

Ditton Primary School

Liverpool Road, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 7HD

Inspection dates

16–17 October 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The school's performance in all key areas has declined since the previous inspection.
- The progress pupils have made across a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics, has been poor. This is due to weaknesses in the teaching of these subjects, particularly at key stage 2.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is slow because support for these pupils is not well planned.
- Governors do not have a deep understanding of pupils' progress and achievement so that they can provide effective challenge to school leaders.
- Pupils' behaviour is not consistently well managed. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are far too common.
- Too often teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. When this happens, they do not match work well to pupils' different needs and tasks are often too easy, particularly for the most able.
- There are differences in how well pupils achieve in curriculum subjects. Some pupils, for example, do not have enough opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in science, history and geography.
- Some children in the early years are not challenged to achieve their best.
- Some middle leaders are not doing enough to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas.
- Too many pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are absent from school regularly.

The school has the following strengths

- New leaders and a reinvigorated governing body are beginning to turn the fortunes of the school around. Teaching is beginning to improve; some pupils are making better progress; and the procedures for keeping pupils safe have been strengthened.
- Many pupils are polite and courteous. They enjoy school. Pupils feel and are kept safe.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well to make good progress.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - addressing where weak teaching, learning and assessment remain, so that teaching across the school is effective and enables pupils to make the progress that they should
 - formulating, monitoring and evaluating precise plans for allocating additional funding to raise standards for disadvantaged pupils
 - ensuring that governors use accurate information to hold leaders robustly to account for the performance of the school
 - acting urgently to ensure that all staff adhere to the new approaches to managing behaviour
 - ensuring that middle leaders raise the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.
- Improve quickly the quality of teaching and learning, especially in key stage 2, so that different groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, make good progress across a range of subjects by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations of what different groups of pupils can achieve
 - provide the right level of challenge for pupils, including those who are the most able
 - use questioning effectively to probe and develop pupils' understanding
 - use assessment information to plan learning that enables pupils to make the best possible progress
 - set work for pupils in different subjects, including geography, history and science, that effectively extends their subject-specific knowledge and skills.
- Improve swiftly pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - eradicating any poor standards of pupils' behaviour
 - continuing to reduce the number of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, who are regularly absent from school
 - developing pupils' confidence and independent skills to improve their attitudes to learning.
- Improve outcomes in early years by ensuring that teaching consistently challenges children to achieve to their best in all areas of their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Until recently, leaders' actions to tackle the decline in the school's performance have been too slow or ineffective. Over time, this had led to a deterioration in the quality of education provided by the school. Swift and appropriate actions taken by the new senior leadership team and a refreshed governing body are stemming the decline. Some aspects of the school are showing clear signs of improvement. For example, the quality of teaching is being strengthened and some pupils, in different classes and subjects, are making much stronger gains in their learning than in the past. Systems for supporting pupils' personal development, well-being and safety have also improved in recent times. Nonetheless, despite evidence that the school is on an upward trajectory, there remain some significant weaknesses in leadership, such as the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and the inconsistent manner in which pupils' behaviour is managed.
- Since their appointment in April 2018, the new interim headteacher and deputy headteacher have set out their vision and ambition for the school with staff. Leaders have begun successfully to challenge and support staff to improve the quality of education. They have set about developing the role of middle leaders and they are ensuring that everyone is held accountable for pupils' achievement. However, these changes are relatively recent, which means that some subject leaders are not making a positive difference to teaching in their areas of responsibility.
- Leaders and governors increasingly demonstrate the determination and capacity to move the school forward following significant changes to the senior leadership team and teaching staff. Leaders have swiftly risen to the challenge of tackling poor performance. Their monitoring of teaching and learning has accurately identified strengths and weakness. Remedial actions, including greater access to training to improve teachers' skills, have resulted in stronger teaching than in the past. This is leading to some signs of improvement in current pupils' achievement. However, as leaders acknowledge, there is still some way to go to ensure that pupils benefit from effective teaching across the school and in different subjects.
- Senior leaders have recently introduced more effective systems to track pupils' progress across the school. Leaders now make better use of this information to support those pupils who have fallen behind.
- Leaders have succeeded in making some improvements to the teaching of writing. They have ensured that teachers have a better understanding of what pupils should be able to do for their age and ability. This is beginning to raise standards of attainment in some classes. Leaders have also made some improvements to the teaching of mathematics. They have implemented a revised approach to teachers' planning and introduced new schemes of work. There is now more problem-solving taking place in mathematics. This is beginning to improve pupils' progress and attainment.
- The funding to support pupils with SEND is spent well to ensure that the varied and diverse needs of this group of pupils are met. Leaders work effectively with parents and other agencies to improve provision for these pupils. Leaders have clear systems in place to support pupils' learning. As a result, this group of pupils makes good progress.

