additional funding, such as that provided to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They are aware that pupils in the resourced provision could make more progress with a better match of work to academic needs.
- Governors know about the quality of teaching and ensure that any pay awards for teaching staff are linked to the progress made by pupils.
- The governing body ensures that the pupil premium funding is used effectively to support the personal and academic development of disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors regularly seek the views of pupils and parents when they review the performance of the school or are considering any changes to aspects of school life.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors regularly check that the school's procedures and systems to keep pupils safe are followed. Staff training is up to date, and covers all the required elements of safeguarding including spotting signs of radicalisation.
- Leaders undertake regular risk assessments to minimise any potential risks of hazards that could cause harm to pupils. The school provides a safe environment for pupils and staff. The school site is secure and procedures to check visitors or appoint new staff are robust. All staff are vigilant in keeping pupils safe.
- Any concern about pupils' well-being are carefully recorded and reported to the appropriate agencies when required. Parents are appropriately notified of concerns. The needs of pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable are met well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The school experienced a period of inconsistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment following the previous inspection. This led to a dip in pupil outcomes, particularly in key stage 2. Decisive action taken by the headteacher and deputy headteacher has led to sustained improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. It is now consistently good, as are pupil outcomes.
- Writing is taught very systematically across the school. Teachers put great emphasis on ensuring that pupils edit their work so that it continually improves in accuracy, imagination and fluency. They use technology and stimulating resources to bring learning to life and increase pupils' participation and enjoyment. The presentation of work in books is excellent, as pupils respond to teachers' high standards. Opportunities for pupils to practice and maintain their standard of work in their writing skills across other subjects are presented regularly.
- Pupils' basic mathematical skills are developed well and there is a strong focus on problem solving and practical mathematical activities. Pupils learn to reason and they are taught to see the role of mathematics in other subjects and in everyday life. Pupils enjoy learning and make a good contribution in lessons. This is particularly true of mathematic lessons where they have opportunities to explain their thinking.
- The teaching of early reading skills, including phonics is a strength of the early years and key stage 1. However, over time this work has not been built on well enough in the older classes. As a result, the teaching of reading is now a focus because the school is aware of the need to accelerate progress in this area, particularly in key stage 2. A wealth of initiatives is already making a difference. Pupils' love of reading is clearly developing. Pupils read with enthusiasm and fluency and progress is improving. Teachers plan interesting reading tasks and a wider, more exciting range of books is now available. Reading diaries show how well pupils, with the support of their parents, have risen to the challenge set for them to read regularly at home. The weekly 'three words' challenge certainly encourages pupils to identify new and interesting vocabulary to use in their writing.
- Teaching assistants are skilled and make a valuable contribution to pupils' emotional

development and learning. On most occasions, they are deployed well, often providing effective support for individuals and small groups who need extra help. However, at times they can over direct pupils' learning rather than encouraging independence in the pupils' they are supporting.

- Pupils like the way teachers' link learning in different subjects together in topic work. Each term's topic is firmly linked to a charity chosen by the pupils. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well through what the school calls its 'Ethical Enterprise' curriculum. As well as raising funds, pupils learn about the challenges facing children living in other communities in this country and around the world. Currently, pupils are supporting a national charity to raise funds for children with disabilities. Last year, one of the charities chosen by the pupils supported Retrak which, among other things, helps children in Africa who have to walk long distances to get to school.
- Pupils' make good progress in topic work however, at times, the work set for the most able pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics does not always challenge them sufficiently to ensure that they achieve their full potential in these subjects.
- Teachers use assessment information well to support most pupils. However, sometimes information is not used as successfully to move pupils' learning on once concepts have been grasped or to provide tasks which match the needs of pupils supported by the resourced provision or those working below the levels expected for their age in the mainstream classes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- This aspect is at the very heart of the school, underpinned by the Bexton values which are embodied by pupils, staff and governors.
- Parents who met with inspectors and the large number who responded to Parent View or wrote to inspectors were highly positive about the way their children are cared for at the school. They praise the school staff for being caring and attentive. They say that their children love coming into school.
- Pupils treat each other, their teachers and other adults with a high degree of courtesy and respect. They respond very quickly to instructions from staff and are polite and well mannered.
- Pupils are highly confident when speaking to visitors and smile and say hello when greeting them. They say they are happy at school and very much enjoy their learning. This is evident in the way they conduct themselves.
- Pupils make a positive contribution to school life, their local community and beyond. There are a range of opportunities for pupils to take on areas of responsibility, for example as school councillors and sports captains. Some enjoy taking on the responsible role of looking after the school's chickens. Older pupils enjoy acting as buddies for younger children, for example.
- Leaders regularly seek the views and opinions of pupils. One survey asked pupils about

their reading habits and as a result leaders set up a challenge to encourage pupils to read more widely and more often. Pupils have risen to this challenge magnificently.

