

St Elphin's (Fairfield) CE (VA) Primary School

Farrell Street, Warrington, WA1 2GN

Inspection dates 2–3 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well from their low starting points. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach standards that are above average.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start.
- The overall quality of teaching is good and there is some that is outstanding.
- Pupils are keen to learn. They enjoy school and feel safe when they are there. They are polite and well mannered around the school and behave well.
- Strong leadership of the school and robust management of teaching have brought good improvement to teaching and other key areas of the school's work over the past two years.
- The governing body knows how effectively the school works and provides good challenge and support.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not yet outstanding overall. There are inconsistencies in teachers' marking and the effectiveness with which teachers manage behaviour in a few lessons. The best practice is not shared throughout the school effectively enough.
- Pupils' attendance has dipped to below average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons or parts of lessons, three of which were observations carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions took place with staff, pupils and members of the governing body. Inspectors also met with a representative from the local authority and there was some informal discussion with parents to gain their views about the school.
- Also taken into account were 26 responses from parents via Ofsted's on-line survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and examined a wide range of documentation that included: national assessment data and the school's own assessments; local authority reports; the schools views about its work; minutes from governing body meetings; safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Carol Machell

Additional Inspector

Sheila Loughlin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a bigger than average-sized primary school.
- Most of the pupils are White British but increasing numbers from minority ethnic groups, some of whom speak English as an additional language, are entering the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is average.
- A similar proportion of pupils is supported by school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, the children of service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.)
- In 2012, the school did not meet the floor standards, which are the government's minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2011 at which time there had been an unsettled period of changes in teaching staff.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching further so that all of it is at least good with a higher proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - using the outstanding teaching in the school as the model for all lessons so that best practice is shared effectively and has an influence on the overall quality of teaching
 - giving pupils clearer guidance about how well they have done and what they need to do next by ensuring that teachers' marking across all subjects and in all classes is high quality and regular
 - ensuring that in every lesson, pupils' behaviour for learning is managed effectively so that they are always fully attentive and engaged in good learning activities.
- Improve attendance so that it is consistently at least in line with the national average.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Nursery with skills that are below those typically seen in the key areas of communication, mathematical understanding and personal and social development. As a result of good provision and at times outstanding teaching, children make good progress in all areas of learning. By the end of the Reception Year most children have developed the skills and knowledge expected for their age and some are more advanced than this.
- The teaching of language and communication skills is particularly successful. Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is taught well so children are confident about tackling reading and writing skills. The effect is now being seen in Year 1. This year the number of children who reached the expected standard in the national phonics check in Year 1 is much higher than the previous year. Good provision also ensures that children who speak English as an additional language are supported well and they too make good progress.
- Good progress continues in Key Stage 1. There is some improvement in reading, writing and mathematics and more pupils than previously reached the higher Level 3 in writing.
- In Years 3 to 6, progress has accelerated due to better teaching in the past two years. The majority of pupils make at least expected progress in each year group and significant numbers are well on track to exceed expected levels. Currently, unvalidated national test results, as well as the school's own assessments, show that standards in reading and mathematics are likely to be significantly above average and at least average in writing. This will be a vast improvement on 2012 results.
- A dip in standards in 2012 was very much against the trend of high standards seen over time. There was an unusually high proportion of lower-attaining pupils in that year group. Progress was hampered by elements of unsettled and ineffective teaching during their time in Key stage 2. Consequently, standards reached at the end of Year 6 were low. Despite additional support put in place by the newly appointed headteacher there was too much ground for the year group to make up.
- There is good progress in reading. Pupils in Year 2 enjoy books and are keen to show how well they read. They use their phonics skills to tackle unfamiliar words confidently. Their reading is accurate and they can talk about the stories they read. By the end of Year 6, pupils read fluently and have good understanding of what they read. Pupils borrow novels from school and public libraries. There is a good range to their reading and they are clear about the authors they prefer and why.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good and sometimes rapid progress from their individual starting points because the support they receive is of a good quality. Their needs are identified at an early stage and learning plans are carefully tailored to what they need. Effective staff training has improved the quality of teaching they receive and the checking of their progress.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, achieve as well as others in the school. Current school assessments for Year 6 pupils show no significant gaps between the standards they reach in reading, writing and mathematics and those of others in their class. This confirms the school's commitment to ensuring every pupil has an equal opportunity.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching, with some example of outstanding teaching, has improved pupils' progress throughout the school and raised the standards reached.
- Where teaching is outstanding, expectations are very high, no time is wasted and the rapid pace of learning and challenges for pupils continue throughout the whole lesson. In one mathematics lesson, for example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 had a very brisk warm-up that challenged their

mental agility and understanding of number. More-able pupils then separated from the main group to work independently in order to calculate the area of their desk top then work out for themselves how to find the area of a triangle. This meant that they did not spend time listening to instruction that they did not need but were fully engaged in their own learning.