- Leaders quickly identified concerns with pupils' behaviour. They introduced a new behaviour policy to set out their expectations for how pupils should behave and to ensure a systematic approach to managing pupils' behaviour. There are some signs that this is beginning to have an impact, especially for younger children in the early years and some pupils in key stage 1. However, the considerable turnover in staff has led to variability in the implementation of this policy. As a result, standards of pupils' behaviour remain unacceptable, especially in key stage 2.
- At the request of the interim headteacher, an external professional has undertaken a review of how effectively pupil premium funding is used. A detailed plan is now in place which identifies barriers to pupils' learning. Leaders are beginning to develop appropriate strategies to maximise the progress of disadvantaged pupils. However, leaders' actions are at too early a stage of development for any impact be evident. Disadvantaged pupils make slower progress than other pupils in many areas of the curriculum, including reading and writing.
- Leaders make sure that pupils study a wide range of subjects. Nevertheless, provision in some subjects, including science, history and geography, is less effective. It does not fully develop pupils' subject-specific knowledge, understanding and skills.
- There are some strengths in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enthusiastically told inspectors about their knowledge of religions and cultures within modern British society. Pupils have enjoyed activities such as having community members visit school and shared how they enjoy opportunities to serve on the school council and as eco club members. However, the poor standard of behaviour in school shows that pupils' social development is weak.
- The school's website is not up to date and does not contain all necessary statutory information. Senior leaders are in the process of developing their new website.

Governance of the school

- Following a significant period of turbulence, members of the governing body have undertaken a review of their skills and have developed a clear plan to improve the effectiveness of governance. Governors have also taken helpful steps to increase their capacity, such as the appointment of professional and experienced co-opted governors with experience in school improvement. Governors are rejuvenated and committed in their drive for improvement.
- Governors are enthusiastic and passionate about the school. They are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in helping to steer improvements. Their actions in the past point to their willingness to make difficult decisions in order to steer the school in the right direction. Their clear vision for the future has provided strength and direction to the interim headteacher and senior leaders.
- Governors have some understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, but this is limited by the quality of information that they have received about the school's performance over time. This limits the rigour and effectiveness of the challenge that they offer to leaders. Nonetheless, governors recognise that pupils' outcomes need to improve. They are also aware that they have not ensured effective use of the pupil premium funding to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding are kept up-to-date with the latest government guidelines. Suitable checks are made on staff when they are recruited to the school.
- Staff are trained well and have a good understanding of the government's latest guidance on safeguarding children. All staff who spoke with inspectors demonstrated a sound knowledge of the procedures that they should follow if a pupil presents an issue or is of concern.
- Leaders have recently strengthened the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe. They have developed a highly supportive team approach within the school. Leaders' strong focus on pupils' well-being, including the development of the inclusion team, is beginning to develop a more open and transparent culture of safeguarding. Staff know pupils well and work closely with other agencies to support pupils' welfare. Consequently, pupils and their families confidently access local services for early help, ensuring that they receive appropriate and timely support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Over time, teaching has failed to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they should. Recent changes in staffing, plus support and guidance from senior leaders, are beginning to tackle endemic weaknesses in teaching. Nevertheless, current teaching remains variable across the school and in different subjects. The current quality of teaching is not strong enough to ensure that pupils quickly make up for lost learning in the past.
- There are signs of improvement across the school. In some classes in key stages 1 and 2, teaching is beginning to have a more positive impact on pupils' progress. The support given to pupils with SEND enables them to learn well. However, this is not being replicated as quickly in key stage 2. Teaching in key stage 2 does not typically encourage pupils to deepen their understanding.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and those who are the most able. Teachers do not assess pupils' learning effectively. As a result, teachers do not pay enough attention to what pupils know and can already do. Sometimes the tasks that teachers provide are too hard and pupils get stuck. At other times, tasks are too easy and lack challenge. As a result, pupils do not develop knowledge, understanding or skills in line with their capabilities. This lack of challenge prevents many pupils from making the best possible progress.
- Teachers are inconsistent in their use of questioning to assess pupils' understanding. Some teachers use questions effectively to check what pupils already know so that they can build on that knowledge. However, some teachers are less effective at using questions to move pupils' learning forwards.
- The recent focus on developing pupils' writing skills has led to some improvements in the teaching of this subject. Consequently, pupils' progress is beginning to improve.

