

# Halebank CE (VC) Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111244
<b>Local authority</b>	Halton
<b>Inspection number</b>	378259
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Judith Tolley

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	74
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Kathleen Williams
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gillian Threadgold
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 June 2008
<b>School address</b>	Heathview Road Widnes WA8 8UZ
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Judith Tolley

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed 11 lessons with the headteacher, taught by four different teachers. The inspector also made short visits to phonics (letters and their sounds) lessons and guided reading sessions across the school, led by teachers and trained assistants. Meetings were held with a group of pupils, members of the governing body and school staff, including senior and middle managers. The inspector scrutinised pupils' work, observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan and the school's analysis of pupils' progress. She also analysed 38 parents' and carers' questionnaires and others completed by pupils and staff.

## Information about the school

Halebank CE Primary School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average but varies from year-to-year. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low. The school meets current floor standards, which set the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school holds a number of awards including Artsmark and Healthy School status.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate**  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because there remain some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and because pupils' attainment in writing is not as high as it should be.
- Pupils' achievement from their starting points is good. By the end of Year 6, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average. Pupils enjoy reading and most read with fluency and understanding. Spelling and punctuation in pupils' writing are less strong. Although pupils apply their knowledge of letters and their sounds (phonics) effectively in their reading, this knowledge is not applied accurately enough in their spelling.
- Teaching is good. The school provides very effectively for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. In some lessons opportunities are missed to use assessment information to match work closely enough to pupils' needs so that some pupils find work too difficult or too easy. Marking is regular but does not always give pupils detailed enough guidance about how to improve their writing.
- Behaviour is good. Attendance is above average. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, are keen to take responsibility and are courteous and polite. They say that learning is fun and that they feel safe.
- Leadership of teaching and the management of staff performance are very effective. Teaching and other aspects of the school's work are monitored closely to provide very clear direction. Action to address weaknesses and raise attainment has proved successful and indicates the school's good capacity to improve further. Staff work very effectively as a team and share a determination to improve further.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing further by:
  - improving pupils' accuracy in spelling and punctuation
  - improving the quality and consistency of the written guidance pupils receive across all subjects so that they know exactly how to improve their work.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching to that of the best by:
  - using assessment information more effectively in lesson planning to meet more precisely the needs of groups of differing ability within classes
  - increasing the opportunities pupils have to work independently and collaboratively with others to solve problems.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers consider that pupils achieve well. The inspection found that achievement is good. Many pupils join the school with attainment which is low in relation to that expected for their age. In the Early Years Foundation Stage they make good progress overall. They make particularly good progress in developing their communication and personal and social skills because teachers take every opportunity to engage them in conversation. As a result they join Year 1 keen to learn and ready to access the Key Stage 1 curriculum. Pupils continue to make good progress as they move through the school in relation to their starting points. By the end of Year 6, all groups of pupils achieve equally well and there is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups. As a result of well tailored intervention programmes and individual support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, these pupils also make good progress and are able to participate fully in activities alongside their classmates.

By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics and writing is below average. By the end of Year 6 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average. Most pupils read a variety of texts fluently and with understanding. They skim and scan for information and write successfully for a variety of purposes. However, pupils' performance in writing is hampered by inaccuracies in spelling and punctuation. As a result of the emphasis on speaking and collaborative working with a partner, most pupils are confident and articulate in expressing their ideas and explaining their views. Most apply their mathematical skills confidently to solve problems.

In lessons, learning is good and pupils participate enthusiastically in activities, especially when working with a partner or a small group to explore ideas and solve problems.

### Quality of teaching

Pupils, parents and carers say that teaching is good. Inspection findings endorse this view although there remain some inconsistencies across the school. Teachers give clear demonstrations and explanations so that pupils rapidly understand new ideas. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilful in their use of questioning to support and extend pupils' thinking in group work and when they monitor pupils' progress during tasks. Pupils with

special educational needs are well supported in the classroom and through intervention programmes. The systematic approach to teaching phonics is effective in raising attainment in reading. Opportunities for pupils to explore ideas with a partner effectively develop their speaking and listening skills and promote their respect for the views of others, as well as their confidence and independence as learners. In a Year 3 and 4 lesson for example, pupils worked enthusiastically with a partner to solve word problems and were keen to explain their ideas to the rest of the class. However, opportunities for them to do this are sometimes missed. On occasions, teacher led activities are too lengthy and not all pupils are fully involved in discussions. The school provides good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the approach that teachers take with these areas of learning is effective. For instance, Year 3 and 4 pupils planned and confidently led a whole school assembly in front of parents, carers and governors and asked their audience to consider issues surrounding attending a church service.

