

Astbury St Mary's CofE Primary School

School Lane, Astbury, Congleton, CW12 4RG

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 2013

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.

- From their starting points, pupils make good progress and most reach above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' progress in writing is a particular strength.
- Teaching is usually good. Some teaching, at the top and bottom of the school, is outstanding.
- The many different subjects and activities on offer to pupils help them to develop a wide range of interests and responsible attitudes.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They enjoy school and feel safe.
- Good leadership and governance, which has involved some tough decisions and a lot of hard work, has been the driving force in bringing about improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are well informed about the school's performance. They demonstrate the ambition and capability to bring about further school improvement in the future.
- Parents express overwhelmingly positive views about the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is still a small amount of teaching that requires improvement, particularly in mathematics.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is not as fast as the progress they make in English.
- Subject leaders for English and mathematics are new to their roles and have not yet developed the skills needed to do their jobs with maximum effectiveness.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons, all of which were joint observations with the headteacher. The inspector also visited two school assemblies; observed break times and listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, the Chair and two other members of the governing body. The inspector also had a telephone conversation with a local authority adviser.
- The inspector took account of 61 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and talked to parents on the school playground.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included information about pupils' progress, school improvement plans, and records of governors' meetings. The work in pupils' books and records relating to the quality of teaching, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Astbury St Mary's CofE Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is similar to that found in most schools. The proportion supported through school action is lower than that seen in most other schools.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is below average. Pupil premium is additional funding to provide extra support for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils in local authority care, and pupils who have parents serving in the armed forces.
- A small number of pupils come from traveller families.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The current headteacher was appointed in April 2012. Since his appointment, three class teachers and four teaching assistants have been appointed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure all teaching is consistently good or better in order to boost pupils' progress and raise standards in mathematics so that they are at least in line with the higher standards seen in English by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in order to solve problems
 - giving pupils time to respond to teachers' written comments about their work and progress
 - making sure that all teachers always adjust their teaching during lessons in order to meet all pupils' learning needs with greater precision.
- Develop the role of subject leaders for English and mathematics by giving them more opportunity to:
 - observe teaching in other classes and provide guidance and feedback to staff about how to improve their teaching
 - visit leaders in others schools in order to share and learn from effective practice.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From their starting points, pupils make good progress and, by the end of Year 6, most reach above-average standards in English and mathematics. Progress in writing is particularly strong.
- Most children start school with knowledge and skills that are at least in line with those expected for their age. The good progress that they make in the Reception class means that they are well prepared for their start in Key Stage 1.
- In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, pupils of all abilities make good progress because of good teaching.
- The well resourced and structured approach to the teaching of reading ensures that all get off to a good start and then continue to make good progress in all classes. Simple, imaginative routines, such as the weekly 'mystery reader', generate an excitement about books and stories that stays with pupils as they move up through the school.
- The 2012 Key Stage 2 test results show that pupils' progress in mathematics slipped behind the progress seen in previous years and also the progress seen in English. It is clear from the school's current data and the achievement seen in lessons and pupils' books that progress in mathematics has now got faster. Most pupils in the current Year 5 and 6, for example, are working at above age-related expectations. Nevertheless, while current standards are above average in both subjects, standards in English remain higher than standards in mathematics.
- Pupils with special educational needs do well because they get carefully tailored support that meets their needs with precision. The inclusive nature of the school means that all have equal access to everything on offer and are supported to do their best.
- The number of pupils in receipt of free school meals and entitled to support through the use of pupil premium funding is low. Such small numbers make it difficult to make any meaningful analysis of the gaps between the achievement of these pupils and others, which can vary widely from year to year. However, by using additional funding to help pay for one-to-one support, the school makes an extra effort to help these pupils keep up with the rest and no one falls behind.
- Observations made in lessons indicate that the small number of pupils from traveller backgrounds make similar progress to their peers.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most of the teaching at Astbury St Mary's is good, and some, in the Reception and Year 5 and 6 classes, is outstanding. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
- The very best teaching requires pupils to apply their knowledge and skills; to make decisions, refine their work, and provide feedback to others about what they have achieved. In a Key Stage 2 English lesson, for example, older pupils worked together to improve each other's poetry, using the features of language they had been learning about. A tight timescale, and the knowledge that they would soon be sharing their ideas with the class, gave pupils a sense of productive urgency that pushed them all to make rapid progress.
- A characteristic seen in every class is the range of different approaches that grab pupils' attention and make them keen to learn. The most up-to-date technology, class blogs and pop songs, for example, alongside the use of traditional chalk blackboards, country dancing and gardening, all serve to promote positive open-minded attitudes to learning, life and the wider world.
- While all teachers plan lessons that start from what pupils already know, just occasionally they do not react quickly enough when pupils are quick to understand or need a bit more time or help to learn something new. Consequently, some pupils spend too long on tasks that do not assist their learning or allow them to apply their skills to new situations, while others get confused. As a result, their progress is not as fast as it could be.

