

Horn's Mill Primary School

Denbigh Close, Helsby, Frodsham, Cheshire, WA6 0ED

Inspection dates

26–27 March 2013

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

- The quality of teaching is too variable. Although none is inadequate, not enough teaching is always good or better. The best practice has not been used effectively as a model for all teaching. The way some teachers organise learning resources is weak.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their writing or mathematics skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils' attainment at both key stages is below the national average. Progress throughout the school is not consistently good and there has been some inadequate progress in the past.
- Actions taken by leaders and managers to move the school forward since the previous inspection have had a limited effect. The checking of teaching performance and its impact on pupils' progress has lacked urgency.

The school has the following strengths

- Provision for children in Reception class has improved. Children now get off to a good start.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved. They feel safe and enjoy school because there are some exciting activities planned to help them to learn.
- The school is an inclusive and welcoming community. There are good links with parents.
- Governance has improved. The governing body is better equipped, because of training, to challenge the school.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's current performance and have embraced the help and support of the local authority to bring improvements in teaching and the standards in pupils' work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons and parts of lessons.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Also taken into account were 23 responses from parents via Parent View.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including: national assessment data and the school's own assessments; the school's evaluation of its work; minutes from governing body meetings; local authority reports; safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kathleen Harris

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- A significant proportion of pupils are from Traveller communities. They attend the school at different times throughout the year.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (funding to help raise achievement of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families and children looked after by the local authority) is average.
- An above average proportion of pupils are supported by school action.
- An average proportion are supported by school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- There is pre-school provision on site, as well as a breakfast club. Neither of these provisions is managed by the governing body and they receive a separate report.
- The school meets current floor standards, which are the minimum government expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.
- There have been significant staff changes and long-term absences since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching so that all of it is consistently good or better by:
 - using the best practice as a model for all teaching whenever possible
 - making sure that learning resources in lessons cater for the needs of all pupils so that they can learn quickly and independently
 - improving planning in order that pupils can practise writing and mathematics skills in different ways and in different subjects.
- Increase the rate of pupils' progress and thereby raise achievement in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school by:
 - embedding the new systems for checking pupils' progress and revising their targets
 - ensuring that the information gained is used by all teachers to plan pupils' work.
- Improve leadership and management by making sure that leaders check the quality of teaching and its impact on learning and progress more rigorously, and take immediate action to improve aspects of teaching when necessary.

Inspection judgement

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children's abilities, when they start in Reception class, are generally below typical expectations for their age. Some start with very low language and communication skills. In the past, progress has been steady rather than good. Due to good, and at times outstanding, teaching in Reception, that situation has changed in the current year and children now make good progress.
- Exciting activities are planned to help children discover their independence and become confident and sociable learners. Currently, most children are working confidently within their expected levels in all that they do and some are more advanced.
- Much work is put in with children from Traveller communities who sometimes start school at different times throughout the year. They, too, make good progress in their number work, letters and sounds from their various starting points and settle very well into class routines.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 has not been better than average for the past five years and slipped to below average for the past two years. Progress in Years 1 and 2 was slower than expected, especially in reading and mathematics. This was partly due to turbulence in teaching but, more significantly, also due to some slackness in teachers' use of assessment to drive learning and progress forward at a good pace. Current assessments show that progress in writing and mathematics is picking up more quickly than reading.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 has varied over the past three years. It rose rapidly in 2011 to above average in national tests but dipped in 2012 to broadly average in English and below average in mathematics. Most pupils made expected progress in English and mathematics but very few did better than that. Currently, school assessments and pupils' work show that they are reaching average standards in reading and mathematics, while still below average in English overall, especially writing.
- Pupils' progress has not been consistently good over time. In the past there have been pockets of slow progress in different subjects, in most classes. School assessments indicate an improving picture with quicker progress emerging and examples of good progress in some subjects in some classes. Nevertheless, school leaders recognise that progress overall is too patchy and that pupils' attainment should be better.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to others. One-to-one and small group support is allocated according to pupils' individual learning plans but movement of some pupils in and out of the school hinders continuous checking of their progress. The impact of additional support over the past term for all pupils with special educational needs has not been monitored rigorously enough by senior leaders.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and supported by pupil premium funding do not always achieve as well as others in the school or their group nationally. This is the case in reading, for example, at the end of Year 2. Data for the end of Year 6 show this group of pupils to be approximately two terms behind others in the school in English and mathematics achievement.
- Pupils from Traveller communities are very much part of school life but their progress varies according to the length of time they attend the school. Generally, because of this, their progress is slow. However, there are examples of some good improvement in both progress and attendance that show the positive impact that the school's provision has when pupils attend regularly over time.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although there is some good and outstanding teaching, the overall quality is not consistent and too much requires improvement. Teaching over time has not brought about good progress.
- Where teaching is good teachers have high expectations and know how to bring the best out of pupils whatever their ability. Planning is clear and lesson targets are shared so that everyone

knows what is expected of them. Teachers question pupils throughout the lesson to check their learning and give pupils good opportunities to work things out for themselves.

