

Sound and District Primary School

Whitchurch Road, Sound, Nantwich, Cheshire, CW5 8AE

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.

- All pupils achieve well. Standards in reading and mathematics are well above average and standards in writing have returned to well above average after a severe dip in 2013.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in art, information and communication technology and physical education. Pupils in all classes make good progress, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Pupils are well taught. They enjoy their learning because activities inspire, challenge and interest them.
- Pupils and parents agree that the school is a safe and exciting place to learn. Relationships are excellent and the family atmosphere is evident across the entire school. Behaviour is good. Attendance is high.
- Pupils' health and well-being is very well promoted through numerous sporting and physical fitness activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Leaders, including governors, responded promptly and effectively to a dip in standards in writing in 2013 and have successfully driven rapid improvements in teaching and achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- One of the reasons that standards in writing dipped in 2013 was that not enough emphasis was placed on accuracy in the basic skills of writing. This is still sometimes the case.
- Pupils' achievement in phonics (learning letters and the sounds they make) is not consistently good.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons taught by five teachers and several teaching assistants. Two of these were joint observations with the headteacher. She listened to pupils read, scrutinised the work in pupils' books and discussed their work with them and attended one school assembly.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, staff, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at information on pupils' progress, teaching, planning and how these are checked by senior leaders and governors. The school's records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance were reviewed.
- The inspector took account of 30 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), letters written during the inspection and the comments of parents bringing their children to school.
- The views of staff were gained from informal discussions and scrutiny of the 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. All pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to the pupil premium (additional funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is just above average; the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is a little below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection a new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2013. There have been a number of staffing changes and a new Year 3 teacher took up his post only two days before the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching and so raise achievement across the school by:
 - ensuring that the teaching of letters and sounds for Key Stage 1 pupils is more effective, especially in building up skills from session to session
 - further embed the strategies in place to improve writing by checking that the focus on writing imaginatively is not at the expense of accurate spelling and punctuation.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Class sizes are small and so results fluctuate considerably from year-to-year. Standards at the end of Year 6 were well above average in 2012. In the 2013 national tests, standards were average in mathematics, well above in reading and well below average in writing. Currently, progress from their starting points is good throughout the school and standards are well above average in all subjects, as seen in the impressive work in pupils' books and the school's tracking of the progress of all pupils.
- Children start school usually with skills that are typical for their age but sometimes lower. They make good progress in the Reception class, particularly in developing self-confidence, creative work, role play and early writing. Children are usually well prepared for the start of Year 1.
- Progress in Key Stage 1 is good and attainment is average and rising.
- Pupils of all ages enjoy reading. In the screening check in phonics (letters and their sounds) in Year 1, pupils attained below national averages. Pupils do not always follow up each day's learning. However, overall pupils make good progress in reading as they move through school. Most enjoy reading and read regularly. Older pupils share ideas and recommend books to each other. They explain why they often prefer a book to a film: 'Because you use your own imagination.' Pupils use their skills well to research as well as for pleasure.
- Progress in mathematics is increasingly rapidly because pupils respond well to the focus on mental arithmetic as well as more complex problem-solving challenges. Pupils rise to the challenge of quick-fire questions and answers and a spirit of friendly competition. One parent wrote that he is sometimes 'stunned' by his son's progress in mathematics. Attainment in the current Year 6 is high because several pupils are working at the highest Level 6.
- Progress in writing in 2012 was good. However, in 2013, there was a serious dip and pupils did not make enough progress. Swift actions taken by leaders and teachers have turned this around rapidly. Teachers recognised that they were not giving pupils enough opportunities to write at length. This year the school day starts a little earlier, assembly has moved to the afternoon and more time is given to writing sessions. The pupils' response has been good, so that all pupils are on track to achieve well. Pupils enjoy weekly 'extreme writing' sessions in which they plan and produce a piece of good quality writing at the end of each week, as well as daily work on grammar, punctuation and spelling. Sometimes, though, pupils do not check their work sufficiently to make sure that writing is accurate and grammatically correct.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported by class teachers and teaching assistants so that they make the same progress as other pupils. Sometimes they have small group sessions, which give them extra practise in tasks they might find difficult so that they have more confidence when they rejoin their class.
- The number of pupils known to be entitled to receive pupil premium funding is very small in this school. The funds are used in different ways each year to provide whatever support the school feels will best help individual pupils. Over time these pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, have achieved as well as other pupils and sometimes better. There are insufficient numbers to report on their overall attainment.
- The most able pupils make good progress overall. They achieved especially well in reading in 2013 national assessments. The proportion of Year 6 pupils on track to reach the higher levels at the end of this year is high in reading, writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The work in pupils' books, the school's progress data and discussions with pupils and parents all show that teaching over time is good and is improving. Pupils say they feel well prepared for the next stage of their education and have enjoyed attending a small school.

