

Mablins Lane Community Primary School

Mablins Lane, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 3YR

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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.

- Parents, pupils, staff and governors are justifiably proud of the school. Over the last 15 months, effective teamwork and a collaborative, can-do approach have transformed Mablins Lane into a thriving learning community that is aiming higher still.
- The now strong sense of direction comes from the refreshed leadership and drive of the headteacher, the realised potential of other senior leaders, the robust challenge and involvement of governors, and the tangible energy and commitment of all staff.
- Reception year children are getting off to a flying start because the well planned indoor and outdoor activities interest and challenge them. The unit is a vibrant, exciting place.
- Pupils' achievement is noticeably on the rise. Gaps in previous learning are being filled and expectations raised. This school year many pupils have made really good progress because of strongly focussed teaching and high quality marking that ensures that all pupils improve their work, especially in writing and mathematics.
- A growing number of aspects of the school's work are exemplary, such as the highly effective systems to track pupils' progress and to tailor support to meet their needs. As a result, pupils have grown in self-confidence.
- Pupils are very good ambassadors for their school. They know their opinions matter, are well-mannered and well-behaved, very willing to learn and present their work neatly.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Staff are just starting to explore how they can build on current best practice to enable pupils to apply and develop reading, writing and mathematics through other subjects.
- Pupils have too few chances to use available technological resources as a learning tool.
- In evaluating improvements, leaders have focussed more on the quality of teaching than on how well pupils learn. There is headroom to home in on those teaching skills that foster independent learning and to deepen teachers' skills in evaluating the impact of their teaching in securing pupils' learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 teaching sessions, two of which were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Inspectors also carried out learning walks with senior leaders to look at the learning environment and the provision for pupils with particular needs.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, the deputy and acting deputy headteachers, the inclusion manager, the assessment leader, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, the leader of the Children’s Centre regarding children’s move into school, the leaders for English and mathematics, and the leader of the team for the development of foundation subjects. Link governors participated in several of these discussions.
- The deputy and acting deputy headteachers, link governors and inspectors jointly scrutinised work in English and mathematics from a sample of pupils in Years 1 to 6.
- The lead inspector heard six pupils read: three from Year 1 and three from Year 2.
- An inspector met with several pupils from Year 6 to talk about their progress in mathematics, and also with a group of pupils from Years 3 to 5 to hear their views about the school.
- The lead inspector met with the Chair of Governors and five governors, and also held a telephone discussion with the monitoring and intervention manager of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of the school’s documents related to improvement planning, self-evaluation, performance management and professional development, support for pupils, pupils’ progress, attendance, safeguarding and the work of the governing body.
- The team took into account the 35 responses from staff to the Ofsted questionnaire, the responses of 54 parents to on-line (Parent View) questionnaire and also the school’s analysis of the responses from parents and pupils to its own questionnaires.

Inspection team

Sonja Øyen, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Christine Addison