- Pupils are unanimous in their views that they feel safe in school. They can recall lessons where they have learned about the need to eat a healthy diet and the benefit of regular exercise. Online safety has a high profile and pupils can talk sensibly about the need to take care when using the internet.
- Pupils are aware of the different forms bullying can take. They say that bullying of any kind is extremely rare and school records supports this view. Pupils of all ages are confident that an adult in the school will help them resolve any concerns they may have.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Relationships are excellent, at all times, both between pupils and between pupils and staff. Pupils are highly appreciative of the interesting lessons teachers' plan. The ethical focus of lessons helps them learn about the views and needs of others. They listen attentively and respond maturely when discussing challenging issues. As part of their ethical enterprise studies, for example, pupils reflected on the impact on the lives of children who live in countries where education is not readily available. The atmosphere around school is calm and productive. Pupils' conduct in class, around the school and at play times is exemplary.
- Pupils take great pride in their appearance and their work. They have very positive attitudes to learning. They listen carefully to their teacher and other adults and work very well in groups and pairs, challenging and supporting each other to develop their thinking.
- Pupils throughout the school are keen to do something for others. This is reflected in the high profile given to charitable giving. Good behaviour and hard work is often rewarded with the allocation of house points. Rather than earn a reward for themselves when house points are totalled each week, pupils gain a monetary donation to that term's chosen cause.
- Good attendance and punctuality have a high profile and are celebrated. Attendance continues to be above average and few pupils miss school regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the previous inspection the school has experienced some variability in pupils' progress. Over time outcomes for pupils in the early years and key stage 1 have continued to improve. Pupils often make strong progress in these year groups but progress in key stage 2 has been less consistent. However, school data and inspection evidence show that the strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher has secured ongoing improvements. Following a period of inconsistency, the quality of teaching across the school is now at least good and, as a result, strong progress in the early years and key stage 1 has been maintained and almost all pupils in key stage 2 now make at least good progress in all subjects.