- Pupils respond with enthusiasm to the many different challenges prepared for them each day. In English lessons, Reception and Year 1 pupils were learning how to write instructions by working out the ingredients for witches spells and then explaining how they should be mixed. In Years 4 and 5 pupils were learning how to write effective notes to follow up their internet research on the wonders of the world. Year 6 pupils were challenged to write as many different types of sentences as possible but still produce a coherent, lively piece of writing. Such challenges ensures that learning is inspiring, challenging and interesting and so promotes good progress.
- Pupils' work in their writing books shows good attention given to writing in a variety of different styles. However, sometimes in Key Stage 1 the focus on writing imaginatively takes over at the expense of ensuring accuracy in spelling and grammar.
- Teaching of mathematics is effective and pupils rise to the challenges they are set. Years 5 and 6 pupils were looking at conjectures and counter examples, working out their own theories and using accurate mathematical language. Activities promote the application of skills to solve problems. Year 4 and 5 were working on designing treasure maps with accurate directions and in Year 3 pupils were busy solving two-step word problems.
- Reading is taught effectively with a focus on reading for fun and enjoyment. Older pupils especially have an impressive knowledge of different books. Daily sessions each morning for pupils in Reception and Years 1 and 2 develop their understanding of letters and the sounds they make. These sessions introduce pupils successfully to new sounds but sometimes new work is not consolidated or practised enough before pupils move on.
- Information about pupils' progress is used well to provide tasks designed to address weaker areas and to ensure that pupils of all abilities make the best progress.
- Lively discussions are a daily feature resulting in pupils who can speak with confidence, explaining ideas or defending viewpoints.
- Pupils' research skills are fostered by half-termly topics studied in depth. This term Years 5 and 6 are researching the Titanic disaster. Their imagined diaries of different types of passengers and crew members are impressive. Displayed work for the Year 4 and 5 topic on the Second World War includes some wonderful ballet dresses improvised out of transparent polythene bags.
- Teaching assistants make a tremendous contribution to the success of pupils' learning. They provide high-quality support, sometimes for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and sometimes for high-ability pupils working on specific challenges.
- Marking is exemplary, particularly in English and mathematics. A new policy is in place which ensures that all teachers mark to the same high standard. Work is checked thoroughly and praise given when it is merited. Advice on how to do even better is given and new challenges set. Pupils respond with alacrity, completing corrections or redrafting their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The site is extremely well managed and secure and all safeguarding procedures are followed robustly.
- The very positive attitude to learning displayed by nearly all pupils is one reason why their progress is good and why they enjoy school. Pupils are very individual in their outlook and have some wonderfully unconventional opinions and attitudes.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Relationships in the school between all adults and pupils are positive and support the school's values and beliefs. Children are nurtured so that they can do their best. The enjoyment pupils have at school is reflected in the fact that attendance is above average.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because playtimes can occasionally be boisterous. Pupils themselves say that they think behaviour at playtime 'could be a bit better'.
- Pupils say that bullying does not happen. If it did, they know it would be dealt with at once by adults. They identify some name-calling in the playground but this is silly nicknames and never said with the intention of hurting someone's feelings. All pupils spoken to were adamant that

racist or homophobic language is never used. The school has a family atmosphere in which adults and pupils treat each other with affection and respect.