Additional Inspector

Terry Bond

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- The school is almost twice the size of the average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is lower than average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after).
- The proportions of pupils supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are below the national average.
- A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic heritages with a very few who speak English as an additional language.
- In 2012, the school met the floor standards which set the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 and progress during Key Stage 2.
- An inspection of the care and provision in the before- and after-school club took place on the second day of this inspection and a separate report is available on the Ofsted website. The Children's Centre, part of the school building, was not inspected. The most recent report regarding this provision is available on the Ofsted website.
- When inspected in February 2012, leadership and management were judged to be inadequate and the school was given a Notice to Improve. Its progress in bringing about improvement was judged to be good when inspected in November 2012 by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors who also led this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the current good gains in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are improved further by:
 - highlighting best practice in teaching, especially in reading, writing and mathematics, which strengthens independent learning, including questioning that probes and challenges understanding, and strategies that develop pupils' skills in deciding for themselves how to tackle their learning and solve problems
 - strengthening teachers' skills in evaluating their own practice and its impact on pupils' learning and school improvement overall.
- Make optimal use of existing technological resources and provide pupils in all classes with opportunities to apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills and knowledge as an integral part of learning.
- Build on the flair and creative approach evident in several year groups to integrate learning through topics and ensure that developments in cross-curricular planning present meaningful experiences for pupils to use, apply and develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement is on the rise across the school. The vast majority of parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire agreed that their children make good progress and the school's data and inspection evidence confirm this. All groups of pupils have made significant gains this school year. Half of pupils in Year 6 have made more than three levels' progress in reading since leaving Year 2 which is well above the national average. The school is now expecting and getting more from its pupils, not just in Year 6, but in every year group.
- Many children start the Reception year with knowledge and language skills lower than expected for their age. Well-planned, interesting practical activities and skilful teaching have fostered rapid learning in early reading, writing and mathematics. For example, Reception children confidently halved and quartered fruit and shared out differing amounts of bone biscuits for two dogs, with the more-able children recording what they had done using correct signs and numbers. Such good progress means that, compared with previous years, children's attainment is higher, particularly for the boys, in reading, writing and mathematical development.
- Similarly, in Key Stages 1 and 2, strong, focussed teaching has resulted in pupils making at least expected progress and in many cases, far better than this. From low starting points, pupils in Years 2 and 6 have moved on considerably, especially in mathematics. Here, an emphasis on practical activities and problem-solving, (a weakness identified in the inspection in February 2012), has sparked pupils' interest and reinforced their knowledge of the four rules of number.
- The school is well aware that some progress is due to pupils making up lost learning from previous years, but there is also good evidence to show pupils are starting to shine. Nearly a fifth of Year 6 pupils are working at a level in mathematics more typical of pupils three years older and many Year 5 pupils are already reading at the level expected of Year 6 pupils.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding are often making more progress than others because of effective intervention and support. As a result, the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is close to that of others. The attainment gap is now less marked than at the start of the school year in Years 2 and 6, but some inconsistencies remain between and within year groups and subjects. In part this reflects how teachers vary in how well they ensure that all pupils' learning is well-grounded before moving on to new aspects.
- Achievement in reading is strengthening. Daily, and sometimes twice daily, sessions of phonics (the links between letters and sounds) give younger pupils confidence to segment and blend words as they read and write. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 also used clues in the pictures to comment on the storyline. Records from reading challenges show older pupils read widely and regularly.
- Pupils' work is neatly presented although older pupils' handwriting is often immature. Pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to meet a target in writing and mathematics. Revision sessions have plugged gaps in older pupils' knowledge of spelling rules, grammar and punctuation and younger pupils showed developing awareness of language features. Year 4 pupils, for example, knew to use brackets in a play script to identify the narrator's comments. However, pupils are less skilled in selecting and using language for effect.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Strong teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and on behaviour. There are some inconsistencies to iron out in marking and in securing pupils' learning but the overall quality of teaching is good throughout the school and across the curriculum.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are drawing on ideas and strategies shared in professional development sessions, especially regarding practical activities in mathematics. Staff have pooled effective practice in the teaching of phonics and guided reading which has resulted in higher consistency of approach and more rapid pupils' progress especially in Year 1.
- Lessons are well planned with different activities to meet the needs of pupils of differing abilities.

Good organisation and positive relationships between adults and pupils ensure that lessons run smoothly. The adults manage pupils' behaviour skilfully through praise, encouragement and reassurance, and as a result, pupils show a strong work ethic. While some resources are used really well, such as small whiteboards for pupils to show their work in class sessions, the teachers are not making best use of the interactive whiteboards as a teaching and learning tool, nor ensuring that pupils are using other technologies as an integral part of their learning.

