

Prospect Vale Primary School

Prospect Vale, Heald Green, Cheadle, SK8 3RJ

Inspection dates

6–7 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 in all year groups. As a result, by the end of Year 6, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above those expected nationally.
- This represents good achievement from their starting points on entry which are typically in line with those expected for their age.
- The quality of teaching is usually good with examples of outstanding practice.
- Teachers plan lessons which are active, enjoyable and enable pupils to learn quickly as evidenced by the good quality of work seen in their work books.
- Pupils say they feel safe, 'because everyone cares for each other'. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Behaviour is good both inside and outside the classroom. Pupils show courteous and considerate attitudes to staff, visitors and each other.
- Leaders and governors have worked well together to sustain the school's performance and raise both the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement across the school since the previous inspection.
- Members of the governing body have a broad range of skills which they use effectively to offer support and challenge to senior leaders. Their work has directly contributed to the school's improvement.
- This continuous commitment and improvement shows leaders' ability to make the school even better in the future.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In the Early Years Foundations Stage, staff do not teach phonic skills (linking sounds and letters) well enough and so children, including the most able, do not develop these skills as quickly as they should.
- School leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly and accurately. However, the quality of record keeping is insufficiently detailed and does not always give enough guidance to teachers on how to improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons and parts of lessons taught by nine teachers. A joint lesson observation was undertaken with the headteacher. The inspection team also listened to pupils from Year 2 read and examined the quality of work in the books of pupils from across the school.
- The inspection team held meetings and had discussions with pupils, senior leaders, members of the school staff and six members of the governing body. They also held a telephone conversation with a member of the local authority.
- The inspection team took into account the views of 17 parents who made their views known through the on-line questionnaire (Parents' View) as well as 12 parents they met informally at the start of the school day.
- The inspection team studied health and safety documentation, teachers' curriculum planning, documents relating to the procedures to check the performance of staff and the school's system for checking pupils' progress.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Gary Kelly

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Prospect Vale Primary is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Approximately 50% of pupils who attend come from families of White British heritage. Just over a third of pupils come from families of South Asian heritage and approximately 20% come from other ethnic backgrounds. Just over 20% of pupils are new to learning English when they start at the school.
- A lower than average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those from service families.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported through school action is just below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection the school has undergone a significant period of change with the appointment of a new headteacher, deputy headteacher and Key Stage 2 leader.
- The school has a range of awards and accreditations including Healthy Schools, Arts Mark Gold, LPPA, Basic Skills Award and Eco Green Flag

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching of phonics in the Early Years Foundation Stage in order to further accelerate pupils' achievement in reading by the end of Key Stage 1 by:
 - increasing training opportunities for Early Years Foundation Stage staff so that they are more confident at delivering phonics lessons
 - ensuring phonics skills are regularly taught across the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - ensuring children are grouped more effectively in order to accelerate the progress of the most-able children.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that records of lesson observations are methodically kept and contain clear detail of the aspects of teaching that need to improve and are shared with individual staff.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils start school with knowledge and skills typically in line with those expected for their age. From their different starting points, most pupils make good progress and some do better than this. By the end of Year 6, standards are above those expected nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents good achievement.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes children usually make good progress and leave with skills and knowledge close to and sometimes above those expected for their age in most areas of development.
- However, in 2012 and 2013, fewer Year 1 pupils than the national average achieved the expected level in the phonics screening check which tests pupils' ability to link letters to sounds. This is because although the teaching of phonics is good in Key Stage 1, daily phonics lessons are not sufficiently well established in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in Nursery classes. Some staff lack the confidence to teach phonics effectively and whole-class sessions reduce the speed at which the most-able children progress because sometimes their work is too easy. School leaders are aware of this and plans to improve this provision are in place, but have yet to be implemented.
- Standards and progress in reading have improved in both Key Stage 1 and 2 since the previous inspection. This increase in achievement is due to leaders' continued and relentless focus on encouraging all pupils, and boys in particular, to read. The newly introduced boy-friendly reading books have encouraged reading for pleasure and as one pupil commented: 'Because I really like the new books, I spend more time reading at home now and less playing on my computer than I used to'.
- Pupils, including the most able, make at least good progress across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics due to the improvement in the quality of teaching brought about by the new senior leadership team. Current school data, lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and listening to pupils read during the inspection confirm that standards are set to continue to rise.
- Leaders' recent focus on mathematics has improved pupils' achievement across the school, particularly for the most-able pupils. Last year's results saw a rise in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 to well-above national expectations. Pupils across the school show a good ability to carry out calculation and in using their problem-solving skills.
- Pupils across the school show good writing skills. For example, Year 2 pupils use good levels of grammar and punctuation effectively when writing both stories and reports.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals make good progress. Last year, attainment for this group was higher than that nationally by approximately a year and higher than peers in school, particularly in mathematics. The school's current data show little or no gaps in the attainment of this group and others in the school. This is due to the very effective use of pupil premium monies which the school has used to deliver extra support to boost pupils' achievement through one-to-one and small group sessions.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, the most able, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who are new to learning English make equally good progress as their peers and achieve well in English and mathematics because teachers identify and provide well-targeted extra help and guidance that meet their needs.

The quality of teaching is good

- The vast majority of teaching observed during the inspection was good or better and evidence seen in pupils' books and the school's records further supports the school's view that the quality of teaching is good over time.