- Pupils have a keen understanding of rules for internet safety.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about the extra sports such as fencing, tag-rugby and orienteering which they can enjoy before school each morning. Comments include, 'Having fun in the morning makes me more ready to learn.' and 'It has helped me run more regularly so I can become fitter.' and 'It makes me excited to come to school.'
- Older pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities such as membership of the school council, managing games at break times and taking part in interview panels for new staff.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has managed the school well during a period of considerable staffing changes. The deputy headteacher leads the development of teaching with energy and enthusiasm and, together with the headteacher, sets the highest expectations for what can be achieved. They are innovative in their approach and constantly searching for ways to develop and improve their school.
- Leaders have a very clear idea of how successful the school can be. Expectations are high and response to any concerns prompt and effective. This was very evident after the set back in writing in 2013. In addition to giving more time for writing, they brought in outside expertise and responded to good advice. All staff have had additional training in literacy techniques, best writing is displayed around the school, higher expectations are set for what pupils can achieve and full use is made of the extensive outdoor areas and includes drama sessions. This response has reaped rewards in improved standards although the attention given to pupils' skills has in some cases lost sufficient focus.
- The drive to improve teaching has been vigorous. The checking on the quality of teaching is strong and staff are clear about which aspects to improve. Only a few issues need attention, such as teaching phonics to ensure pupils recall prior learning. Teachers and teaching assistants work together to support each other and focus all their activities on giving pupils the best experience of school.
- A more rigorous system has been put in place to check pupils' progress in all subjects more frequently so that staff are aware much sooner if pupils are in danger of underachieving. As a result, equal opportunities are fully promoted.
- Teachers know they are accountable to school leaders and governors if pupils in their care do not make good progress. Salary progression is firmly linked to pupils' achievement.
- All staff have a leadership role in this small school. The skills of the subject leader for literacy have been improved through working with an outstanding local school. Subject leaders are now more effective. They are clear about future actions because they have been given extra time to observe good practice and check on the quality of their subject areas through observation of teaching and reviewing work in pupils' books.
- The school promotes pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the example set by adults, the sense of belonging to a family and numerous opportunities to reflect and consider. Assemblies are especially a time for thoughtful contemplation and sharing. Pupils' cultural development is evident in their enjoyment of music, learning French and the quality of their art work. The pupils have links with schools in Singapore, Cyprus, Wales and Turkey, as well as sharing expeditions to London and other visits with another small village primary nearby.
- The additional funding provided through the pupil premium is used to good effect to promote the learning of individual pupils. The money is used in various ways such as providing one-to-one sessions, to ensure pupils can take part in outings and other activities and sometimes for school uniform.
- The primary sports funding is used to add new sports clubs for pupils and to train staff so that these can continue when the funding is no longer available. The impact is seen in pupils'

developing fitness and confidence, more pupils taking part in sporting activity and better enjoyment of school.

- The great majority of parents are fully supportive of the school. They speak with enthusiasm of the progress their children make and say that the school nurtures, as well as educates.
- The local authority has provided good support when the school needs it.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school well and so were dismayed when the results dipped in writing last year. They reacted promptly and reviewed and changed the way they monitored the school. They have sought advice from the school improvement partner and a nearby outstanding school. The result is that they now review data more closely and have half-termly updates on the progress of all pupils. They are more informed about the quality of teaching and teachers are held to account for the progress their pupils make. Governors understand the data on pupils' progress in greater detail so that they are able to compare the school's performance with that of others. They are rigorous in making sure all pupils have the same opportunities to succeed. Checks on spending are thorough and pay progression is closely linked to successful outcomes for pupils. Governors ensure that arrangements for safeguarding pupils are met. The governors have learned from recent experience and know that the school is now in a strong position to do even better.

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	111074
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	444146

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	114
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Balaam
Headteacher	Jo Grundy
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2010
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