- A key strength of the teaching is the effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants in leading sessions and supporting pupils with particular needs. This is working especially well in the Early Years Foundation Stage unit and in Year 1 where new ways of working have raised achievement.
- Where teaching is strongest, the teachers regularly check and probe the understanding of the class and individuals. They ask pupils to explain their thinking and encourage them to help themselves by using 'working wall' information and thinking through the steps in what they need to do. In an English lesson, Year 5 pupils made good progress in using clauses demarcated by commas because the teacher moved from simple to increasingly more complex sentences. While some pupils went on to use given statements to add a central clause, the more-able rose to the challenge of using their knowledge of mountains to create sentences around given clauses.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' writing and work in mathematics is particularly effective in evaluating and prompting pupils' progress. The now high quality and depth of marking have developed rapidly. Teachers and pupils see the links between marking, target-setting and improvement. The most strikingly effective marking gives pupils a clear, well-balanced picture of how they have done. Pupils are acting on the points for improvement and, in responding to questions, often show good self-awareness of their performance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school: attendance has risen to broadly average. The school is calm and orderly and, despite its size, retains a friendly, family feel. Reception year children are very confident in showing visitors what they are doing; they are highly independent and eager to learn.
- Pupils know and follow the routines. As they move around school, they are polite and well-mannered, smiling and holding doors open for others. In an assembly, pupils from Years 3 to 5, sat quietly, listened attentively and readily celebrated with the staff the positive attitude and conduct of some pupils. The theme of 'being proud' is echoed throughout the school in eye-catching displays of pupils' completed work.
- Pupils' behaviour has strengthened since the inspection in February 2012. Most parents and all staff agree that pupils' behaviour is good, that pupils are looked after well and feel safe. However, almost 20% of parents did not know how well the school dealt with bullying and some disagreed that bullying was dealt with effectively. Pupils referred to occasional incidents of name-calling, which they knew to be bullying, but also how such incidents had been quickly 'sorted out'. Pupils felt confident to raise concerns and to voice their views.
- Records show that tailored support aligned with regular reviews of progress have led to marked improvements in behaviour and in attitudes to learning for the few pupils who have particular behavioural needs. Similarly, pupils who start school with little spoken English settle quickly and often make rapid progress in understanding and speaking English because of the support from adults and pupils alike, both in the classroom and in the playground.
- In lessons, pupils were quick to settle, keen to try new things and worked well with a partner or in a small group. However, some are too dependent on adults to guide them rather than make their own decision or work out for themselves what to do and how to do it.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and governing body have been very successful in renewing a sense of purpose and developing a highly effective senior leadership team. By emphasising accountability at all

levels and delegating responsibilities for day-to-day management, they have raised expectations markedly and drawn out the latent skills and management expertise of key members of staff. In turn, this, along with guidance from a National Leader in Education, has refreshed the leadership of the headteacher. Parents value his visible presence around school and staff value his role in mentoring and evaluating their work, positive elements that underlie the high morale. Most parents and staff now strongly agree that the school is led and managed well.

- The school recognised that weaknesses in leadership and management lay at the heart of the three areas for improvement arising from the inspection in February 2012. It was prompt to identify where external support would help in developing leadership and provision in English, mathematics and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The openness of all senior leaders to advice has been a crucial factor in accelerating the pace of change. Likewise, a willingness to support others is ensuring that middle managers are also leading improvement, as in the current work to develop a more rounded curriculum with links between subjects. The action plan already includes the development of pupils' use of ICT skills, a weakness highlighted in this report.
- Systems have been developed and refined to suit the school's needs: this is most evident in the implementation of the marking policy, and in the comprehensive tracking and analysis of the progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils. Data and findings from the scrutiny of pupils' work are informing decisions about, for example, how best to challenge pupils making good progress and the effectiveness of support for pupils with specific educational needs. Such are the strides made that the school is being consulted by others who wish to echo best practice, as for example, in safeguarding.
- The profile of teaching has strengthened as a result of effective professional development, constructive monitoring and rigorous performance management. Teachers are being held strongly to account for their pupils' progress and for their contribution to school improvement. Regular monitoring of teaching, teachers' planning and pupils' work has rightly focussed primarily on how well teachers are following agreed practices. Less emphasis has been given to how well pupils are learning and the aspects of teaching that account for rapid progress.
- The school is well on its way to achieving its goal of being outstanding. It has an accurate picture of its own effectiveness based on reliable evidence from evaluations and reviews. Senior leaders know the pupils and staff well and, while raising the bar, they are keeping a close eye on progress and teaching to ensure that inconsistencies lessen and all staff play their part in evaluating the school's performance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - has sharpened considerably in the last 15 months and is now outstanding. Under the strong, confident lead from the Chair, governors are holding all in the school to full account but also providing considerable support. During this inspection, link governors accompanied leaders to many of the meetings and showed an informed awareness of what accounted for the improvements made and where further action is needed. Governors have taken hard but well-justified decisions regarding spending, including the use of pupil premium funding, and also teachers' remuneration. The school's finances have stabilised and governors are working with the senior leadership team to ensure continued improvement.

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	111216
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	399753

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	472
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Turner
Headteacher	Paul Burke
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2012
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