

Runcorn All Saints CofE Primary School

Church Street, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 1LD

Inspection dates

12–13 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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. It is not good because

- Standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are below average and too few pupils reach the higher levels of attainment.
- Progress across the school is uneven. The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good enough to enable all pupils to make good progress from their starting points.
- Ineffective teaching in the past means some pupils have gaps in their learning. The teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy has not always been built on year on year. There has not yet been enough time to tackle these issues fully. As a result, teaching and achievement have not improved enough since the previous inspection.
- The work set by teachers is not always hard enough, particularly for the most able pupils
- Targets set for pupils lack the detail needed to help them to improve their work.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to think through interesting problems when practising their mathematics skills.
- Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are not developed systematically.
- The skills of subject leaders to check on pupils' learning are not yet fully developed.
- The quality of teaching of reading varies across the school. Some pupils, especially those with weaker reading skills, do not have the opportunity to read to an adult often enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The proportion of good teaching is increasing.
- Progress has started to speed up and more pupils in the current classes are reaching the standards expected for their age.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress.
- Pupils behave well. They feel safe, are happy and keen to learn.
- Attendance has improved. It is now similar to that of most other schools.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership and has a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, the school is starting to improve.

Information about this inspection

- Thirteen lessons or parts of lessons were observed in the course of the inspection. The teaching of reading skills was observed in all classes. The inspector listened to pupils read and talked with pupils about the books they have enjoyed and those that they are currently reading.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils and spoke to other pupils about the school and their work. She took account of the responses to the school's own questionnaire for pupils.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and members of staff. Five members of the governing body met with the inspector. The inspector held a meeting with a representative from the local authority. She also met with the independent education consultant who works with the school.
- Inspectors were unable to take account of responses to the online survey (Parent View) as there were not enough of them for them to be made available. The inspector spoke with parents at the start and end of the school day. She took account of several letters she received from parents and the school's own questionnaires to parents. Responses to the staff questionnaires completed during the inspection were also considered.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, records of current standards and progress, the school improvement plan and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance. External reports about the school and minutes from governing body meetings were also considered.