Pupils' work in books during this academic year is much better than in the previous year. However, pupils' spelling skills remain weak and the inaccuracy of letter formation is not consistently identified or tackled by teachers.

- Phonics skills (letters and the sounds they represent) are not consistently well-taught in key stage 1. Consequently, many pupils struggle to read fluently. Opportunities to teach the higher order comprehension skills, such as inference and reasoning, are too variable in key stage 2. Pupils are not always encouraged to read books that challenge them or to develop their reading skills well enough.
- In mathematics, teachers are beginning to find an appropriate balance between developing pupils' mathematical skills and providing them with opportunities to apply these skills to solve problems. As a result, rates of progress in mathematics are starting to improve in some classes. However, teachers do not consistently spot and address pupils' mathematical mistakes and misconceptions, and opportunities to stretch and challenge the most able pupils are often missed.
- In subjects such as history, geography and science, teachers do not consistently provide work that challenges pupils. Books show that learning in subjects other than English and mathematics lacks depth.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils are happy in school. Many pupils are often polite, displaying good manners. However, a small number of pupils do not treat adults or other pupils with respect. Pupils' attitudes to learning vary considerably and teachers do not routinely encourage pupils to develop their confidence and independence as learners.
- The inclusion team is passionate about its work and persistent when seeking external support for pupils. There is determined focus on supporting pupils' emotional well-being and keeping them safe.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school, despite some of the poor behaviour exhibited by some of their peers. They know that their teachers or the members of the inclusion team will listen to any problems or concerns that they might have.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about how to stay safe online. They enjoy learning how they can keep themselves safe and particularly like it when members of the community, such as police officers, come to speak to them.
- There are opportunities for pupils to accept posts of responsibility and widen their understanding of citizenship. For example, they are proud to be members of the school council and have recently enjoyed the opportunity to meet members of the wider school community.
- Leaders have planned opportunities to develop pupils' well-being. In the school's nurture classroom, staff give pupils the time to talk about their feelings and emotions. Older pupils enjoy opportunities to learn life skills. In a sewing project, a group of pupils was excited to be planning, designing and making firework-themed artwork

collaboratively.

- Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy school, but that there is some bullying and behaviour which disrupts learning. Incidents of racist or homophobic language are rare. A significant number of parents do not have confidence that their concerns about bullying are addressed effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Leaders have implemented a new behaviour management system, but changes in staffing this year have contributed to a lack of consistency in managing pupils' behaviour. Consequently, pupils' behaviour in some classes, especially in key stage 2, slows down learning.
- During the inspection, some pupils were observed calling out and not listening attentively to teachers or other pupils. Some pupils do not take enough care to present their work tidily and do not complete tasks appropriately.
- The standard of pupils' behaviour around school and during breaktimes and lunchtimes is poor. Inspectors observed high levels of noise in the dining hall and pupils being disruptive while adults ignored their lack of manners and poor behaviour.
- Pupils said that they would like staff to deal more effectively with poor behaviour in class, around school and outside. They were clear that 'it gets in the way of learning'.
- Attendance is a significant issue for the school. Pupils' attendance has remained below the national average over time. Persistent absence has been approximately double the national average for the past three years. Despite strategies put in place by leaders, current information shows that there is little sign of improvement. Too many pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, do not attend school regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes are inadequate because over time pupils have made weak progress in a range of subjects, especially in reading and writing.
- The attainment and progress of pupils at the end of key stage 2 have declined markedly since the previous inspection. The provisional 2018 results show that the proportions of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading and writing were well below the national average. Overall, only half of the pupils who left Year 6 in 2018 reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, pupils are not adequately prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Over time, not enough pupils reach the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in 2017 was in the bottom 10% of all schools nationally. However, the impact of stronger teaching is evident in the provisional 2018 outcomes, which demonstrate an improvement in pupils' attainment. This means that current Year 3 pupils are far better prepared to make a successful start on their key stage 2 education than has been the case in the past.
- Hardly any pupils attained the higher levels, or greater depth, in any subject at the end

of either key stage 1 or 2. This is because teachers do not challenge the most able pupils sufficiently during lessons, and expectations for this group are too low in all year groups.

