

Audlem St James' CE Primary School

Heathfield Road, Audlem, Crewe, CW3 0HH

Inspection dates 25–26 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Recent improvements in teaching, assessment and leadership and management introduced by the headteacher have not had sufficient time to improve achievement across all areas of the school.
- The quality of teaching over time is not consistently at least good and does not fully stretch all pupils, especially within Years 3 and 4 and within foundation subjects (those other than English, mathematics and science).
- Some pupils' writing skills, especially those of more-able pupils, are not sufficiently developed.
- Some pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to work independent of adult support.
- The outdoor area within Nursery and Reception is underdeveloped and limits children's involvement across the full range of learning.
- The part played by subject coordinators in monitoring teaching within their areas and contributing to school development planning is limited.
- The school has yet to fully explain its new ways of working and raised expectations to parents, such that they all have confidence in the direction and performance of the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders and staff are highly committed to improving both achievement and the quality of teaching and are very clear about how to do this.
- Standards of reading at both Year 2 and Year 6 are above average and improving further.
- Recent good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching in Year 2, and in Years 5 and 6 has accelerated pupils' progress so that pupils' achievement in English and mathematics in these classes is currently above average.
- Attendance is well above average and behaviour is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons, of which two were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspection team made a number of other short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, parents, representatives of the governing body and from the local authority, and the school's senior and middle managers and teachers.
- Inspectors took account of 23 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the school's own surveys of pupils' and parents' views of the school in planning the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents, including pupil performance data, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance and safeguarding arrangements.

Inspection team

Nigel Cromey-Hawke, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bimla Kumari

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average sized primary school, with a well above average number of girls in comparison to boys.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average.
- There are currently three pupils in local authority care.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage, with very few who speak English as an additional language.
- The school operates mixed-age classes of Nursery and Reception, Years 3 and 4, Years 4 and 5 and Years 5 and 6.
- The school provides its own breakfast club.
- There is an on-site playgroup and after-school club that is not managed by the governing body and is reported on separately.
- The school has many awards, including Healthy School status, the Activemark, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and has Eco-School status.
- The school has undergone significant staffing changes since the previous inspection including a period of temporary leadership early last year and changes within the governing body. The current headteacher took up post in September 2012 and worked closely with the interim headteacher from midway through last year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise achievement to be at least good by:
 - ensuring that in all lessons there is sufficient pace and challenge, especially within Years 3 and 4 and in foundation subject lessons, to ensure that pupils make the best progress in their learning
 - develop pupils' writing skills, especially those of more-able pupils, so that they can better communicate their learning
 - develop pupils' ability to work independent of adult support.
- Develop the outdoor classroom within the Early Years Foundation Stage setting so that all areas of learning are fully available to children.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing the role of subject leaders, especially in monitoring the quality of provision within their areas of responsibility and within development planning
 - engage more effectively with parents to explain the school's raised expectations and new ways of working.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with basic skills that are broadly expected for their age and settle quickly into the welcoming and safe environment provided. Children's progress has recently quickened to be good, due to the new staffing and ways of working recently introduced, especially better procedures for assessing and tracking children's learning. Despite renovations to indoor areas, the outdoor learning area remains underdeveloped and children's access to all aspects of learning there is limited.
- Over the last three years pupils' attainment in English and mathematics has varied considerably across classes, reflecting weaker teaching but also considerable staffing changes. In 2010, pupils' attainment on leaving the school in Year 6 was above average, but in 2011 it fell to low levels. Local authority monitoring expressed concern over the quality of teaching and pupils' progress within the school. Robust improvements introduced by the interim headteacher, and then the permanent headteacher, have done much to recover achievement such that, in 2012, pupils left in Year 6 with above average attainment in English and mathematics.
- Attainment in reading has also been improved and is currently above average in both Year 2 and Year 6. Skills in writing have been focused upon but school data and inspection evidence show that some areas of weakness remain here, notably with more-able pupils, which limits their ability to effectively communicate their learning.
- Many pupils are now making accelerated progress and catching up on lost ground. The drive to improve the quality of learning has not yet been effective across all year groups, however, and achievement in Years 3 and 4 and in the foundation subjects still requires improvement. Past weaker performance by some groups of pupils has been targeted with noticeable success and, although gaps remain in some year groups in the achievement of girls, the differences are being rapidly closed.
- Over time, the progress being made by pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs matches expectations. Again, many of these pupils are currently making accelerated progress as a result of more closely targeted support.
- Over time achievement is inconsistent and still requires improvement, although raised expectations are bringing about rapid changes for the better.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time requires improvement, but much current teaching is good, with a small amount that is outstanding. This reflects the success of the recent drive by senior staff and members of the governing body, to improve the performance of the school.
- Significant changes in teaching staff have been made since the previous inspection. New procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress, more challenging individual pupil learning targets and better quality marking and feedback to pupils on their work, have all begun to eliminate the effects of past weaker teaching. Staff are highly committed to the different ways of working and the new direction of the school, although teaching practice varies in effectiveness across the school.
- In the majority of lessons information on pupils' prior learning is used to good effect to target pupils' needs, particularly within the mixed-aged classes. Funding from the local authority has been used to good effect to provide additional support within the Year 5 and 6 class in literacy and numeracy. The impact of this was seen during the inspection where outstanding learning was taking place, for example, within a lower-ability mathematics class that was benefiting particularly from its smaller group size.
- The teaching of reading skills is good, with well structured daily sessions on letters and sounds and guided reading sessions that give pupils the tools to move their learning forward.