Inspection team

Lyn Pender, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most other primary schools. The number of pupils on roll has fallen since the previous inspection. Some classes are taught in mixed-age groups.
- Most pupils are White British with a very small proportion from other heritages. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well above average. A well-above average proportion of pupils are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is well above the national average. This additional funding is provided for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils joins the school at other than the normal time.
- The school has continued to experience the turbulence in staffing that was present at time of the previous inspection. A number of teachers and other staff have left and joined the school, including the deputy headteacher who was promoted to headship in another school in January 2014. At the time of this inspection, a teacher from a local school has been seconded as acting assistant headteacher while the governors appoint a successor.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2013, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A pre-school setting is provided on site by a private provider. This provision is subject to a separate inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better in order to raise standards and increase the rate of progress made by pupils by ensuring that:
 - the level of challenge is increased, particularly for the most able, so that more pupils reach the higher levels of attainment
 - targets set for pupils tell them exactly what they need to do to improve
 - basic skills in literacy and numeracy are built on in a structured way from year to year and in mathematics pupils have more opportunities for problem-solving activities which enable them to practise their skills
 - pupils have sufficient opportunity to read to an adult in lessons
 - skills for information and communication technology (ICT) are taught systematically across the school.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that middle leaders have the skills to check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and use this information to increase the rate of pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In this small school, groups in each year vary considerably in size. Some groups are small, some have a number of pupils who start at different times and some have a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. As a result, attainment varies between year groups because the performance of each individual can have a disproportionate impact where year groups are small.
- Nonetheless, over time progress from pupils' individual starting points has been uneven across the school. In the past, too few pupils reached the level expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Although the proportion of pupils making the progress expected of them is rising, it is not yet consistent across all year groups and not enough pupils make more than expected progress. As a result, overall achievement requires improvement.
- Some weaker teaching in the past has had a negative impact on pupils' progress. Basic literacy and numeracy skills have not always been built on as pupils move from class to class. Leaders are tackling this with a will, but gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills are still to be securely overcome. Improvements have been brought about by a more stable staffing situation and better use of information about pupils' progress. This is starting to help current pupils make faster progress from their starting points.
- In 2013, results of assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 were below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Not enough pupils reached the higher levels. Improved teaching strategies, including a tighter focus by leaders on the teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills are now having a positive impact on ensuring pupils make faster progress. Although standards remain below average, they are rising because more pupils are working at the level expected for their age. The proportion of pupils on track to reach the higher levels of attainment by the end of Year 2 is also improving, but is still lower than that expected nationally.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the screening check in phonics (letters and their sounds) in Year 1 is rising in response to more effective teaching, although it remained below that of other schools nationally. However, the proportion of pupils who meet the national standard when they retake the test at the end of Year 2 is close to the national average.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 was below the national average in 2013 and too few pupils made the progress expected of them as they moved through Key Stage 2 and few did better than this. Pupils' achievement requires improvement but has improved in response to better teaching. Although attainment in reading, writing and mathematics remains below average, more pupils are working at the level expected for their age and a greater proportion are doing better than this.
- Although pupils' reading skills are below average, more pupils use phonics (letters and the sounds they make) to tackle unfamiliar words. Pupils understand how to adjust their writing when writing a letter or a poem but do not have security of the basic skills to reach the higher levels. In mathematics, pupils have a more secure understanding of calculation using basic number facts, but lack confidence when using their skills to solve problems.
- At the end of Year 2 in 2013, the attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding was in line with other pupils in the school and similar pupils nationally. Pupils supported by pupil premium funding, all of whom are known to be eligible for free school meals, at the end of Year 6 in 2013, were around five months behind other pupils in the school in English and mathematics. Currently, pupils in this group are making faster progress and the gap between these pupils and others in the school is closing.
- The most able pupils are starting to make better progress by the time they leave Year 6 but this is not yet consistent across classes. Occasionally, the work they are set is not hard enough to ensure they make enough progress.
- Pupils who start at different times during the school year and the very few who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to the other pupils.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. They join the Reception class with skills well below those typical for their age. Teaching moves children on well, however, their skills are still below the national average when children join Year 1.
- Given their starting points and abilities, pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers.
- A strong programme of support is in place for those pupils falling behind in their learning. The programme is taught effectively by support staff and managed well by the headteacher. As a result, these pupils manage to close the gaps in their learning.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Observations of teaching, supported by scrutiny of pupils' work and reviews of the quality of teaching by the headteacher and local authority, all indicate that the headteacher's determined focus on improving the quality of teaching is proving successful. Nevertheless, teaching requires improvement to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' progress sometimes slows because expectations are not always high enough and work does not stretch pupils sufficiently. This is especially the case for the most able pupils who do not have enough chances to deepen their learning and move on to harder work.
- Changes to staffing have interrupted the sequence of teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills. The situation is improving with more stability and attention to planning from leaders. In mathematics, basic number skills are now taught well, but pupils do not have enough opportunities to use what they have learned to solve problems. Tablet computers and other technology are used regularly in lessons but ICT skills are not yet taught systematically across the school.