- In a science lesson, Year 6 pupils needed to draw on a wide range of creative, technical and literacy skills to investigate how the human eye works and to satisfy their curiosity and answer their own questions.
- In these lessons where pupils are fully occupied by exciting activities, behaviour and attitudes to learning are always first class.
- Teachers generally assess pupils' learning well. Questioning to test pupils' understanding and move their learning on is good and there are frequent checks on pupils' progress during lessons.
- A good emphasis is given to reading and writing across the curriculum. The school is well equipped with technology and computers increasingly feature in lessons. Mathematics focus still leans toward calculation skills. While pupils reach high standards, a more creative approach to apply those skills to problem solving is being developed.
- Teachers' planning is good. It takes account of pupils' varying abilities well and ensures that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive the teaching and challenges best suited to their particular needs.
- Although teaching is good, leaders acknowledge that there is scope to use the outstanding practice already in school more successfully to raise the quality of teaching across the school further. The engagement of pupils, especially where behaviour for learning could be managed better, has yet to be fully addressed. Teachers' marking across the school varies too much in quality and its effectiveness in keeping pupils informed about their next steps to improvement.
- Teaching assistants use their skills well and contribute significantly to pupils' learning. They deal sensitively with the groups of pupils in their care and generally work well with teachers to monitor progress during lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons and have good attitudes to learning. Some pupils say that what they will remember most about their school are the good lessons and their teachers. Nevertheless, occasional immature behaviour means that a few pupils are not always attentive enough in lessons and do not get on with their work as well as they should.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They enjoy playtimes because there are plenty of activities to do. They state firmly that there is no bullying and that squabbles over football games are not serious and are quickly sorted out. Pupils know the different forms that bullying can take including cyber-bullying and name-calling. They are also aware of how to avoid potential dangers outside of school.
- The school keeps a close check on attendance and takes a firm stance on punctuality. Nevertheless, attendance so far in the current year has fallen to below average.
- Staff and most parents support pupils' views about their safety and behaviour in school. Overall, parents have positive views about what the school provides for their children, although a few parents express some concerns.
- The school promotes Christian values strongly through the curriculum and pupils have a good awareness of different cultural lifestyles. This contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils contribute well to school life. The school council is active and ensures that all pupils' views can be heard. There are always willing hands to help in assemblies and to help the rest of the school day to run smoothly. Year 6 pupils feel well prepared for the next stage of their education and confidently look forward to new challenges.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has moved the school on rapidly since her appointment two years ago. All staff and governors have rallied behind the headteacher and work effectively as a strong team to achieve their shared vision for improvement.
 - Senior leaders are a strong force. Their crucial role in helping to improve teaching and monitor progress is evident in the overall quality seen in the school and leaders' accurate view of its own performance.
 - The management of teaching performance by the headteacher and senior staff has been central to the school's improvement. Inadequate teaching has been challenged incisively. Consequently, there has been considerable change in staffing and various teaching roles. Teachers understand how they are accountable for progress and how salary increases are linked to their performance.
 - Training to improve leadership and teaching skills has been an important measure, along with the school's work in partnership with the local authority. As a result of the actions taken by leaders, good teaching, improvement in what is provided in the Early Years Foundation Stage, accelerated progress and improved standards amply confirm the local authority's and the school's own view that it is capable of managing its own further success.
 - The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to achieve well. Subject leaders have a good understanding of what is going well and what can be better and manage developments in their subjects well. There is a good range of activities outside of lesson time to enrich pupils' learning, enjoyment and personal development.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a good understanding of how well the school works and of how good it can become. Relevant training and the expertise they bring to their work has equipped members well to challenge the school. For example, when measuring pupils' progress against that of schools nationally or questioning the effectiveness of the school's use of technology. Finances are managed efficiently, including the use of the pupil premium. Governors check that the use of this funding has the effect that it should in ensuring eligible pupils have an equal opportunity to learn and achieve as well as all other pupils. There is a clear overview of the quality of teaching and how individual roles and responsibilities affect teaching costs. Safeguarding arrangements are regularly considered by the governing body and fully meet government requirements.
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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	111296
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	412699

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	333
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Canon M S Finlay
Headteacher	Mrs M Cummings
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2007
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