

Eccleston CofE Primary School

Eaton Road, Eccleston, Chester, Cheshire, CH4 9HD

Inspection dates 11–12 June 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points and, by the end of Year 6, reach standards in English and mathematics that are above average.
- In 2012, the school was among the top performing primary schools in the country and received a letter of congratulation from the Minister of State for Schools.
- Pupils make particularly fast progress in Key Stage 2.
- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers make an extra effort to inspire all pupils to think hard, ask questions, express themselves clearly, and to do their best.
- Pupils' conduct, manners and ability to work together and take responsibility are outstanding. They respond exceptionally well to the high expectations of staff and feel valued and safe at school.
- School leaders, including governors, are very well informed about the school's performance. Clarity of vision, well-organised planning, strong teamwork and some tough decisions have led to improvements in the quality of teaching that have boosted pupils' progress.
- This is a good and improving school because of the outstanding leadership that has steered the school with determined ambition.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching.
- Given pupils' starting points, their progress in Key Stage 1 is not as fast as it could be.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, five of which were joint observations with the headteacher. The inspector also visited a school assembly, observed break times and listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, school staff, groups of pupils, the Chair and three members of the governing body, and a local authority school improvement adviser.
- The inspector took account of 39 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), talked to parents on the school playground and received two email communications from parents.
- 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

- Ecclestone C.E. 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 lower than that found in most schools. The proportion supported at school action is similar to that seen in most other schools.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the additional pupil premium funding is below average. The 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.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There are three classes at the school and there is more than one year group in each class. Since the last inspection, two new teachers have joined the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to accelerate progress in writing and mathematics for all pupils, but particularly for those in Key Stage 1 by:
 - making sure that teachers do not carry out tasks, or provide explanations, which pupils could do or discover for themselves
 - making sure that teachers always use what they find out about pupils' knowledge and understanding during lessons in order to fine-tune tasks so that all learning needs are met with greater precision
 - making sure that the inspirational prompts, brisk pace and purposeful activities seen in the very best lessons feature in even more lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils make good progress at Ecclestone C.E. Primary School and, by the end of Key Stage 2, they reach standards in English and mathematics that are above average for their age. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. In 2012, the school was among the top performing primary schools in England.
- Most children start school with knowledge and skills that are at least in line with those expected for their age. Good communication between home and school, and attention to every child's well-being and individual needs, mean that they settle in quickly and are soon making good progress in their learning. They make particularly quick gains in their early reading because staff give this a high priority and, by the time they reach Year 1, they are well prepared for the phonics screening check and do well.
- The mixed-age Reception/Year 1 class ensures that the move into Key Stage 1 is very smooth and pupils continue to make good progress in both of the Key Stage 1 classes. Nevertheless, in recent years, some pupils have not made as much progress in Key Stage 1 as they could. Consequently, the standards that they reach at the end of Year 2, in writing and mathematics, are not as high as they could be and lag behind the higher standards seen over time in reading.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 make fast progress because of strong teaching. The pupils who made slower progress in Key Stage 1 get help to catch up and all do well. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average.
- The small numbers of pupils in each year group and the small numbers of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make it difficult to carry out any meaningful analysis of the differences between the standards reached by different groups. However, the most recent end of key stage test results show that all pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, made good progress and reached the standards expected for their age and ability.
- Boys and girls achieve equally well and the informed attention to each pupil's individual needs is indicative of the school's commitment to providing fair and equal opportunity to everyone.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because they receive the help that they need.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Whether dressed as a dinosaur, demonstrating theatrical role play or examining plants, teachers usually do their best to inspire pupils to apply their skills and learn more.
- The very best teaching makes the most of pupils' excellent attitudes to learning and gives them scope to make decisions, apply their skills and articulate their thoughts and ideas. In one expertly pitched English lesson, for example, a well-chosen video clip inspired some thought-provoking discussion that really pushed pupils to think hard about a character's feelings and motivations and to experiment with expressive actions and language that captured their ideas. The joy of learning shone through and all made excellent progress.
- The quality of some of the writing in pupils' books, particularly in Key Stage 2, demonstrates that teaching is nurturing talent and helping pupils to develop an excitement about language and literature and an ability that, at its best, is highly creative and eloquent.
- While teaching is usually good, more could be done to raise the quality even higher. In some lessons, teachers spend too long providing explanations or doing things for the pupils that are not really necessary. This limits the time that pupils have to get on with their work or to make decisions and discoveries for themselves. Over-directing the pupils in this way means that teaching staff lose time to check what pupils already know and can do. This reduces teachers' ability to fine-tune their teaching to meet the learning needs that emerge during the lesson.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and in detail. They make plenty of comments that

recognise and encourage success and provide specific guidance about how to improve work in the future. Pupils value, and benefit from, this helpful feedback. They know how well they are doing and can talk about their targets and how these help to steer their future efforts. While all marking is effective, the quality of marking in English books is better than that seen in mathematics.