- Teachers are effective at using information about how well pupils are doing to plan future lessons. As a result, work planned meets the needs of pupils, including the most able, and enables all groups to make good progress.
- Teachers are also good at making learning exciting and fun. The words of one young pupil sum up the views of others: 'I love coming to school because every day I learn something different'.
- This could clearly be seen in an exciting and innovative Key Stage 2 English lesson in which pupils went outside to experience the world through their senses. Standing in the sunlight under a small grove of trees, pupils closed their eyes and let their imagination roam. 'The gnarled tree reaches down to cast a wicked spell on me', described one boy. 'The sunlight dances through the leaves' described another. 'The murky, sticky, chocolate mud coats my shoes' described a third. Pupils' very clear understanding of personification and the use of similes was impressive and led to some excellent creative writing on pupils' return to the classroom. This led to them making outstanding progress.
- Parents of children who attend Nursery and Reception classes feel that the school gives their children a good start. 'Staff make us feel welcome' was a comment made by one which summed up the views of others. While teaching in these classes is generally good, just occasionally planned activities do not offer children sufficient opportunity to use their imagination and play creatively, particularly in the outdoor areas.
- Teachers and support assistants work closely together and effective working partnerships are evident across the school. Extra sessions planned for pupils who need extra help with their learning enable them to make the same good progress as others in the school.
- Pupils are proud of their work because teachers display pupils' work at every opportunity in classrooms and corridors. They mark pupils' work diligently and effectively which ensures pupils across the school are clear about how to improve.
- Lessons in art, religious education and personal and social education promote pupils' good levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils show very caring and friendly attitudes to each other, staff and visitors. For example, Key Stage 2 pupils act as play leaders; ensuring younger pupils enjoy a range of activities and games at lunchtime. This responsibility is taken very seriously and, as one pupil said, 'makes sure no one is left out or lonely'.
- Pupils are keen and eager to learn and show positive attitudes to their work. However, occasionally when teaching does not capture pupils' full attention, for example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, their attention and behaviour dip.
- 'School is so brilliant. It couldn't be better' commented a group of pupils. This is clear evidence of the safe and happy place the vast majority of pupils feel school is. Parents spoken to also echo this view that school is a safe and happy place to which their children enjoy coming. Rare incidents of misbehaviour, they feel, are effectively dealt with by staff. The school's records confirm this. No pupils have been permanently excluded for the last four years.
- Pupils clearly feel valued as members of the school community and their views are communicated well to senior leaders through the school council. Should action not be taken swiftly enough by this route, pupils have the confidence to lobby on their own behalf as one pupil explained: 'I have also written to the headteacher myself to remind him he promised us new lights for the stage'.
- Pupils are particularly clear about the different forms bullying can take. They feel that incidents are rare because pupils are made aware through, for example, the school's internet safety policy and through effective systems which teach pupils' to recognise homophobic bullying, and the effects bullying can have on others. They are clear about where to seek help should an incident occur.
- Attendance has improved year-on-year for the last three years and is now just above the

national average. This is continuous improvement is due to the headteacher's very strong and effective stance on reducing the number of holidays taken in term time.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection the new headteacher and senior leadership team have brought about significant change at a fast pace. Their unswerving focus on driving improvement has ensured the quality of teaching has improved. This is evidenced by the rise in pupils' achievement across the school and the improved quality of work observed in pupils' books.
- A success of the headteacher has been in uniting the staff in a quest to improve the school even further through the development of a clear and concise plan which has pupils' achievement at its centre. This, coupled with a very clear focus on making the ethos of the school welcoming to all through, for example the high quality displays of pupils' work around the school which are a strength of the school, reflects the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils.
- Teaching is effectively and rigorously monitored across the school. Firm and successful actions have been taken by leaders, through the management of staff's performance to improve areas of weakness. However, information from lesson observations is not always methodically recorded and lacks clear detail of the aspects of teaching that need to improve. As a result, information on how teachers' skills could improve is not always shared as effectively as it could be with individual staff.
- School leaders ensure performance targets for staff link directly to pupils' achievement and targets within the school's development plan. Checks on the performance of staff are undertaken and leaders have used this information to make decisions on teachers' pay.
- The curriculum is good and is enriched by many visits and activities away from the classroom, offering pupils excellent opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the wider world. For example, a Year 1 pupil commented on a much anticipated visit to Jodrell Bank as: 'I can't wait to see the big telescope and try on a spacesuit like a real astronaut'. These experiences increase pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum meets the needs of the children. There is a balance between activities which are adult led and others which children choose for themselves. This helps to improve children's social and independence skills. However, opportunities for children to use their phonics skills to improve their reading are not yet as good as they should be.
- The school has developed a clear plan for using their allocation of sports partnership monies. This includes further training opportunities for staff to develop new skills in both physical education (PE) and health and nutrition which are beginning to improve the quality of PE teaching and the health and well-being of pupils.
- The local authority does not directly support school improvement because school leaders have chosen to buy this support from external consultants. However, the local authority has worked closely with school staff in supporting the successful integration of pupils who are new to learning English.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - School governors bring a wide range of skills and experience to the governing body which they have continued to update successfully through attending further training. As a result, they offer good levels of support and challenge to senior leaders in a variety of ways. For example, they have a very good understanding of data relating to the achievement of pupils and as a result are very clear about what needs to be done to improve the school further. In partnership with senior leaders, governors have now developed an effective system for checking the performance of all staff which rewards good teaching and addresses any underperformance. They manage pupil premium funding prudently and this careful management has enabled them to support eligible pupils exceptionally well. Safeguarding procedures and policies within school meet current requirements.

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	106071
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	426229

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	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Cottrell
Headteacher	Paul McDowell
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2008
Telephone number	0161 437 4226
Fax number	0161 498 8708
Email address	schooladmin@prospectvale.stockport.sch.uk

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