

Gorsewood Primary School

Gorsewood Road, Murdishaw, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 6ES

Inspection dates 24–25 April 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		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 at least good progress across the school.
- By the end of Year 6, standards in English and mathematics reach and sometimes exceed the national average.
- All groups of pupils achieve well because teaching is good and, at times, it is outstanding.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start in their learning.
- Pupils and parents agree that the school is welcoming and caring.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they have positive attitudes to learning. Attendance is consistently above average.
- The curriculum is well planned. The school provides a good range of activities, clubs and visits. These offer pupils exciting experiences outside the classroom and support pupils' learning.
- The highly effective headteacher, governors and other senior leaders work well together for the benefit of all the pupils. Their view of how well the school is doing is accurate and they have a good grasp of how to further improve teaching and pupils' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not yet make excellent progress because the quality of teaching is not outstanding.
- In some lessons, not enough is expected of pupils and so they do not do as well as they could.
- Marking is not always used well enough to help pupils to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons or part lessons taught by eight teachers. Two lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors talked with pupils and listened to some Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils reading. Pupils' current work and assessments were scrutinised. Inspectors also observed pupils at lunchtime and during their break times.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked closely at the school's work, including minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's analysis of how well it is doing and its improvement plan, documents relating to behaviour and safeguarding and the school's data on pupils' progress.
- Inspectors were unable to take account of the responses to the online survey (Parent View) as there were not enough responses for them to be made available. The inspectors considered parents' views through informal discussions during the inspection and took account of surveys of parents' views carried out by the school.
- The inspectors took account of the 24 responses to the staff questionnaire provided by Ofsted.

Inspection team

Michael Hewlett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Terry Bond

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school
- Almost all pupils are White British. No pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be supported by the pupil premium funding is well-above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs 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 average.
- In 2013, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupil's attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been significant changes in staffing since the last inspection and a new leadership team was established in January 2014.
- The school offers breakfast and after-school clubs every day.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching in order to raise pupils' achievement further by ensuring that:
 - work set in lessons is consistently hard enough for pupils, including for the most able, to enable them to always achieve their best
 - there is good quality marking of pupils' work throughout the school so that all pupils are clear about how they can improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are much lower than those typical for their age. They make good progress in the Reception class because of the good teaching and the specific support that they receive to meet their different needs.
- Despite the consistently good progress made by pupils in Key Stage 1 in the past, pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics remained below average by the end of Year 2. Due to improved teaching, standards in the current Year 2 class are higher and are average. Lesson observations, the work in pupils' books and the school's systems for checking how well pupils are doing confirm this.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 to 6 so that by Year 6 pupils' standards in reading and mathematics are average overall. In writing, which has been a school priority for improvement, they are just above average.
- While pupils make good progress overall, the most able pupils are not always challenged to do their very best. This is because some tasks in lessons do not always stretch their thinking. As a result too few pupils are reaching the higher levels in their tests at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Pupils are encouraged to read accurately and for pleasure from an early age. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 screening check of phonics (the linking of letters to sounds) has improved year on year and is now above average.
- Good teaching also ensures that pupils understand what they read. Pupils are asked probing questions about the books they are reading in small group reading sessions. Older pupils talk about their love of books and how much they enjoy sharing their reading skills with younger pupils in the 'paired reading' sessions. 'My cousin is a much better reader now that I have started to help her.' was a typical response.
- Disabled pupils and those who need extra help are fully included in all learning activities. This reflects the school's commitment to ensuring every pupil is given an equal opportunity. As a result they make good progress and achieve well.
- In Year 6 in 2013, the standards reached by pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, were approximately two terms behind those of other pupils in the year group in English and mathematics. The school has taken rapid and effective action to address this deficit and the gap between the standards reached by these groups of pupils is closing rapidly.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils enjoy their lessons and are quick to praise their teachers who, 'work hard to make sure we learn a lot and plan exciting things for us to do'.
- Work completed by pupils in their books and checks on teaching confirm that teaching is generally good and often outstanding.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff work well as a team to make sure that children get a good start to their formal education. Rich and varied learning experiences capture children's interests and help them to successfully develop their language, social and personal skills.
- Learning across the school is well-planned and exciting activities capture pupils' interests well. Subjects are carefully linked through topics so that pupils can practise and then apply their numeracy and literacy skills in a range of activities. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, pupils were able to test out their ideas in real-life situations as they calculated perimeter, using the school playground and outdoor classroom areas. Pupils persevered well, shared ideas and made good progress in their learning by the end of the session.
- Most teaching encourages pupils of all abilities to reflect carefully on what they are doing and not settle for the first answer that comes to mind. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils discussed how they might 'up level' or improve their writing so that the reader was left in no doubt about what they

were trying to describe in the opening sentences of their books. They pondered over the right words and phrases before deciding on the one that was 'just right'. As a result, their finished written work was of a very high quality.

