

# Beechwood Primary School

Meredith Street, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 2PH

**Inspection dates** 19–20 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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**

- Achievement is not yet good. Too few pupils make more than expected progress from their starting points or reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress pupils make is uneven as they move through the school.
- Behaviour is not yet consistently good in lessons.
- Teaching is not consistently good across the school. The needs of groups of differing ability are not always sufficiently taken into account in teachers' planning, particularly those of the more able. As a consequence, pupils sometimes find tasks too easy. Less-able pupils are not always given the resources they need to work independently of the teacher and so rely too heavily on direct help from adults.
- Pupils are not always given precise enough guidance about how to improve their work, particularly in writing and spelling.
- Pupils are not always given sufficient guidance in choosing the books that they read for pleasure. As a result, the progress of some pupils is slowed because they find the books they choose too easy or too difficult.
- Pupils are given insufficient opportunities to deepen their subject knowledge and their basic skills in topic work.
- Subject leaders are not sufficiently involved in checking and driving improvement in the quality of teaching in their subjects. Good practice in school is, therefore, not yet spread rapidly enough.
- Governors are new in post and are at the early stages of developing their role in supporting and challenging the school to improve further.
- Pupils' attendance is below average.

## The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result of good teaching.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and good relationships with each other and with adults in the school. They feel safe here.
- The school's own evaluation of its work is accurate and based upon the frequent analysis of pupils' progress.
- In the short time the headteacher has been in post she has taken swift action to raise attainment, increase the rate of pupils' progress and eradicate inadequate teaching.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons and made short visits to other activities led by teachers and trained assistants. These included five joint lesson observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders. Meetings were conducted with the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Governing Body and with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 10 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors read a range of documents. These included information on the school's own evaluation of its performance, school improvement plans, pupils' current progress, policies, and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Judith Tolley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Catherine Beeks	Additional Inspector
Anthony Buckley	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Beechwood is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion speaking English as an additional language is lower than that found nationally but varies from year to year.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and children of service families) is higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is higher than average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also higher than average but varies from year to year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the last inspection there have been significant changes in staffing. A new headteacher took up post in September 2012, a new deputy headteacher in January 2013 and the new governing body was formed in May 2013.
- A larger than average proportion of pupils join the school at other than the normal times.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve progress further in English and mathematics, especially in writing, by:
  - ensuring pupils are always given precise guidance about how to improve their work, especially their writing and their spelling, and are given sufficient time to act upon this guidance
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their basic skills and deepen their subject knowledge and understanding through topic work
  - making sure pupils can easily identify, and thereby correctly choose, books suited to their ability in reading.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
  - ensuring teachers plan activities that precisely meet the needs of all pupils, particularly to provide an appropriate level of challenge for the more able
  - ensuring pupils are always given the right amount of support to be able to complete tasks successfully without help from adults
  - increasing the opportunities pupils have to work independently of the teacher to solve problems and to explain their working to others.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management on achievement by:
  - fully involving subject leaders, especially in English and mathematics, in checking and driving improvement in the teaching of their subjects
  - ensuring governors are able to challenge the school more effectively and become more active in self-evaluation and improvement processes in order to better hold the school to account.
- Improve attendance further by continuing to challenge and support those families whose children do not attend as often as they should.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Standards in English and mathematics are below average and too few pupils achieve the higher levels in writing, reading and mathematics. Pupils make up some lost ground but there is too much reliance upon extra help beyond lessons.
- Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards have risen and progress has quickened recently so that the majority of pupils make expected progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Nonetheless, the progress pupils make as they move through the school is uneven, particularly in writing and reading, and requires improvement.
- Over the last three years attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been significantly below average by the end of Year 2. Attainment is currently rising but is still below average. In Key Stage 2 attainment has been broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. However, there was a dip in attainment to below average in 2012.
- Many pupils enter the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are well below those typically expected for their age. Children make good progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage so that the majority enter Year 1 with skills that are below, rather than well below, those expected for their age.
- Pupils make expected progress in developing their reading skills. The youngest are able to apply their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) successfully to read simple sentences. Although they read books that the teacher has given them well, pupils' progress in reading is hampered because there is too little guidance for them in choosing books to read for pleasure and, too frequently, they choose texts which are too difficult or too easy for them to read. However, by the end of Year 6 most read a variety of texts with a good level of fluency and understanding. Most are able to talk in detail about what they have read, empathise with characters in stories and make inferences.
- Achievement in mathematics has also improved recently, with most pupils now making expected progress, but the proportion of pupils exceeding expected progress is still lower than that found nationally.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those at the early stages of learning English are making the same expected progress as their peers as the result of the extra help they are given.
- The progress of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding, including those eligible for free school meals, has lagged behind others in this group nationally but has improved recently. Although attainment in English and mathematics is below the national average, the extra support that the school is providing with this funding now enables these pupils to reach their targets and to make the same expected progress as their peers. Pupils who join the school at other than the usual times settle in quickly. Because of the extra help they are given, such as, for some, acquiring a working knowledge of English or extra help in class, they are able to join in fully with activities alongside their classmates and make the same rate of progress as do others.
- Gaps between the performance of different groups, including those receiving this funding, are closing.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching is too variable across the school. The quality of teaching over time requires improvement. Although outstanding practice was observed, the quality of teaching is not consistently good or better across the school. It is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage but in Key Stages 1 and 2 it requires improvement.
- Evidence from the school's own records, analysis of pupils' work and from joint observations

