

Thingwall Primary School

Pensby Road, Thingwall, Wirral, Merseyside, CH61 7UG

Inspection dates

22–23 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2013 was significantly below average in reading and mathematics and overall performance was not as good as in the previous years.
- The overall progress made by pupils by the time they left Year 6 in 2013 was average, and not as good as in previous years, particularly in mathematics.
- Too few pupils attain the higher levels, particularly at Key Stage 1, and girls' performance lags behind that of boys at Key Stage 2.
- Improvements in pupils' progress so far this year are not consistent across all year-groups, or subjects.
- Teachers sometimes give pupils work that is too easy and this means that few pupils make as much progress as they should during lessons, especially the most able.
- School leaders, including governors are yet to fully implement or evaluate plans aimed at raising levels of attainment and improving the quality of teaching.
- Many of the school's middle management team are new to their posts. Their work has yet to fully impact on raising levels of achievement across the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour is good, as is their attendance. They enjoy coming to school, and are 'excited' about their learning.
- Pupils' overall performance in writing is good across the school, and is above average by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' achievement is improving as a result of improvements to teaching.
- The headteacher, governors and newly formed senior leadership team are determined to improve the school and have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses.
- The quality of pupils' reading is rapidly improving, as is the teaching of phonics because the school has given a higher profile to the teaching of phonics and ensured that teachers are well trained.
- The school's middle leaders work together well and are clear about their school improvement roles.
- The overwhelming majority of parents are very complimentary about the school. They say that it meets their children's specific educational needs and keeps them safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons, including parts of lessons, as well as the teaching of small groups of pupils and sessions aimed at helping pupils to learn to read through understanding the links between letters and the sounds they make (phonics teaching). Two lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read from Years 2, 3, 4, and 6, and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised during lessons and separately.
- Inspectors took account of 26 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the school's own surveys of parents' views.
- A meeting took place with a representative from the local authority school improvement service.
- A meeting was held with seven governors, including the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body.
- Various school documents were examined. These included data on pupils' progress, external school evaluations, records of the school's checks on the quality of teaching, minutes of the governing body's meetings, the school's development plan and review of its own performance, records of pupils' attendance, behaviour records and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Lenford White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Elaine White

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium is well below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The school has a small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. A few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Most teachers are new to the school since the last inspection. Two teachers, one newly qualified in the Reception class and the other in Year 6, who is also acting deputy headteacher, started at the school this term. The majority of governors have been at the school since the last inspection, with at least one being recently appointed.
- There is privately run pre-school and after-school provision which is housed on the school site. Both are subject to separate inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to consistently good or better by making sure that:
 - all teachers provide work that stretches pupils to do their very best, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Raise levels of achievement for all pupils by:
 - providing as many opportunities as possible for pupils to practise their reading and mathematics writing skills across the curriculum in Key Stage 1, and their mathematics skills across the curriculum in Key Stage 2
 - focusing on closing the gaps in attainment between boys and girls
 - ensuring that more pupils attain the higher levels, particularly at Key Stage 1.
- Improve further the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governors, by:
 - ensuring that all plans aimed at raising levels of attainment and improving the quality of teaching are fully implemented and evaluated
 - ensuring that the middle management team is fully supported in its work, and provided with appropriate training to enable it to effectively execute its various roles.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter Reception with skills and abilities which are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They progress well and most achieve a good level of development by the time they enter Year 1. However, achievement requires improvement because too few pupils make good or better progress through Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Too few pupils attained the higher levels at the end of in Key Stage 1 in 2013, and their performance was well below average in reading and mathematics. Pupils' overall achievement in Key Stage 2 in 2013 was not as good as in previous years, particularly in mathematics.
- However, the school has taken decisive action to remedy pupils' poor achievement, by, for example, appointing a specialist mathematics teacher in Year 6 and improving the quality of teaching across the school.
- Standards in phonics have improved and were broadly at national levels in 2013. Year 2 and 3 pupils who read for inspectors could identify a number of authors and genres and said that they enjoyed reading. Less-able readers demonstrated a good ability to use their phonic knowledge to break-up, sound-out and read unfamiliar words.
- The school regularly assesses how well pupils are doing and has developed a wide range of support programmes which are tailored, for example, to improve pupils' spelling, writing and the social and emotional aspects of their learning.
- The school has few pupils who are supported through the pupil premium, however, their progress is monitored closely and support provided when needed. Currently, there is no significant gap between this group and their peers in school, or similar groups of pupils nationally.
- Because there were too few pupils from minority ethnic groups or with English as an additional language at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2013, it is not possible to provide a meaningful analysis of their performance. Current data indicate that their progress is as good as their classmates.
- Equality of opportunity is improving, particularly for girls. The school's current data indicate that previous gaps between the performance of boys and girls in Year 6 in 2013 are narrowing. The school's close monitoring of the performance of girls and providing booster sessions in mathematics for those who need them, is helping to improve their performance.
- The school has identified pupils most likely to attain the higher levels in Year 6 at the end of the academic year and provides greater levels of support through small-group activities and more challenging tasks in lessons.
- All teachers have a detailed understanding of the academic, emotional and social needs of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The standard achieved by these pupils by the time they left at the end of Year 6 in 2013 was above average.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although the majority of lessons observed during the inspection were good, and teaching is improving, it is still judged to require improvement overall because pupils' achievement over time is not good enough, and progress is uneven across year-groups.
- Teachers generally use information on pupils' past performance well; however, this is not always the case. In some lessons, the work pupils are given is too easy, which means that few make as much progress as they should during the lesson, particularly the most able.
- In two lessons observed in Key Stage 1, teaching required improvement because there was too little variation in the work that pupils were asked to do. As a result, progress for some groups of pupils was not good enough, particularly for higher attainers who were not fully engaged in their learning.