- Highly skilled and experienced teaching assistants plan alongside the teachers and provide valuable support for pupils of different abilities in lessons so that they all make good progress.
- Sometimes the expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. In these lessons, there is too little difference in the activities given to the different ability groups. Consequently, the work set is not hard enough to challenge the most able pupils to achieve their best.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and generally provide good guidance on how that work might be improved. Comments are positive and constructive and pupils are certain that, at its best, marking helps them to learn faster. On some occasions, comments in the books lack clarity and leave pupils unsure about what they need to do next.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are invariably friendly and welcoming. They greet adults politely and love to help, such as holding doors open and tidying up in class.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is never less than good and this has a positive effect on pupils' achievement. 'We all get on well and if anyone misbehaves they miss their golden time, which is fair.' was a typical comment made by an older pupil.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well in lessons. They are proud of their school and respond well to the many opportunities provided for them to take on responsibilities. Pupils on the school council take their responsibilities very seriously. For example, they were proud that their views and opinions mattered when decisions were made about the games that could be played outside on the playground.
- The school employs a good range of strategies to support pupils who, at times, present challenging behaviour. The pastoral team and school counsellor provide good support to pupils who need it. They help to ensure that all pupils arrive in class ready to learn.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Parents agree with this view and believe their children are safe, happy and well cared for.
- Pupils also feel safe and secure in school and appreciate that staff work hard to keep it that way. They point to the litter free site and the school-wide security.
- Pupils and parents agree that bullying of all types, including when using the internet, is rare and that any concerns are sorted out quickly.
- Attendance is above average and pupils arrive promptly. The school's breakfast and after-school clubs are well run. They provide good-quality care enabling pupils to enjoy a calm start and end to their school day.

The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership and is ambitious for the school. Since being appointed to the post, she has quickly identified, through an accurate review of strengths and weaknesses, what needs to be done to improve the school still further.
- She is well supported by other school leaders and governors and together they have acted decisively to secure the necessary improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and teachers know that they are accountable for this. For example, a slight dip in pupils' reading scores has been swiftly addressed by deploying additional staff in Key Stage 2. This has already had a positive impact on pupils' reading levels.
- There is good care and support for groups of pupils who are at risk of not doing as well as they should. For example, school leaders have recognised that some of the most able pupils could be

reaching higher levels. Steps taken to address this are paying dividends, with more challenging work being introduced where necessary. It illustrates the way that everyone's needs in the school are respected and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

- Rigorous checks on the school's work by senior leaders, together with a well-planned programme of staff development, are firmly in place. There is good quality monitoring of teaching and the overall performance of teachers. Staff pay awards and performance-management targets are closely linked to pupils' achievements.
- Middle leaders work well as a team and share best practice. As a result a culture of good teaching and behaviour flourishes across the school.
- The curriculum is well planned and there is an appropriate focus on developing skills in literacy and numeracy. These are linked well with other subjects so that pupils have good opportunities to use and apply the skills that they have learned.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively across the curriculum. Pupils take part in a wide range of extra activities and visits, which enrich their learning experiences. They have good opportunities to discuss moral values such as respect and trust for one another and to reflect on how their actions can affect others.
- The school makes good use of the primary sports funding to extend the range of sports that are offered in the school and to provide training for staff. Pupils are enthusiastic about the extra competitions they now take part in and explain that the additional sports coaches that visit the school are 'making us fitter' and 'better at games'.
- The local authority regards the school as one in need of only 'light touch' support. Nevertheless, the skilled support given has helped to improve the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet all requirements. Records are carefully maintained and first-aid and child-protection arrangements are up to date.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well-organised and knowledgeable. Governors are proud of the school's role within the community and of the 'team spirit' which exists in the school. They are fully informed about the school's performance. Governors receive detailed information about the quality of teaching and individual governors make regular visits to gain first-hand views of the life of the school. Consequently, governors have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This information is used very effectively to hold school leaders to account through performance targets that are set for the headteacher and other school staff.
 - Governors keep a careful watch on all budget-related matters. In particular, they scrutinise the achievement of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. They also check on the spending of the primary sport funding and the impact of both of these funds on pupils' learning. The governing body takes it duty to ensure that pupils are kept safe very seriously. They fulfil all their statutory responsibilities and make sure that safeguarding arrangements are checked regularly.

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	111176
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	444228

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	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Owens
Headteacher	Mrs Janette Gregg
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2010
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