made by inspectors and school leaders supports these judgements.

- In some lessons pupils' progress is slowed because planning does not take sufficient account of their individual needs. In particular, the level of challenge provided for the more-able pupils is not sufficient to enable them to achieve their full potential. Less-able pupils rely too heavily upon direct help from the teacher or teaching assistants in order to tackle tasks confidently on their own.
- In the best lessons pupils increase in confidence and independence as a result of working with a partner. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, for instance, pupils were able to explain their working in addition and subtraction as a result of working in pairs and using display to help them solve problems. Pupils respond to opportunities to work together with enthusiasm, especially when tasks involve problem solving. For instance, in a Year 6 literacy lesson pupils rapidly increased their range of vocabulary and skills in spelling through games and pair-work activities.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress as a result of the very effective use of assessment in planning next steps. Teachers and teaching assistants take every opportunity to engage children in conversation and are skilful in enabling them to learn through play.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils are too often prevented from thinking things through for themselves and taking the initiative to show they can learn on their own. This is because teachers are sometimes too ready to expand their thinking for them or pupils are not always given the opportunity to explain their working or their thinking to others.
- Pupils' work is usually marked regularly and there are instances of best practice within the school. However, marking does not always give pupils the precise guidance they need to improve, particularly their writing. In some classes marking does not always pick up errors in spelling so pupils continue to make the same mistakes. In some classes pupils respond to teachers' comments and improve upon the work they have done, but too often this is not the case.
- Pupils develop mathematical skills in their topic work by, for instance, plotting coordinates in geography or drawing graphs to record their findings in surveys. However, opportunities are missed to reinforce pupils' targets for writing in subjects other than English.
- Pupils with special educational needs are given good one-to-one support in lessons, as well as extra help with English and mathematics, which enables them to participate fully in activities and make adequate progress.
- The impact of teaching on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is variable. Where pupils are given the opportunity to work together to solve problems or explore their ideas, they do so sensibly, reflecting on and respecting one another's views, but they are not always given the opportunity to do this. The school's links with other schools in Europe and Kenya are beginning to be used effectively to increase pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own, for instance through the exchange of postcards and letters.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **require improvement**

- Although pupils' behaviour around the school is usually good, behaviour overall requires improvement. When activities in lessons do not engage them adequately or tasks are too easy or too difficult, they lose concentration and interest.
- Pupils and parents say they feel safe and they value the good relationships they have with their teachers and with each other. Pupils who have recently joined the school say they have been able to settle in quickly because of the friendly and welcoming atmosphere.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and are keen to do well. When given the chance they work together sensibly and organise themselves well. They take on responsibility, for example as playground leaders and prefects, with enthusiasm. They regularly help younger pupils in the playground and organise games.
- Pupils have a good understanding and awareness of different types of bullying, including

cyber-bullying. Although a very small number of parents express concern about poor behaviour, pupils are confident that any poor behaviour is usually dealt with promptly and effectively.