Teachers use assessment information effectively to place pupils in groups in lessons and to plan pupils' next steps in learning. In the most effective lessons, they plan in detail for groups of differing ability within classes. For example, in a Year 5 and 6 mathematics lesson, pupils made swift progress working in groups to solve multiplication and division problems because of the way tasks and resources were provided to meet the precise needs of different groups. However, on occasions, some pupils find work too difficult or too easy; resources provided sometimes lack the guidance some lower attaining pupils need to complete tasks independently so that their progress is slowed. Similarly, opportunities are sometimes missed to provide further challenge for higher attaining pupils. Marking is regular but does not always give pupils sufficient guidance about how to improve their work, in particular, with the accuracy of spelling and punctuation.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour is good. Parents, carers and pupils are confident that any poor behaviour is dealt with effectively and promptly. Pupils say lessons are fun and are enthusiastic about their learning. They enjoy school and attendance is above average. They have very good relationships with each other and are courteous and polite. Pupils display high levels of concentration and, when working in pairs or groups, organise themselves swiftly and without fuss. Pupils know how to stay safe and healthy and have a good understanding of the risks to which they may be exposed, both within and outside of school. Pupils say they enjoy extra-curricular activities, including drama, music and sport. They know the importance of a healthy diet. Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take, including disparaging reference to individuals' personal style, and the dangers posed by some inappropriate internet sites. Instances of bullying are rare and parents, carers and pupils express confidence in the school's systems for dealing with such occurrences. Pupils are proud of their school and their achievements. They take responsibilities seriously, for instance as school councillors, road safety officers, fundraisers and as playground buddies. They are especially proud of their achievements in improving the school grounds through their gardening, and by creating the wetland area and the outdoor 'stage'. All pupils, even the youngest, take great pride and care in looking after these areas.

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## Leadership and management

The headteacher provides excellent leadership and very clear educational direction, based on a rigorous analysis of pupils' progress, close monitoring and an accurate evaluation of the school's work. She is strongly supported by the governing body which plays an active part in the school's self-evaluation, monitoring and improvement planning processes and is fully involved in the day-to-day life of the school. Governors are very well informed and are therefore, able to act very effectively as critical friends. As a result of very effective teamwork amongst staff and a shared determination to improve further, attainment has risen and progress accelerated since the last inspection. The school has been successful in forging a strong partnership with parents as well as improving attendance and punctuality. Strategies to improve the quality of teaching, such as joint planning across year groups, have proved successful in developing good practice. Subject specialists use their expertise to good effect in helping to plan the curriculum and in spreading the best practice in their subjects across the school, although this is at the early stages of development. As a result, inconsistencies in teaching remain. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements: policies are regularly reviewed by the governing body and staff are kept up to date through regular training. Issues from the previous inspection have been tackled successfully.

The curriculum is good and ensures a balance of activities. Although in lessons there are some inconsistencies in matching work to ability, overall the curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. As a result, the promotion of equality of opportunity for success is good. The adoption of a topic based curriculum, taking into account pupils' own preferences, is having a positive impact upon pupils' progress and enjoyment and provides them with opportunities to practise their writing and reading in a variety of contexts. The systematic teaching of phonics and the focus on writing has proved successful in raising attainment in English. Visitors and visits, as well as after-school clubs, sport and enterprise activities are all greatly valued by pupils and enrich the taught curriculum. Pupils also benefit from specialist teaching in music, French and physical education. The school takes a firm stand on any suggestion of discrimination and pupils learn to reflect and appreciate their own skills and the skills of others. This, together with collaborative work, is very successful in increasing pupils' confidence and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.



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## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



31 May 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Halebank CE (VC) Primary School, Widnes, WA8 8UZ**

I would like to thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school recently. I really enjoyed talking to you all and hearing your views. Your school is a good one. Your behaviour in lessons is good and I was impressed by how courteous and polite you were. You do a lot to help improve the school, for instance, through the school council and as playground buddies and road safety officers. Thank you very much for showing me all the work you are doing to improve the school grounds as well. The wetland area and the outdoor stage are very impressive and all your vegetables and plants are doing really well. You're doing a great job!

You make good progress and you reach the same standards as other pupils nationally. You all told me how much you enjoy your lessons. I did notice that some of you sometimes found tasks too difficult or too easy, so I have asked the teachers to make sure you always get the right amount of challenge to make sure you can all do your best. Some of you struggle with spelling and punctuation and this prevents you from doing your best in your writing. I have asked the school to put this right and to give you more help with this. You work really well with a partner and in small groups to solve problems so I have asked your teachers to make sure you have more opportunities to work in this way.

The headteacher and staff are working to make your school even better. You can all help by continuing to work hard. I wish you every success for the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely

Judith Tolley  
Lead inspector

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