

Darnhall Primary School

Sandyhill Road, Darnhall, Winsford, Cheshire, CW7 1JL

Inspection dates 24–25 September 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.

- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress, often from low starting points, and reach nationally expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs, including those in the school's resourced provision, achieve well because teaching is carefully matched to their individual needs.
- Teaching is consistently good, with some outstanding elements. As a result, pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning activities and their achievement has improved since the time of the school's last inspection.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection because of effective action taken by leaders.
- Pupils behave well in school and show positive attitudes to learning. They feel extremely safe and secure and enjoy trusting relationships with the adults in school. This enables all pupils, including those with additional social, emotional and behavioural needs, to learn and progress successfully.
- The headteacher is a powerful driving force for continuous improvement in the school. A united staff team and knowledgeable governors all share her determination to achieve the best possible outcomes for all pupils. Effective senior and middle leaders contribute well to implementing improvements.
- Parents expressed great appreciation of the school's work, stressing its important contribution to the community.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet enough outstanding teaching to move the school to the next level.
- Not enough pupils reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons. They listened to pupils read in Years 2, 3 and 6 and held discussions with pupils about the books they have enjoyed and those they are currently reading.
- Meetings were held with five members of the governing body, with senior and middle leaders, with a group of pupils and with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed 28 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They took into account the outcomes of a recent survey of parents' views conducted by the school. An inspector also met with a group of parents and with an individual parent to hear their views about the school.
- Inspectors took into account the views that staff expressed in the questionnaires they completed.
- They observed the school's work. They inspected the written work in pupils' books and also looked at a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, the school development plan, records of pupils' current attainment and progress and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Diane Auton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Potter

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is similar in size to most other primary schools.
- Most pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. A small proportion of pupils are from a range of other backgrounds and heritages.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is considerably above average.
- The school is resourced by its local authority to provide 10 places for pupils who have social, emotional or behavioural needs. Pupils in this provision are in the Year 1–4 age-band.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is considerably above average. This additional government funding is provided for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There have been a number of changes in teaching staff since the time of the school's last inspection and a new headteacher was appointed in February 2012.
- The school provides a breakfast club every day during term time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by continuing to keep rigorous checks on teaching and to share good practice.
- Increase the proportion of pupils across the school who are working above the levels expected for their age, by continuing to develop the school's systems for identifying its most-able pupils at an early stage, in order to ensure that they are always given the challenge and support they need.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most children join the Nursery class with skills that are below those usually expected for their age, especially in language and communication. Some children arrive with very immature social and self-help skills. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In the last school year, many children made outstanding progress in the Reception class and by the end of the year most were working at the expected levels for their age. This represents an improvement on the two previous years, when, although progress had been good, a significant minority had left the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills a little below expected levels.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics were below average at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2011 and 2012. However, the school's records show that pupils in Years 1 and 2 made good overall progress in all three subjects during the last school year and that their attainment had moved up closer to national standards by the end of the year. Inspection evidence confirms that this improving trend is set to continue.
- During the last school year, most pupils made the expected rate of progress in reading, writing and mathematics in both Key Stage 1 and 2. A majority of pupils did better than this and made more than the expected rate of progress in all three subjects.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were below average in 2011 and 2012. The school's records show a marked improvement in attainment in 2013, with most pupils reaching the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics. More pupils reached the higher level in all three subjects than in previous years. These outcomes represent good progress from pupils' individual starting points and inspection evidence shows that the improvement trend is set to continue in the current year. However, the proportions of pupils reaching the higher levels were still below national expectations, indicating that all of the school's most-able pupils are not yet doing as well as they possibly could. Leaders know that work is needed to bring about an increase in higher level attainment in the current and future years.
- Standards in reading are rising across the school, with pupils across the age-range showing a real interest in books and an enjoyment in reading. At the end of Year 2 in 2013, there was a significant increase in the number of pupils who reached the higher level in reading. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, their reading standard is at the expected level for their age.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs, including those receiving the resourced provision, is good, with pupils often making rapid gains as a result of the effective individual support they are given. This exemplifies the school's work and commitment to ensure equal opportunities for every pupil.
- Further evidence of this was seen in the achievement of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for pupil premium funding, which is similar to that of the other pupils in the school. By the end of Key Stage 2 in 2012, the progress of this group compared favourably with the national picture; school evidence for the last school year indicates that this was also the case in 2013. The school keeps careful checks on the progress of all groups across the year and takes effective action, when required, to ensure that any identified gaps in achievement are addressed. For example, the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for pupil premium funding was nearly a year behind that of the other pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2012. This was recognised, action was taken and the gap between the groups narrowed considerably in 2013.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching was judged satisfactory at the school's last inspection. It is now good, overall and a small proportion is outstanding. This is resulting in ongoing improvements in pupils' achievement.
- Good teaching is helping pupils to learn and progress well. Typical features include: well-planned

lessons, with activities matched to pupils' learning needs and interests; lessons that move along at a brisk pace so that pupils' interest is fully engaged throughout; effective explanations of what pupils are expected to do and to learn, giving them a clear understanding of how to move their learning forward.