- The teaching of reading skills has improved, especially the teaching of phonics. Sometimes the balance between listening to pupils read and asking them questions to check understanding is not right. As a result, pupils sometimes do not have the opportunity to read enough in lessons. Younger readers, and older ones whose reading skills are still weak, sometimes have too few opportunities to read to an adult in school or at home.
- Assessment information is being used more thoroughly to allocate pupils with individual learning targets. As yet, these targets do not give pupils enough information about how they can improve.
- Children are taught well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Imaginative and interesting activities are well planned and promote children's language development well. They play and learn happily together. During the inspection, a few children decided to build tall towers out of small wooden shapes. This required them to work together with great concentration, much discussion and nimble fingers.
- Across the school, warm, positive relationships exist between pupils and adults. The effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants contributes well to pupils' learning, especially those who have special educational needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are good**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are very proud of their school and greet visitors warmly and are keen to tell them about their work and the way the adults in the school keep them safe and take good care for them.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. All who learn and work in the school know each other well; they chat happily together in the dining hall and as they pass each other in the corridors. Pupils usually listen attentively to their teachers and the teaching assistants and enjoy the regular opportunities provided for them to work together in small groups. Occasionally, when learning slows because the work is too easy, pupils become distracted and lose concentration and focus.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have a good understanding of some of the different forms of bullying, for example cyber bullying, and understand the need to use mobile phones and other technology sensibly.
- Pupils say that bullying does not happen often and if incidents do occur, they trust the adults to deal with these quickly and fairly.
- The school's rules are clearly understood by all. Pupils say that the adults apply these fairly and give out plenty of awards for good behaviour.
- Due to the concerted efforts of staff, parents and pupils, attendance has improved from its previous low level and is now close to the national average. The weekly reward for the class with the best attendance is eagerly anticipated.
- Pupils enjoy contributing to the life of the school. For example, as members of the school council to help make decisions about the school.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Despite staffing difficulties experienced over a number of years, the headteacher has been largely successful in maintaining a calm atmosphere in the school conducive to learning. However, leadership and management require improvement because the actions of leaders have not effectively accelerated pupils' progress. A contributory factor to this has been the staff changes that have hampered the progress of change. Actions and training have been put in place and then not fully followed up because staff have changed. As the staffing situation is settling the headteacher is becoming more effective in improving the skills of other leaders, including the governing body. This work is starting to raise pupils' progress, although not enough time has elapsed for there to be significant impact on pupils' attainment. However, the way ahead is more secure and demonstrates that the school has the capacity to continue to improve.
- Currently, too much rests on the shoulders of the headteacher and the role of middle leaders is not fully embedded. These leaders are enthusiastic and are committed to moving the school forward but are at an early stage of developing their management role in driving improvements in teaching and learning. The effect of their work is yet to be fully seen in improved standards and in the quality of teaching.
- The quality of teaching is regularly reviewed by the headteacher. This identifies correctly aspects that need improving and action is being taken to tackle these, although as yet issues remain requiring attention. On a positive note, information about the quality of teaching has led to better staff training which is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching. Teachers' pay is now clearly linked to the achievement of the pupils in their care.
- Improved checks on how well pupils are doing are helping leaders to identify more rapidly the needs of pupils who have special education needs and any pupils who are at risk of falling behind in their learning. Swift action is taken to intervene and bring pupils back on track and as result, pupils in the current year groups are making more rapid progress. However, the progress of the most able pupils is not fully secure and so the promotion of equality of opportunities although improving, is not yet fully effective.
- The school development plan is clearly focused on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching. The correct priorities have been identified and precise targets and timescales are helping the school bring about improvements.
- The new primary school sports funding is used effectively to provide specialist coaching and tuition; this also provides ongoing training for school staff. Pupils of all ages enjoy good quality sport and physical education activities in lessons and in out of hours sessions. For example, music and dance sessions are now held before school to help the day get off to a good start.
- The vast majority of parents who spoke with the inspector and the school's own parental questionnaires indicate that they hold very positive views about the school staff and appreciate the care provided for their children.
- The curriculum contributes well overall to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development. Subjects are brought together into topics that capture pupils' interests well.

- At the beginning of this academic year, the headteacher and governors sought the support of the local authority. They wanted to review what was working well and what needed to be changed to move the school forward quickly. As a result of the good partnership with local authority officers, teachers have been able to improve how they learn from each other and leadership and management systems have been tightened up and are now more effective.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are highly committed and know the school's strengths and where improvement is required. They understand they have a role to play in improving the quality of teaching. Governors check that targets and pay awards for leaders and staff are linked to pupils' achievement. Through visits, governors gain first-hand experience of school life. Data is reviewed more thoroughly and questions asked when they are unsure about pupils' progress. Governors now have an accurate overview of how well pupils are doing. They are fully informed of how the pupil premium funding is spent and the difference it is making for this group of pupils. Governors maintain a strong overview on the school's finances and have had to make some difficult decisions about staffing when faced with falling roles and changes in the school budget. They have ensured that safeguarding requirements are met.

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	111314
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	430965

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Canon John Hayes
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2012
Telephone number	01928 572091
Fax number	01928 560425
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