

The Arches Community Primary School

Saughall Road, Blacon, Chester, Cheshire, CH1 5EZ

Inspection dates 20-21 May 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.

- Actions since the last inspection have led to better progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and improved attendance.
- From very low starting points, children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in early reading.
- In Key Stage 1, more pupils are now attaining average standards than in previous years.
- In Key Stage 2, in 2013, the proportions of pupils making better than expected progress in mathematics and reading were above average. Attainment is above average in mathematics and broadly average in reading.
- The gap in attainment between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and non-eligible pupils is narrowing.
- Teaching is generally good with significant examples of outstanding teaching.
- Processes for tracking pupils' progress have been particularly effective in raising standards in reading.
- Behaviour is outstanding.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding
- Pupils feel safe and the school's positive environment supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The acting headteacher, supported by the permanent headteacher, has continued to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The school is well supported and held to account by an effective governing body.
- Parents say the school provides a good education for their children.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in mathematics is not as strong as it is in reading and writing.
- In Key Stage 2 in 2013, the proportion of pupils' making better than expected progress in writing was below average.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage the activities provided in classroom and outdoor area do not always support the development of children's literacy skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, one of which was observed jointly with the permanent headteacher who requested her full involvement in the inspection process. In addition, a number of other lessons were visited to look at the quality of provision for pupils of different abilities.
- Meetings were held with four groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, temporary senior and middle leaders, groups of staff, a representative of the local authority and - at the request of the permanent headteacher - an external consultant who had been advising the school and a group of parents.
- Inspectors took account of 19 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as the results from the school's own survey of parents' views. Two written communications and one e-mail from parents were also considered.
- There were 21 staff questionnaires returned and considered by the inspection team.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including examples of pupils' work, the school's own information on pupils' attainment and progress, records of attendance and behaviour, and information about safeguarding, school planning and performance management.

Inspection team

Prydwen Elfed-Owens, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Shutt	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Arches Community Primary School is smaller than most primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well-above average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding to support the performance of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action or school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is well above the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are low.
- There is a breakfast club and an after-school club, both of which are community run. These provisions are inspected separately. Reports for these provisions can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.
- Because the headteacher and three other key teachers are on maternity leave, other members of staff have taken on temporary responsibilities. All intend to return to their posts at the end of the summer term, 2014.
- The acting headteacher took up her post in April 2014.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage further so that all children make even better progress in the development of literacy skills, by:
 - improving the activities provided in the classroom and outdoor area to make the most of opportunities to support the development of children's literacy skills.
- Improve the quality of teaching of mathematics in Key Stage 1 and, thereby, pupils' progress by making sure that:
 - work provides the right amount of challenge for pupils of all ability
 - more opportunities are provided for pupils to practise mathematical skills in different subjects.
- Raise pupils' attainment in writing, particularly in Key Stage 2, by sharing the outstanding teaching practice that is evident in some classrooms.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been inconsistent since the last inspection. However, pupils' current work and the school's own data show a marked improvement at every key stage.
- From very low starting points, children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers place a strong emphasis on phonics (letters and the sounds they make) within well-planned and purposeful activities; consequently, children are confident and are now well prepared for entry to Year 1.
- In Key Stage 1, in 2013, standards were below average in reading and writing but significantly below average in mathematics. However, pupils continue to make good progress and, currently, more pupils are now reaching higher standards than in the past. Even so, their progress in mathematics is still not as strong as it is in reading and writing, and pupils' numerical and mental arithmetic skills in Key Stage 1 remain below average.
- Progress in Key Stage 2 accelerates and, by Year 6, pupils develop well to reach above-average standards in mathematics. In 2013, Key Stage 2 pupils also achieved well in English grammar punctuation and spelling although their attainment in writing was below average.
- The proportion of pupils in Key Stage 2 making more than expected progress in writing in 2013 was below average.
- Girls do better in mathematics, reading, writing and English than boys; however, leaders are working successfully to close these gender gaps.
- Pupils' attainment in reading has risen noticeably over the last year because of the high profile given to a new strategy for improvement which includes a strong and effective link with parents. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1, pupils' understanding of phonics has improved significantly. In Key Stage 2, pupils often read on their own and with fluency, as a result of the school's specific strategies to ensure pupils' enjoyment of reading and the purchase of a wide range of appealing fiction and non-fiction books.
- Pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, also make good progress across the school. They compare well with national averages and the gap between their attainment in English and mathematics and that of other pupils in the school is narrowing.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress in mathematics, and compare well with national averages. In national assessments and tests in 2013, their attainment is slightly below that of their peers in English. This indicates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all, though there is more to be done to narrow gaps between groups of pupils.
- By Key Stage 2, the most able pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 in Key Stage 2 has increased in 2013.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. However, because the headteacher and three other key teachers are on maternity leave, less-experienced teachers have taken on temporary class responsibilities and this accounts for some of the inconsistency in the quality of teaching overall.
- Work in pupils' books, the outcomes of the school's checks and the activities observed during the inspection confirm that the impact of teaching over time is good overall. There are significant examples of outstanding teaching particularly at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Key Stage 2.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage too little attention is given to ensuring that the classroom and outdoor area continuously support the development of children's literacy skills. Children are not always provided with the help they need to succeed in their writing tasks.

