

Highfield St Matthew's C.E Primary School

Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan, WN3 6BL

Inspection dates 16–17 October 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils are well taught, sometimes outstandingly well. As a result, they make good progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils make particularly good use of computers to help them research and present their work.
- A strong culture of good writing is emerging; writing is strongly promoted in a wide range of subjects and pupils enjoy it.
- Pupils behave well in and out of class; they attend regularly and most show a strong desire to work hard and do as well as they can in their work. Pupils say they feel safe and their parents agree.
- Parents are very happy with the school. There are many more requests for places than can be provided, even though an extra Reception class has been opened this year to help cope with this demand.
- Leadership and management duties are spread fairly across the school and members of the governing body keep a close eye on what goes on and how well staff go about their work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are still some aspects of teaching that require improvement. For example, the outside area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not used well enough to promote learning.
- There are a few pupils who, with a bit more push from teachers, could be expected to do even better in their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 20 lessons; two were joint observations with either the headteacher or an assistant headteacher.
- Meetings were held with many senior staff and representatives of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Many informal discussions took place with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 29 parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work and school data about their past and current progress.
- Documents relating to behaviour, safeguarding, attendance and school improvement were looked at alongside those relating to self-evaluation.

Inspection team

Alastair Younger, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Gordon Alston

Additional inspector

Patricia Cope

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportions of pupils supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are below the national average.
- Fewer pupils than average are known to be eligible for the pupil premium.
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standard which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching to help even more pupils to make good or better progress by:
 - reducing the amount of time teachers spend talking to the whole class at the start of lessons
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to work by themselves
 - raising teachers' expectations and making sure all pupils are set work that consistently challenges them to achieve as well as they can
 - making better use of resources and the outside learning area in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Increasing further the proportion of pupils who exceed the national expectations by:
 - focusing sharply on pupils with broadly average attainment in Year 2 to raise their attainment by the end of the key stage to above average
 - ensuring work in Key Stage 2 helps more pupils to reach the higher levels by the end of Year 6.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children enter the school in the Nursery or Reception classes with the skills broadly expected for their age but their language and number skills are lower. Consistently good teaching helps them to make good progress, especially in language and number work so that, by the time they transfer to Year 1, nearly all are achieving what is expected for their age in all areas of their early learning goals.
- By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is above expectation. This has been the case for four of the past five years. Last year, attainment dipped but the work of current Year 6 pupils shows that last year's results were an exception and that attainment is once more above average.
- All groups of pupils make good progress. There are some very small differences in the progress made by different groups but none are significant or consistent, including those for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs or pupils in receipt of the pupil premium funding.
- There is uniformly good progress across the whole curriculum with success spread across many subjects beyond English and mathematics. This is helping pupils to receive a well- balanced, relevant education.
- Pupils become confident readers; they are taught about the value of understanding combinations of letters to create distinctive sounds and how these sounds can be combined to make words. Pupils are especially encouraged to develop a love of books and how they can use their reading skills to support their learning across subjects. In assessments at the end of the last school year, Year 1 pupils did better than most pupils nationally.
- Progress in writing deserves special mention. There are many exceptionally good examples, especially in Key Stage 2, where pupils are presenting work particularly well, and writing for many different purposes, such as creatively in English, factually in theme and topic work and technically correctly when reporting in science. Many pupils say that writing is one of their favourite activities.
- The highest attaining pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 usually go on to achieve the higher levels at the end of Year 6. Many lower attaining pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 also go on to exceed expectations by the end of Year 6. Not enough pupils of average ability go on to exceed expectations in English and mathematics at the end of each key stage.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Most teaching is good, a little is outstanding and a similar proportion requires improvement. There is no record of any inadequate teaching.
- Leaders and managers have taken great care to ensure there is good teaching across the school which is helping to maintain consistently good standards for all year groups.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation stage are well taught. They are encouraged to choose and learn with as much independence as possible. Adults strongly encourage the promotion of their social, communication and language skills. Teachers are however not using the outdoor area well enough. They tend to use it as a play space rather than as a further environment where children can apply their learning and pick up new skills.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, there are many common strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Computers are consistently well used in lessons to help pupils research work, present it formally, or to give them a new stimulus and avenue for learning. Weaker features are teachers' tendency to have overly long introductions to lessons and to talk for too long to the whole class. These limit the opportunities for pupils to work by themselves at their own pace and so develop their skill in learning to work on their own.
- Occasionally, pupils of average and higher ability are not expected to do hard enough work. Not all teachers recognise when pupils understand what they have been taught and then

quickly move them on to more challenging work.

- Teachers promote literacy skills very well. In nearly all lessons, pupils are encouraged to use and develop their reading, writing and communication skills. A superb example of this was seen in an art lesson, where pupils studying the work of the artist Andy Goldsworthy were being challenged to create a biography of the artist presented in the style of his work using computers for research and materials they had collected as part of their homework.
- Pupils who have special educational needs are frequently taught in smaller groups and receive effective extra support to help them achieve their full potential. One such group of Year 5 pupils were making outstanding progress as they learned how to round numbers to the nearest 10, with expert help from a teaching assistant.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in class and around the school. They are friendly towards one another and to staff, and inquisitive and chatty with visitors. Pupils justifiably feel safe and well cared for and their parents agree. Attendance is higher than average.
- In the main, pupils show a good attitude to learning. They develop positive attributes such as patience and tolerance. A few higher attaining pupils are not encouraged to ask for harder work when initial tasks have been completed and a few lower attaining pupils to ask for help when they need it. Very occasionally, pupils are distracted when work does not consistently match their needs.
- Pupils play together well at break and lunchtimes and it is rare to see any pupils isolated from their peers.
- There are very few serious instances of misbehaviour and recourse to exclusion is almost unheard of. Records show that incidents of harassment, discrimination, racism and bullying are extremely rare. Pupils are encouraged to respect the school environment.

The leadership and management are good

- Responsibilities are well shared amongst staff; there is a good senior leadership structure. Each subject is conscientiously and well led, usually by teachers who have been suitably promoted, having helped to improve pupils' progress. There are rigorous and fair performance management procedures.
- The headteacher provides astute leadership. Important matters receive the urgent attention they deserve. Contacts established with other schools to discover good practices have been beneficial to all involved.
- The local authority adopts a 'light-touch' approach and recognises the school's capacity for consistent improvement. The school has valued the occasional support, for example, for mathematics teaching and in developing the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Perceptive and frequent observation of teaching ensures that teachers are clear about their strengths and of those aspects in need of improvement. Newly qualified teachers are expertly mentored and appreciate the support they receive.
- Leaders and managers have paid good attention to the development of a varied and exciting curriculum which strongly promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The harmony evident in the school reflects its strong Christian ethos. Staff share a commitment to making pupils' lives better and they listen to parents' concerns. All pupils are treated with the greatest possible degree of equality.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body strongly supports staff development and encourages contact with other schools. It demonstrates an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors take on a variety of roles and contribute fully to safe recruiting and the secure safeguarding of pupils. The governing body maintains a good overview of how the

additional pupil premium funding is spent, listening carefully to teachers' views. As a result, funding supports specific programmes and enrichment opportunities for individual pupils to broaden their horizons and to help them to make better progress.

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	106450
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	405037

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	483
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Pearson
Headteacher	Elaine Tyrrell
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2010
Telephone number	01942 747818
Fax number	01942 747819
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