- This quality of teaching is not always evident because the best classroom practices are not shared effectively enough throughout the school.
- Too many lessons have shortcomings that hinder pupils' progress. For example, learning resources are not well enough prepared and organised resulting in pupils not being able to get on by themselves and learn quickly. Occasionally, pupils are not sure about what to do, making them slow to start work.
- There is sufficient focus on the teaching of basic literacy skills such as punctuation, spelling and grammar. Pupils also learn about different purposes for writing. However, teachers do not plan enough opportunities for pupils to use these skills, to write at length in different subjects, and this limits the progress pupils make in writing.
- The picture is similar in mathematics where pupils learn tables and different ways of calculating but are not given enough opportunities to develop good understanding by applying what they know to practical problem solving in and outside of the classroom.
- Teachers' focus on reading is paying dividends. Pupils in Year 2 are beginning to gain confidence in linking letters and sounds because of the teaching they receive. They enjoy stories and are keen to read. Pupils in Year 6 read fluently and understand what they read. They read for pleasure at home as well as in school and have clear opinions about the kinds of books and authors they enjoy.
- Teaching assistants work well alongside class teachers. They mostly take selected groups of pupils to help boost their literacy and mathematics skills. They know pupils well and make a valuable contribution to their learning.
- Teachers manage pupils consistently well. Relationships are very strong and pupils behave well as a result. They know that teachers value their contributions to lessons. This helps to motivate pupils and makes them more willing to 'have a go'.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They enjoy learning and list literacy and numeracy among their favourites as well as art, music and sports.
- Pupils' attitudes to work are good. They pay attention to their teachers and generally settle quickly to their work. When given opportunities to work independently, they like to discuss problems and try out their ideas on each other. Pupils take care with the presentation of their work and some handwriting, in Year 5, for example, is of a very high standard.
- Pupils typically behave well both in lessons and around the school. They are polite, well-mannered and treat adults and one another respectfully, whatever their background or circumstances. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to learn about the richness of other cultures and this encourages their tolerance of, and respect for, others.
- 'Safe, caring and fun' is how a group of pupils summed up the atmosphere in their school. Parents fully support that view and appreciate the care that is shown by staff. Pupils say playtimes are enjoyable because there is no bullying or hurtful name-calling. Pupils know the different forms that bullying can take. They know the rules about internet safety and have sensible views overall about how to keep themselves safe and healthy.
- The attendance of pupils from Traveller communities is not significantly different from the national average for that group and this brings the school's overall attendance to below average. Nevertheless, most pupils attend school regularly. The school works very hard to promote attendance and is making considerable headway with some families.
- Pupils contribute well to the everyday life of the school. The school council makes sure that all pupils have a say. Pupils have recently been involved in a survey to find their views about the ways they learn and how they could be improved.
- Year 6 pupils are mature young people who take pride in their school and have the personal confidence and social skills needed to move successfully on to the next stages of their education.

The leadership and management requires improvement.

- Since the previous inspection school leaders, including governors, have worked hard to resolve the difficulties brought about by staff changes. These, in some respects, have hampered the progress and development of teaching that leaders would have liked. Although improvements are beginning to take place, leaders still have some way to go to secure good teaching, speed up pupils' progress and raise attainment.
- Recent checking by leaders of how well the school is doing and their work with the local authority, have helped them to form an accurate picture and set out clear priorities. This has increased the school's ability to improve more quickly. Actions to improve teaching, for example, by enabling teachers to visit other schools to see the best practice, are already underway.
- A new system for rigorously checking pupils' progress has been introduced recently. This provides both an accurate picture of what individual pupils are capable of and a secure basis for teachers' planning. Better progress is evident but it is early days and the effective use of this information by teachers is not yet embedded through the school.
- Leaders check teaching quality and set targets for teachers based on the 'Teachers' Standards' document and pupils' progress. Teachers understand how pay progression is linked to their performance in the classroom. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is now more effective and children's progress gets off to a better start.
- Most teachers feel that they have had enough opportunities and the right support to develop professionally. However, leaders' actions to follow up observations and improve teaching overall have not had sufficient urgency, resulting in pupils not yet making the good progress they should.
- The curriculum provides adequately for pupils' progress in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) although they have few opportunities to practise their skills in other subjects. Good opportunities for pupils in art and music bring about good achievement for some pupils in those subjects. Residential and day visits, visitors and a good programme of after-school clubs enrich pupils' learning and their personal development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Training and individuals' expertise have equipped the governing body more effectively to monitor pupils' progress and to challenge and support the school. Governors have a clear overview of teaching quality and its impact over time. They are conscious of the need to bring more stability, and they check to ensure that remuneration reflects teaching performance. Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent. They regularly check for gaps in pupils' achievement and they support leaders in making sure that pupils have equal opportunities to benefit from what the school provides. They ensure that safeguarding measures fully meet the government's requirements.

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	111129
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	401172

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Dobson
Headteacher	Anne Doughton
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2009
Telephone number	01244 981050
Fax number	01928 722242
Email address	head@hornsmill.cheshire.sch.uk

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