- While there are many opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum, these are yet to be fully developed with regard to mathematics and reading.
- Pupils are very knowledgeable about their learning. Almost all pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 2, know how well they are doing in English and mathematics, and most can say what they need to do to improve.
- Overall, the quality of the marking of pupils' work is good. However, there are too few examples of pupils improving their work as a result of teachers' advice.
- In most lessons, teachers and teaching assistants are quick to identify signs of any pupils who are falling behind. When this happens, they carefully tailor work so that it engages and challenges all pupils to make increasingly good progress.
- Specialist teachers and well-trained teaching assistants work very effectively in providing targeted one-to-one support for various pupils, including the most able. School records show that these pupils are now beginning to make better progress.
- Relationships between pupils and adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage are especially strong. Pupils get off to a good start in a very stimulating environment in which teachers and other adults provide opportunities for them to explore various areas of learning and progress at a good rate.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge was well demonstrated in a good Year 5 English lesson where pupils, including the least able, gave eloquent examples of their own similes and metaphors based on *The Highway Man*.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy coming to school; this is evidenced by their good attendance. They say that the best things about their school include their teachers, friends and lessons. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They are proud to talk to visitors about their work and say that they feel part of a community. Pupils take pride in wearing their school uniform, and conduct themselves well during lunchtimes.
- Pupils' behaviour is not better than good because occasionally they are 'off-task' during lessons. This is mostly likely to happen when work is not sufficiently engaging. At such times their attitudes towards learning are not as positive as they could be. Teachers work very effectively to help pupils to develop their understanding of discrimination and prejudice. Older pupils who spoke to inspectors were very clear that nobody should be treated unfairly on the basis of 'their colour, religion or because of who they love'.
- Pupils are very respectful towards their teachers, all adults and each other. In a celebration assembly they behaved exceptionally well as they listened intently to the headteacher as she awarded special certificates to acknowledge pupils' good achievement.
- Pupils insist that behaviour is almost always good. The vast majority of parents, as well as school staff, are also of this view. School records also support this view.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Younger pupils are adamant that bullying is rare. They say that they are very confident in talking to adults about any concerns that they have and that these are always taken seriously and dealt with immediately.
- Pupils say that they learn about safety issues in personal, social and health education (SEAL) and from visitors such as the police, ambulance service and firefighters.
- Pupils have a good understanding of 'e-safety'. When asked for tips on how to stay safe while using the internet pupils agreed that 'if you come across anything that you should not see minimise it, close it, then tell a teacher' and 'never pretend to be older than you are'.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher knows exactly what needs to be done in order to move the school forward, and has the drive and determination to ensure that she succeeds. Supported by an active governing

body, and a new senior leadership team, the headteacher has taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching. The school ensures that teachers' performance is directly linked to salary progression.

- All staff who completed the inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the school and indicated that they were fully aware of what needs to be done in order to secure further improvements.
- However, leadership and management still require improvement because until recently pupils' achievement at Key Stage 1 was below average, and their progress through Key Stage 2 was not good enough given their starting points.
- The school's middle management team has a clear, shared understanding about what needs to be done in order to raise standards across the school. The team's clearly focused action plans have, for example, helped to improve reading and phonics across the school. However, most middle managers are new to their roles and their work has yet to improve standards in all year-groups or in all curriculum areas.
- The school ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong through its links with, for example, schools in India and Norway. The school makes effective use of additional sports funding to enhance opportunities for pupils to participate in sport and to develop teachers' skills in the subject.
- The school works very closely with the local authority school improvement service which has recently reviewed teaching and learning and provided training for governors in a number of areas, including data analysis.
- Safeguarding procedures are followed closely and meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are both committed to and knowledgeable about the school. However, governors' precise knowledge of how well individual groups of pupils are performing or how they compare with similar groups of pupils nationally requires improvement.
 - Governors ensure that teachers only secure promotion or pay awards if they meet their performance targets, all of which are linked to pupils' achievement. They have taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching; the work of their recently appointed mathematics specialist teacher, for example, is already helping to raise levels of achievement. Governors know how the pupil premium is spent, and that the tailored support and one-to-one activities that entitled pupils receive is helping to improve their progress.

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	105051
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	432397

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Wallace
Headteacher	Danielle Cronin
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2011
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