

Thatto Heath Community Primary School

Hobart Street, St Helen's, Merseyside, WA9 5QX

Inspection dates

27–28 March 2014

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		Outstanding	1
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 very low starting points, and reach broadly average standards by the time they leave the school in Year 6.
- Pupils' speedy progress is the result of good teaching across the classes; an increasing proportion of teaching is outstanding.
- Children become enthusiastic learners in the excellent Early Years Foundation Stage; they take these positive attitudes with them as they move up through the school.
- Pupils with a wide range of special educational needs are supported very well, enabling them to make good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary; they are happy and secure, proud of their school and keen to keep on doing well. The school cares for them very well and keeps them safe.
- The very effective headteacher provides strong leadership. She is supported well by able senior and middle leaders and by well-informed governors. Everyone shares her high expectations for the pupils and the school.
- Leaders make regular checks on teaching and provide good guidance for staff; this is bringing about ongoing improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' progress and attainment are checked very carefully and regularly; this is helping to ensure that everyone is given the support or challenge they need.
- Across the school a small, but growing, number of pupils are working at standards above those expected nationally for their age.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet enough outstanding teaching to accelerate pupils' progress even more over time and take the school to the next level.
- Work given to the most able pupils does not always challenge them sufficiently.
- The school improvement plan does not set out the targets for improving pupils' achievement with sufficient clarity and precision to enable leaders to measure exactly how well the school is doing during the year as it works towards its targets.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 35 lessons. They listened to pupils read in Years 2 and 6 and discussed with them the books they have enjoyed and those they are currently reading.
- The inspectors met with three members of the governing body, with senior and middle leaders, with a group of pupils and with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took into account 40 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They took account of the school's most recent survey of parents' views. An inspector also met with a group of eight parents during the inspection to hear their views about the school.
- The inspectors took into account the views that staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned.
- The inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at the written work in pupils' books and also reviewed a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' attainment and progress, and documents related to pupils' behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Diane Auton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Robert Pye	Additional Inspector
Nina Heron	Additional Inspector
Adrian Martin	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most primary schools; pupil numbers have continued to rise since the time of its last inspection.
- Most pupils are White British, with a very small proportion from other heritages and backgrounds. Currently, nearly all of the pupils in school speak English as their home language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs has risen since the time of the school's last inspection, including an increase in the number of pupils with autistic spectrum difficulties.
- An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for support through pupil premium funding. 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 proportion of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than the usual transition points has increased and is now above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching so that the rising trend in pupils' achievement is sustained and so that more pupils reach the higher standards in all subjects by ensuring that the most able pupils are always provided with appropriate levels of challenge.
- Ensure that the school's ambitious targets for improving pupils' achievement are set out more clearly and precisely in the school's improvement plan so that leaders can measure progress towards the targets accurately over the year.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most children's skills are considerably below those typical for their age when they start school in the Nursery class, especially in their speech and language and often in their social and independent skills. Children progress extremely well in the Early Years Foundation Stage; by the end of the Reception Year, a large majority are much closer to the expected levels for their age in all the areas of learning.
- Although most pupils reached the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2013, the proportion reaching higher standards in all three subjects was significantly below average, resulting in a dip in standards overall. However, this dip was not typical of the school's performance at Key Stage 1 in recent years. These pupils made good progress from their lower than usual starting points and are continuing to do well in Year 3.
- Pupils in the current Years 1 and 2 are making good progress and are on track to reach expected standards by the end of the key stage.
- Most pupils in Year 6 in 2013 reached the nationally expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, with above average proportions reaching higher standards in writing and mathematics. Standards in writing were significantly above average, higher than in previous years. School records and inspection evidence show that attainment is continuing to rise across the year groups in all three subjects in Key Stage 2 in the current year.
- Across the school, a growing number of pupils are working above the expected levels for their age; this is because teachers are becoming increasingly skilled in identifying and supporting the most able pupils from an early stage in their education. However, the school knows there is more to do to make sure that teaching always challenges the most able pupils to do as well as they possibly can.
- In 2013, most pupils in Year 6 made at least the expected rate of progress in reading, writing and mathematics and many did even better than this, especially in writing and mathematics. Evidence from lessons, in pupils' books and the school's progress records all show that pupils are making good progress across the classes in all three subjects in the current year.
- The school has taken decisive action to improve pupils' attainment in reading. As a result, standards in reading are rising rapidly in the current year and progress is accelerating. Letters and sounds are taught very successfully and the proportion of pupils who met the required standard in the Year 1 screening assessment of their reading skills in 2013 was above average.
- Pupils of all ages show a genuine interest in books and an enjoyment of reading. By the time they leave the school in Year 6, most can read at the expected standard for their age, with an increasing number of mature and capable readers.
- In Year 6 in 2013, the attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, was about a term behind that of the other pupils in the year group in reading, writing and mathematics. However, they had made good progress from their starting points, equal to the progress made by the other pupils in their year group.
- In all year groups in the current year, gaps between the attainment of those supported by the pupil premium and that of other pupils are very small and closing rapidly because progress is consistently good across the classes. This reflects the school's strong commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for every pupil.
- Further evidence of this is seen in the good achievement of pupils with special educational needs, who, from their individual starting points, make the same good progress as their classmates because of the good support they are given. Pupils who join the school at other than the usual starting times during the key stages are helped to settle in quickly. A considerable proportion of the new arrivals have additional learning needs, but the school ensures that they make good progress from their starting points.
- The very small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups make good progress and achieve well.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Good teaching in literacy and mathematics is enabling pupils to learn and progress well across all the year groups.
- A lively curriculum and excellent teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage mean that learning is fun for children and they progress very well. There is a strong emphasis on developing their basic skills in literacy and numeracy, giving the children the tools they need to become increasingly confident learners.
- Across the school, teaching is consistently good. Activities are mostly matched well to pupils' differing needs and abilities. These activities are interesting for pupils, keeping them engaged and on task. Teachers give clear explanations of what pupils are expected to do and to learn, and pupils fully understand these. All of this contributes well to pupils' good learning and progress.
- The most able pupils sometimes make less rapid progress than they should because the work they are given does not challenge them sufficiently. Sometimes, this less rapid progress is also because pupils do not have enough opportunity to complete or extend the tasks they have been set.
- With expert guidance from their teachers and teaching assistants pupils are regularly encouraged to evaluate and improve their work within the lesson. In a Year 6 literacy lesson, for example, pupils discussed, re-drafted and improved a piece of writing provided for them by their teacher; they went on to use what they had learned through this challenging whole-class activity to improve their own individual pieces of writing.
- Positive relationships between pupils and adults in the classroom contribute well to pupils' good learning and progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together well to support the learning of pupils of all abilities. The school uses a wide range of effective additional strategies, including teaching pupils in small groups and providing individual support in lessons, for those pupils who need extra help.
- Teachers provide good guidance for pupils when marking their work. Pupils have a good understanding of their individual learning targets for reading, writing and mathematics. All of this is helping them to understand how well they are doing and what the next steps in their learning should be.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They greatly enjoy coming to school and they are caring and polite. They are rightly proud of their school and their achievements.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes in lessons contribute strongly to their good learning and progress. They are alert and responsive to their teachers, listening well to instructions and working well cooperatively with a partner or in a group. They present their work neatly in their books, showing how hard they always try to do their best.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say that staff look after them well, describing trusting relationships with the adults in school. Parents express great confidence in the care the school provides for their children.
- Pupils have a very clear understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying. They say that any sort of aggressive behaviour is very rare and is always dealt with quickly by staff.
- Pupils with additional learning, health, social, emotional or medical needs are included in everything on offer and are supported extremely well. The school provides sensitive, caring support for pupils and families whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. Staff work very well with a wide range of agencies to ensure that support is targeted appropriately.
- The small numbers of pupils with autistic spectrum difficulties are supported very well through regular small group sessions that are helping them to develop the skills they need to achieve successful social interactions.