- Positive relationships between pupils and adults in the classroom contribute very strongly to pupils' learning and progress. Staff are particularly skilful in the support they provide for pupils who sometimes experience difficulties in managing their own emotional and behavioural responses. As a result, there is little disruption in lessons and pupils are able to work together productively in class.
- Effective teaching and a lively curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage enable children to achieve well and to establish the positive attitudes to learning that they take with them as they move up through the school.
- Extremely effective teamwork between class teachers and very skilful teaching assistants is a key factor in pupils' successful learning and progress. This is a strength of the school.
- Where teaching is outstanding, teachers often question pupils very skilfully to test out how much they have understood and to move them on to extend their thinking. For example, in a very successful lesson about measuring in Year 1, pupils made excellent progress in understanding 'longer' and 'shorter' and in using different methods for measuring length. They were keen to answer their teacher's probing questions and showed they could explain the choices they had made in their activities.
- Where teaching is good, rather than outstanding, lessons support pupils' overall learning and progress well; sometimes, however, the most-able pupils may not have been clearly identified and so the level of challenge in activities is not always matched as closely to the most-able pupils' needs as it is in the outstanding lessons.
- Teaching gives effective support for the progress of pupils with special educational needs, including those in the resourced provision. In the resourced provision, individual learning programmes mean that pupils who require it can access small-group teaching by specialist staff. Integration into whole-class sessions is managed gradually, giving each pupil the time and support they need to build self-confidence, resilience and self-control.
- Teachers use marking very effectively to help pupils improve their work. There is very good evidence, especially in older pupils' books, to show that they take and benefit from the advice they are given by their teachers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' attitudes to school and to their work have improved since the last inspection, when they were judged to be only satisfactory. This improvement is having a good impact on the progress they make.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they are polite and considerate. They are eager to talk about their work and about how much they enjoy school. They say they feel safe and well cared-for; 'our teachers always help us'. They show caring attitudes in their relationships and often demonstrate a mature understanding of fellow-pupils' additional needs: 'some people need extra help sometimes'.
- Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils usually apply themselves well to their work. Their books show that they take a real pride in their work and that they try very hard to present it neatly. Pupils listen carefully to their teacher's instructions in lessons. They are also learning to listen to each other's ideas and views and show an increasing ability to take part in thoughtful discussions. Pupils in the resourced provision are at varying stages of learning to manage their own behaviour in a classroom setting and most are making good or even better progress in this respect. Because their inclusion in whole-class lessons is managed well, it is rarely the cause of disruption for other pupils.
- Pupils have a clear understanding about different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying. They say there is no bullying in their school, but that when people fall

out with each other teachers sort matters out quickly.

- Pupils contribute well and in many ways to making the school a happy place for everyone, including acting as influential school councillors. They feel that their views are listened to.
- Pupils with additional learning, health, social, emotional or behavioural needs are included in everything on offer and are supported extremely well. The school provides very sensitive and caring support for pupils and families whose circumstances might make them vulnerable and several parents expressed their appreciation of this. Staff work productively with a range of agencies to ensure that support is targeted appropriately.
- Attendance rates have been a problem in past times. The school is working successfully to assist families where pupils may be at risk of poor attendance and provides a wide range of support actions where this is the case. Attendance rates are now improving and are now in line with national average figures.
- Breakfast club is well attended and provides a happy and nurturing start to the day.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's very effective leadership has been a key factor in securing the ongoing improvements in pupils' achievement and in teaching that have taken place since the school's last inspection. During her relatively short time in post, she has established a clear focus on taking the school forward.
- Systems for checking on pupils' progress have been overhauled and strengthened; they provide clear and regular information about how well everyone is doing and this is enabling staff to identify and support pupils who may be underachieving. Work remains to be done to ensure that all of the school's most-able pupils are identified at an early stage, so that they may be supported appropriately and so that more will be enabled to progress as well as possible and to reach the higher levels of attainment.
- The school checks the effect of its support for all of the different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium. This is helping to ensure all pupils' good progress.
- Regular checks are made on the quality and effect of teaching. Senior staff assist the headteacher in this and all staff share good practice and work together closely. All of this is supported by a programme of training for all staff, including teaching assistants, and this is helping to keep staff skills sharp and up to date. This good leadership practice requires further development in order to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in the school.
- The school's senior leadership team was restructured and further strengthened after the new headteacher's appointment; this team and the middle leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and the Resourced Provision Leader, all make strong contributions to school development and are positive role models for colleagues.
- The curriculum contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Subjects are brought together into topics that capture pupils' interests well. The curriculum is well-enriched by visiting specialists' contributions and by regular visits to interesting places, including residential trips. Pupils of all ages enjoy regular opportunities to participate in sport and physical education activities through timetabled lessons and through a good range of after-school activities.
- The school uses its funding and local services well to promote the health and physical well-being of all pupils.
- The local authority has provided advisory and consultant support and this has helped the school to continue to improve.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors share the headteacher's uncompromising determination to move the school forward as rapidly as possible and to achieve the best for all of its pupils. Governors make a strong contribution to school leadership.
 - Their regular reviews and comparisons of data on pupils' progress give governors a clear

overview of pupils' performance and of the quality and effect of teaching. This means they are able to hold the school to account and to ask searching questions from a well-informed standpoint.

- Governors ensure that performance management systems are robust and that leaders and staff are set challenging targets linked to pupils' progress and school priorities. They are fully aware of the link between the achievement of these targets and salary progression.
- The governing body gives good support to the headteacher in meeting safeguarding responsibilities, particularly regarding the safety of pupils and staff appointments, and in ensuring that equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination is not tolerated.
- Governors ensure that the pupil premium funding is spent wisely, for example, providing additional teaching assistants, individual or small-group support and enrichment activities. They keep regular checks on the impact of this expenditure on the learning and progress of this group of pupils.

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	111133
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	426119

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Strachan
Headteacher	Sarah Tomlinson
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2011
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