- Although attendance is below average, it has improved over the last three years and persistent absence has decreased. This is because of the strong work the school is doing in encouraging attendance and pursuing those families whose children do not attend regularly enough.
- Pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and speak enthusiastically about opportunities to take part in sports and other extra-curricular activities.

## The leadership and management

## require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the school is in a period of transition and many middle and senior leaders are still at the very early stages of developing their roles.
  - The headteacher, strongly supported by the deputy headteacher, has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to secure further improvement. The senior leadership team have an accurate view of the school's performance through close tracking of pupils' progress against their targets.
  - Despite a period of considerable change and changes in staff, the headteacher has been successful in maintaining stability and in improving achievement in English and mathematics in the short time she has been in post. She has acted decisively and swiftly to eradicate inadequate teaching and to improve management systems, including governance, within the school. This has been done through a programme of support and mentoring which is enabling staff to develop their roles effectively and work together as a cohesive team. The school, therefore, has the capacity to improve further.
  - At present too much reliance is placed on extra help beyond the classroom to fill gaps in pupils' learning and accelerate progress. Plans for improving the quality of teaching are hampered during this period of change because the school is still in transition, with new staff yet to join the school.
  - The quality of teaching of each member of staff is regularly reviewed. The outcomes are used to secure appropriate training to benefit their professional development and are also used to consider any advancement in pay. The information gathered from lessons is used to drive improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, identify training needs and spread best practice. Because many subject leaders are new in post they are not yet sufficiently involved in checking and improving teaching and learning in their subject areas, so that improvement is currently too slow.
  - The school's partnership with parents is adequate and is improving. Opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning through 'Stay and Play' sessions in the Early Years Foundation Stage and similar sessions where parents can join in with their children's learning are being introduced across the school and are proving popular.
  - The curriculum adequately provides for pupils to learn all required subjects. A new reading scheme has been introduced so that phonics and reading are now taught systematically across the school, but it is too early to see the full impact of this. Pupils have too little opportunity to apply their basic skills of literacy, to solve problems or to deepen their knowledge and skills in subjects such as science, geography or history in topic lessons. Good provision is made for pupils to develop their skills in information and communication technology.
  - The curriculum is enriched by a variety of activities. A wide range of clubs and sporting activities, visits and visitors extend learning beyond normal lessons.
  - The local authority has provided effective support during this period of change in enabling governors to develop their roles. This has had a positive impact on governors' ability to hold the school to account.
- **The governance of the school:**

- Many governors have only been with the school for a very short time; however, they have a good understanding of how the school is doing and are clear about what it needs to do to improve further. They are well-informed and are currently undergoing training for their role. They are working alongside experienced mentors to enable them to support and challenge the school to improve further. The school has undertaken a review of the governing body and an audit of its skills. Governors, therefore, have a good understanding of how to improve. They make sure that pupils and staff are safe by securing effective safeguarding arrangements. Governors understand how pupil premium funding is spent. They make sure that some of the grant is used to pay for extra staffing to improve the pupils' achievement in English and mathematics. Governors are beginning to be involved in monitoring the performance of the headteacher and setting her relevant targets, and they are also aware of the performance of teaching staff. Finances are managed with care and the budget closely controlled. As yet, the governing body does not play an active role in school self-evaluation and improvement planning processes but is undergoing training to better hold the school to account.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111211
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire East
<b>Inspection number</b>	401176

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	346
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gordon Fyffe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Valda McGee
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 December 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01270 214490
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