- The strong partnership with parents helps to make sure that homework is usually completed to a high standard.
- Teamwork between staff is good. All adult help in classrooms is used well; everyone is kept busy and focused on learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school, and at playtime, is excellent. They are courteous, well mannered and helpful and show a keen interest in others. Pupils say that they enjoy school because 'everyone is kind and we get treated fairly'.
- The systems and routines that the school puts in place to keep pupils safe, while also allowing them to exercise responsibility and nourish their curiosity about the world, helps them to feel secure but not fearful. Consequently, they grow in confidence.
- Pupils report that bullying is extremely rare and, in discussion, they display a mature understanding of what constitutes bullying and how it differs from the disagreements or playground upsets which do occur sometimes.
- In their responses to the online questionnaire, the large majority of parents expressed unreservedly positive views about the school. During the inspection, parents on the playground, and in two email communications, also said how happy they were with the school and described how it had improved in recent years.
- Parents and pupils are confident that they can approach school staff about their ideas or concerns. They say that members of staff always listen carefully and appropriate action is taken.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are first class. Teaching, even when it is not at its best, works well because the pupils want to learn and work hard.
- The overall attendance figure is similar to that seen in most other schools and the vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and on time. Nevertheless, there is some unnecessary holiday absence and a small number of pupils sometimes arrive late for no good reason.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- There is no doubt that the school has improved since the last inspection because of the outstanding leadership that has focused everyone's efforts on improving teaching and learning. The headteacher leads by example, demonstrating the highest standards herself and successfully inspiring others to do the same. Whether teaching pupils, leading the whole school or giving guidance to staff, her unwavering commitment to providing all pupils with the best possible deal is her guiding light.
- Staff take their leadership responsibilities seriously. All are given the opportunity to share, and learn from, good practice, both within the school and through links with other schools. This outward-looking approach means all are continually checking the quality of their work against others and refining and improving what they do.
- In addition to watching others teach in order to share practice, staff also receive clear written feedback about the quality of their own work and its impact on pupils' progress. Teachers are given targets to meet and all understand that their career and pay progression is firmly linked with the effectiveness of their teaching.
- School leaders have made some difficult decisions in order to build the current staff team and to improve the quality of provision in Key Stage 1. They are proud of their achievements so far, but

there is no sense of complacency. The clarity of vision and strong leadership that has driven up the quality of teaching still has well-informed ambitions to make further improvements.

- The school makes an extra effort to enrich learning and to raise pupils' awareness of the richness and diversity of the world around them. After-school clubs such as Latin, fencing and karate, and trips that include visits to Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and a residential activity week in Wales, help to build further on pupils' enthusiasm for learning and give them the chance to develop new interests and skills.
- Work on display and in books shows that pupils receive a worthwhile education across a wide range of subjects that are taught in imaginative ways.
- Since the last inspection, the local authority has provided appropriate support to the school and is confident that the school is well placed to build further on its current achievements.
- The school meets statutory requirements relating to safeguarding and equality of opportunity.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are extremely well informed about the work of the school. They employ a range of formal and informal methods to gather information and check its accuracy. They are quick to ask questions to make sure they get, and understand, the details that they need.
 - Governors know about the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils are making because they come in to school, watch teachers at work, check data, and receive regular reports and updates from key staff. The Chair of the Governing Body regularly writes to all parents to provide a straightforward jargon-free summary of the school's work.
 - Governors' attention to the safety of the pupils, and to teaching them how to keep themselves safe, is second to none. The school is soon to receive an e-safety award in recognition of the effective work in this area.
 - Governors' wise financial planning has helped the school to manage staff changes and set targets for the future. They know about different sources of funding, including the pupil premium, and ensure that all funds are used in the best interests of the pupils so that all can succeed. Their main aim, as described by the Chair of the Governing Body, is 'to make sure that every child in the school gets the best possible education'.

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	111349
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	405332

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	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Howarth
Headteacher	Katie Wilkes
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2011
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