- Work in books is generally of good quality. Teachers' marking is helpful and, in most cases, provides clear guidance to pupils about how well they are doing. There is a consistent, well-understood, marking policy that employs the use of different coloured pens to highlight strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work. However, pupils do not always get enough time to respond to teachers' comments or advice. This means that a valuable opportunity for them to spend time improving their work, or learning from successes or mistakes, is lost.
- In all classes, teaching assistants and other adults work very well with teachers to support the learning needs of individuals or groups of pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are happy at school. They feel safe, enjoy lessons and behave well.
- Pupils take a great interest in all aspects of school life and are keen to get involved in decision making. They benefit from the strong local links that help them to take on responsibility and develop skills outside the classroom; in the recently created vegetable plots, for example. In addition, pupils take an active part in village activities, such as the May Day celebrations.
- The importance of trust, courtesy and care for others is a thread that runs through much of the school's work. Whole-school events, such as the enjoyable and thought-provoking assemblies, make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development, and promote a strong sense of community and shared values.
- In lessons, pupils are attentive and keen to learn. Even the very youngest pupils show the ability to make well-reasoned decisions and sensible choices. When teaching is outstanding, pupils' ability to exercise initiative and independence in their learning shines out.
- Pupils are taught about bullying and its consequences and say that it rarely happens. They do report some falling-out at break times, but show a mature understanding that learning to manage disagreement is part of their wider education. They are confident that adults will help them if they have a problem and know that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The level of attendance at school has improved and, currently, is similar to that it seen in most other schools. The school sends out regular reminders about the importance of good attendance and punctuality, but a few pupils do arrive late in the mornings and miss the start of lessons.
- High expectations and a consistent behaviour management system, which includes detailed record keeping, means that good behaviour is noticed and rewarded. Weekly reward badges and the longer term incentive of a special 'day out' serve to recognise and reward good behaviour. Poor behaviour is uncommon and, when it happens, it is challenged and stopped.
- The small number of pupils who find it difficult to manage aspects of their behaviour are given firm, yet sensitive, support and cope well at school.

The leadership and management are good

- The improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement that have been brought about since the last inspection are a direct result of the headteacher's energy, drive and ambition. He has worked hard and made some tough decisions in order to bring about change and push standards up.
- Senior staff are highly effective in the classroom and have the ability to support others. The leadership of special educational needs provision in the school is a significant strength and means that staff get clear guidance and pupils get the assistance that they need.
- The headteacher, and visiting consultants, carry out regular checks of teachers' work and provide feedback about how teaching and learning can be improved. All teachers have targets based upon their own professional responsibilities and the progress that pupils make, and there is a clear expectation that everyone will do their best. Future pay and career progression is linked firmly with effectiveness in the classroom.

- Subject leaders for English and mathematics are relatively new in their posts and already have a good understanding of the school's performance and the training needs of staff. However, they have not had enough opportunity to learn from other leaders in order to develop the skills they need to evaluate the quality of teaching and share best practice across the school.
 - The partnership with parents is strong and this is reflected in the overwhelmingly positive views expressed by parents, both through the above-average percentage of responses entered on the online questionnaire and in comments made during the inspection.
 - The school teaches some subjects through topics, which are often enriched by trips and visitors to school. Work on display and in books shows that pupils receive a broad and worthwhile education across a wide range of subjects, with many opportunities to write in different ways and for a real purpose. In contrast, opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in different subjects or to solve meaningful problems are less frequent.
 - The school's link with Kenyan School is given a high profile and exchange visits are organised. This, together with programmes of study in subjects such as religious education, geography and modern foreign languages helps pupils to learn about life in the wider world.
 - The local authority has confidence in the current school leadership and provides appropriate support.
 - The school meets statutory requirements relating to safeguarding and equality of opportunity.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are ambitious for the school. Through their well-organised committee structure, governors meet regularly to review the school's work, receive reports about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, and to set well-informed targets for the future. They analyse performance data and ask many challenging questions. In addition to shaping school strategy, governors have a 'hands-on' role; leading school events or after-school activities, helping out in class and observing the school at work. Their forward-looking financial management is good; all funds, including pupil premium money, are used to best effect to help pupils do well at school.
-

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	111333
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	405331

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	124
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Donna Graham
Headteacher	Mark O'Leary
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2011
Telephone number	01260 272528
Fax number	01260 298160
Email address	admin@astbury.cheshire.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