Opportunities for extended writing are beginning to be developed across all subject areas but practice is variable and impact not yet fully evident.

- The school has used considerable staff development to increase the amount of cooperative learning opportunities in lessons where pupils share learning together and benefit from exchanging ideas. Teaching assistants provide good support in these situations, often focusing effectively upon the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and improving their previously variable progress. Equality of opportunity is also being improved with closely targeted support for any underachieving groups, whose progress is checked rigorously on a half-termly basis by senior staff.
- Teachers monitor pupils' progress effectively in many current lessons, especially within literacy and numeracy. Some lessons lack the necessary pace and challenge, however, with the result that progress is no better than expected, especially within Years 3 and 4 and within the teaching of foundation subjects. There are also limited opportunities in some lessons for independent working by pupils, and insufficient guidance given to help them move their own learning forward.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school has a welcoming atmosphere, where all pupils are made to feel valued. This contributes to pupils' positive attitudes to learning and good relations between pupils and with adults.
- Pupils are polite, well mannered and punctual to school and to lessons. Attendance has been consistently above average for many years and exclusions are extremely rare.
- Behaviour within the best lessons and around the school is often exemplary, although there is evidence of minor low-level disruption in some lessons when the pace of learning slows. This is managed well, however, with clear rewards and consequences being operated by all staff.
- Pupils are encouraged to take on many forms of responsibility within the school, with older pupils acting as buddies for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, as monitors of various kinds, peer mentors for those experiencing difficulty and through the active school council. This group has contributed significantly to the recent reviews of teaching and learning and the range of subjects and clubs and activities provided by the school.
- Inspection evidence, school records and discussion with groups of pupils show that bullying is low level. When it is encountered, pupils feel confident that it will be dealt with effectively and quickly. The vast majority of parents who used Parent View and those who responded to the school survey on their views earlier this year, supported this view.
- A small number of pupils take advantage of the breakfast club provided by the school and get a healthy start to their day. Some also attend the on-site playgroup and after-school club, which links well with the work of the school.
- Pupils interviewed during the inspection were wholeheartedly in support of the changed direction of the school under its new leadership, with several commenting very positively upon the improvements in teaching, information about their progress and extent of their involvement in school life. Some parents also wrote extensively to the inspectors in support of the improvements within the school and the increased level of their children's enjoyment in attending Audlem St James.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Building upon the start made during the temporary leadership of the school last year, the current headteacher is driving improvement forward with great energy and skill. Teaching has been improved, staffing renewed, including governors, and achievement raised. Effective support from the local authority has been used to considerably improve the performance of the school and government funding has been used effectively to close gaps in the performance of

groups of pupils.

- A comprehensive cycle of self-evaluation and lesson monitoring by senior staff, followed by closely targeted professional development, has been put in place. There are very focused whole-school plans for driving further improvement. Due to the newness in post of many staff, however, the monitoring role of subject leaders and their involvement in planning for further change is currently underdeveloped.
 - The curriculum has been extensively revised and provides a rich and varied range of learning experiences for pupils, but due to its newness in place its impact across the school is not yet fully proven. Pupils talk with enthusiasm, however, about increased opportunities for visits, the greater use of technologies within lessons to provide interesting resources and a wider range of clubs and activities on offer for them.
 - The school has introduced a parents forum, revised newsletters and a programme of family learning that are designed to help parents support their children's education. The school recognises, though, that it has more to do in fully explaining its raised expectations, new ways of working and its improved performance levels within the local community.
 - Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
 - Throughout the many changes in personnel and operation of the school, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has remained a priority and is good, reflecting the faith ethos of the school.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has provided very effective support and challenge for the school's drive for improvement over the last two years.
 - Governors have closely monitored developments, and together with the headteacher have robustly used performance management structures to hold staff to account and develop good practice. The school clearly has the ability to manage its own future improvement and staff morale is high as the school responds to these challenges.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	111267
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	405326

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek Barnes
Headteacher	Rebecca Jewitt
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2010
Telephone number	01270 685120
Fax number	01270 812314
Email address	head@stjamesaudlem.cheshire.sch.uk

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