- Children generally enter the early years with knowledge and skills above those typical for their age. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception is consistently above average and a good proportion of children do better than this.
- Early reading skills are taught particularly well. The vast majority of pupils reach the Year 1 phonics standard.
- The good start in early years is built on well in key stage 1. The proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics and those working above this level are consistently higher than the national average at the end of Year 2.
- Progress at the end of key stage 2 improved to in line with the national average in writing and mathematics in 2017. Progress in reading remained broadly average but the downward trend seen in the previous year continued. The proportion of pupils working at the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics was similar to the national average. The proportion of pupils working at the higher level is at least in line with the national average with writing and mathematics, the strongest subjects at this level.
- The school's assessment system and the quality of pupils' work show that most pupils currently in the school are making at least good and increasingly strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, at times progress, particularly for the most able, could be even faster if teachers moved learning on quickly when new concepts have been grasped and allowed pupils the opportunity to think things through and apply their learning to tasks independently.
- Pupils working below the level expected for their age and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those who attend the resourced provision, at times make more variable progress from their starting points. This is because the tasks provided are not always well matched to pupils' needs and, at times, adults over direct their work and do not provide resources to support learning or encourage pupils to think for themselves.
- Pupils make good progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. However, sometimes the work set in these subjects does not provide enough challenge to enable the most able to make the best possible progress.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is low. Nonetheless, the progress of this group is very closely tracked by senior leaders. As with other pupils, leaders have a precise understanding of how well individual disadvantaged pupils are doing. Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, perform as well as similar pupils elsewhere and their peers in the school although some working below the level expected for their age could achieve more.
- Some differences remain in outcomes between boys and girls in the school, particularly the most able. Changes made to the curriculum are helping speed up the progress made by boys and girls across the different year groups and differences are beginning to diminish.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Since September 2016 leaders and governors have successfully extended the provision in early years to cater for pre-school children from the age of two.
- Staff do not waste any time settling children of all ages in quickly. Careful assessment of children's skills on entry and strong partnerships with parents ensure that children get off to a flying start in the early years classes.
- The early years leader and the manager responsible for the pre-school provision work in close partnership. Both are experienced leaders and have established a strong, well-organised and highly-committed staff team. Parents value the highly-effective pastoral and nurturing care provided for their children. Children's achievements are celebrated in an online electronic journal that parents use to check how well their children are doing.
- Teaching provision indoors and outside are of high quality. Adults arrange activities that build on children's curiosity of the world around them. Resources stimulate, challenge and sustain concentration extremely well. During the inspection, some of the children's learning in Nursery was focused on the Three Little Pigs fairy tale. Children had much fun finding out about the materials needed to build a strong house for the three little pigs. Using a hairdryer, they sorted out the best materials to withstand the huff and puff of the wolf!
- Aply supported by knowledgeable teaching assistants, teachers ensure that every learning opportunity is seized. They are strongly focused on what they want the children to learn. Children's understanding is checked regularly through careful questioning. Adults are skilful in knowing when to intervene when children learn independently and when to step back and allow children to explore their learning for themselves.
- Adults' expectations of what children can achieve are high. Those not quite working at the levels for their age are given the right experiences and support to help them catch up quickly. Links are made with other professionals to support pupils with particular needs. For example, with additional help to improve speech and language development. This early intervention often means that there is no need for this additional support further up the school.
- Systematic teaching of phonics helps children master early reading skills. They quickly gain the confidence to use their rapidly growing phonic knowledge to read and write because they are provided with plentiful opportunities to do both. Children's work and their creations are displayed with pride throughout the setting. The quality of children's writing is well beyond that typically seen in early years
- Children thrive throughout their time in early years. There is plentiful stretch and challenge for the most able children. The checks on children's learning are precise and accurate and each individual's progress is meticulously recorded, often by the key worker, and tracked carefully by early years leaders. Children already demonstrating that they have met the expectations for the end of early years are targeted to move their skills beyond this. In this way, pupils are exceptionally well prepared for Year 1. The very large majority of children reach at least the level expected nationally by the end of Reception and a good proportion do better than this.
- School leaders regularly share their expertise with staff from local schools.
- Safeguarding and welfare arrangements are thorough. All staff are vigilant in ensuring

the safety and happiness of children.

School details

Unique reference number	111232
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10037764

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	516
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Woodhouse
Headteacher	Emily Armstrong
Telephone number	01565632816
Website	http://www.bexton.cheshire.sch.uk
Email address	head@bexton.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 May 2013

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-size primary school. Since the previous inspection the number on roll has risen significantly as the school now provides nursery provision for two and three year olds.
- Children attend the Nursery classes part time. Timings of sessions are flexible. There are two Reception classes which the children attend full time. Not all children who attend Nursery gain a place in the over-subscribed Reception classes.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This comprises of a small class for seven pupils with complex learning needs. Pupils are educated both within their base and sometimes in the mainstream classes.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is low.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, and health care plan is high.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced a number of staffing changes. The current headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their posts in January 2016. The SENCo and leader of the early years have also joined the staff. Nearly half of the staff have joined the school since the previous inspection. The chair of governors and vice chair of governors have been appointed to their roles since the previous inspection.
- The school provides a breakfast and- after school club for its pupils. It also provides holiday clubs for pupils.
- The school receives support from headteacher of Boughton Heath Academy who is a national leader of education. Bexton Primary School is a member of the Knutsford cluster of schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. Learning was observed in all classes and when pupils learned in small groups. Some learning was observed jointly with the senior leaders.
- Inspector looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about their work. They listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of reading skills. Pupils talked to inspectors about the books they have enjoyed and those that they are currently reading.
- The inspectors talked with pupils informally as they played at break times, visited the dining hall at lunchtime and observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around school. They met formally with three groups of pupils including two pupils who showed an inspector around school.
- An inspector met with the chair and vice chair of the governing body and four other governors.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and a national leader of education who is supporting the school.
- Inspectors spoke with middle and subject leaders and other members of school staff.
- Inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day. They took account of 233 responses to Ofsted's online survey (Parent View) and 109 comments provided for inspectors. Inspectors also took account of 36 responses to the staff questionnaire and one response to the pupil questionnaire and the school's most recent surveys of pupils' and parents' views.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including information about pupils' progress, school improvement plans, information about teachers' performance and external views of the school. They reviewed the contents of the school's website and scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding completed by school staff.

Inspection team

Lyn Pender, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Beard	Ofsted Inspector
Tina Cleugh	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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