- The school's assessment information shows that the rates of progress for current pupils are improving but remain far too variable. While improvements in teaching are leading to an increasing proportion of pupils making stronger progress than in the past, significant weaknesses remain. Some pupils are making better progress and are catching up quickly. However, gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, coupled with a legacy of weak teaching in the past, mean that too many pupils are not developing into successful learners.
- Assessment information shows that over half of the pupils in key stage 2 are currently working at the level for their age expected by the school in mathematics. This is confirmed by the work that inspectors saw in pupils' books and around school. While current attainment in mathematics is not good enough, it does signal a marked improvement on previous years.
- Over time, pupils' phonics outcomes have been a strength of the school. However, significant staff changes led to far fewer pupils reaching the expected standard in 2018. As a result, the phonics scores dipped to below the national average.
- Pupils' work shows that their achievement in subjects other than English and mathematics is uneven. Pupils are not routinely able to build upon their knowledge and skills in subjects such as history and geography. In science, some pupils are able to carry out interesting investigations, but this practice is not reflected elsewhere.
- The school's tracking information and the work of pupils currently in the school show that pupils with SEND make good progress. The leader with responsibility for special educational needs ensures that provision for these pupils is better matched to their needs using targeted individual plans.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is inadequate. They have made exceptionally slow progress over time and this is not improving. Differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are wide in reading, writing and mathematics, and they are not diminishing.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children enter early years with a level of skills and knowledge that is below that typical for their age. Many children have particularly underdeveloped skills in speaking, listening, reading, mathematics, social interactions and emotional management.
- Children typically make adequate rather than good progress. As a result, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception, despite improving over time, remains below the national average.
- The school's own records of children's learning show that most children's attainment is lower in mathematics, reading and writing than in the other areas of learning. While children benefit from taking part in focused mathematics and English, expectations of what children are capable of achieving are not consistently high enough.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and engaging. They share warm relationships with the children and are attentive to their needs. However, the quality of teaching is not good

because teachers do not consistently challenge the children to achieve their very best.

- Children are trusting of adults and feel safe. Teachers have increased transition activities with the local nursery school. As a result, children are settled and ready to learn when they join the Reception class.
- Children play happily alongside each other, sharing and taking turns as they learn and play. Standards of behaviour are good, and children's progress is monitored well.
- Reception classrooms provide bright and welcoming environments in which the children learn. Children can access activities across the different areas of learning and quickly develop the confidence to make their own choices.
- The early years leader is knowledgeable but new to her role. She has begun to ensure that the early years team works more closely together to improve the quality of teaching.
- Positive relationships have been established with parents, helping to promote security and consistency in children's lives. Parents are kept well-informed about their children's progress and are encouraged to contribute to their learning. Advice and support are given to parents to help them develop their children's learning at home.
- At the time of the inspection, the statutory welfare requirements were met.

School details

Unique reference number	111183
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10045801

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	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	403
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Carl Cagliarini
Interim Headteacher	Mrs Emma Fenton
Telephone number	01514 245861
Website	www.dittonprimary.co.uk
Email address	head.dittonprimary@halton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 February 2014

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is significantly lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The school runs daily a breakfast club.
- The new interim headteacher was appointed in April 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a wide range of lessons, covering all classes in the school. Leaders accompanied inspectors on some observations.
- Meetings were held with the interim headteacher, acting deputy headteacher and other leaders from across the school.
- The lead inspector also met the chair of the governing body and other governors.
- The lead inspector spoke to the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors talked to a group of pupils on the second day of the inspection. The inspection team also talked to pupils about their learning in lessons and at breaktime.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, lunchtimes and playtimes.
- Inspectors examined the quality of pupils' work in a wide range of books and across different subjects.
- Inspectors looked at the school's work and considered documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, attendance figures, curriculum plans and information relating to pupils' achievement and safeguarding.
- Inspectors talked to parents as they dropped their children off at school. They also considered 64 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 63 free-text responses from parents.

Inspection team

James Blackwell, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lynne Ryder	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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