- Pupils enjoy many opportunities to contribute to making the school a happy place for everyone, including acting as school councillors, monitors and prefects, play leaders and reading buddies.
- Attendance has continued to improve. It is in line with the national average, reflecting the school's strong partnership with parents and its successful work to support families at risk of poor attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is an inspirational leader. This was identified at the last inspection and is a consistent element of the school. Despite additional challenges, including a significant increase in pupil numbers, and including a rise in the proportion with special educational needs, good achievement has been sustained, with a significant improvement in writing in Key Stage 2. Staff morale is high and the school continues to strive for excellence in all aspects of its work.
- The deputy headteacher and all of the senior and middle leaders also demonstrate effective leadership skills, playing an active part in driving improvements forward; they are positive role models, leading by example.
- The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is extremely well led and managed.
- Because thorough systems are in place for checking on pupils' progress and on the quality and effect of teaching, leaders and staff have clear information about how well every pupil is doing so that any underachievement can be spotted and acted on. This has had the strongest impact on helping pupils of lower or average ability to make good progress.
- Senior and middle leaders check regularly on teaching quality and all staff work together well, sharing the best practice. An ongoing programme of training is keeping staff skills sharp and up to date. Leaders know there is more to do to raise the overall quality of teaching from good to outstanding, by ensuring that teaching always stretches and challenges the most able pupils.
- The school development plan identifies well-chosen actions to enable pupils' achievement to continue to improve. Leaders and staff have high expectations for pupils, but the plan is not explicit enough about the amount of progress the school is aiming for pupils to make. This makes it difficult to measure accurately the success of improvement actions.
- The curriculum contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Subjects are brought together into topics that are interesting and stimulating for pupils. Visiting experts and visits to places of interest plus a very wide range of after-school activities provide extra enrichment. The school is well prepared to meet the requirements of the new 2014 National Curriculum.
- The school uses its primary school sports funding effectively to provide an improved range of additional sporting activities, often with specialist coaching; this also provides ongoing training for staff. Pupils of all ages enjoy good quality sport and physical education activities in lessons and after school.
- The local authority provides regular advisory support for this good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Regular reviews of the school's and national data about pupils' progress give governors a clear overview of pupils' performance and of the quality and effect of teaching. This means that they are well informed and able to hold the school to account. They ensure that performance management systems are thorough and that leaders and staff are set challenging targets linked to pupils' progress and school priorities. Governors are fully aware of the link between the achievement of these targets and salary progression.
 - Governors are effective in making sure that safeguarding policies and procedures are fully in place. They are fully informed on how the pupil premium funding is spent and the difference it is making to 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	104763
Local authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	440703

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	618
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marleen Newman
Headteacher	Catherine Ireland
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2011
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