- The school's new process for tracking pupils' progress is thorough and effective. Emerging problems with progress are identified quickly and effective action is taken, including interventions, to raise standards in reading and mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Most teachers have high expectations of their pupils. For instance, in Year 2, pupils were engrossed in planning a plethora of activities for pupils to engage in to research their chosen area of study on buildings and architecture. In Year 3, pupils were led skilfully to write very impressive letters of complaint following 'bite-sized' teaching steps and fun preparatory activities. Then in Year 6, pupils of all abilities were supported with useful pointers for success and a helpful bank of words and phrases to reach higher-than-expected standards in persuasive writing.
- However, this high quality is not found in all teaching. As a result, pupils' progress in mathematics at Key Stage 1 and in writing at Key Stage 2 has varied over time. In Key Stage 1 mathematics, for example, pupils do not always get enough opportunities to practise their skills in different subjects and, just occasionally, some work does not provide appropriate challenge.
- Overall, there is a key focus in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 on ensuring that pupils accurately recognise and sound out new vocabulary and so develop into confident and enthusiastic readers.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. A wide range of resources, including displays, books, interesting artefacts and interactive technology help make learning absorbing for pupils.
- Key Stage 1 pupils develop their thinking and independence through opportunities to choose from the 'Busy Time Menu' or 'Busy Bee Challenge', for instance, pupils were asked to, 'Read a non-fiction book and tell me something you have learnt'.
- Imaginative and well-planned activities promote pupils' positive attitudes to work. This means that pupils are fully involved and make good progress. Throughout the school, pupils are encouraged to support one another and share ideas in pairs.
- Learning support assistants are deployed very well to support pupils' specific learning needs identified through the school's effective half-termly progress meetings.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Relationships between pupils and adults are founded on warmth and mutual respect. Older pupils are polite, well mannered and very welcoming to visitors. This was always the case with all pupils when engaged in conversation and in groups discussing their views.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and they say that good behaviour is typical of their school. This is confirmed by their improved attendance and punctuality, by school records and parents' views in response to the online questionnaire.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils have a very good awareness of how to keep safe, for example, in relation to e-safety, road and water safety. They say that they feel very safe and happy in school. Parents' views confirm this and pupils' good attendance is further testament to this.
- Pupils feel well cared for and respected by all the adults, and know they can go to anyone should they need help or have or have any concerns.
- Pupils are eager to learn. They are enthusiastic learners and bring effort to their work. Pupils were unanimous in their praise of 'fun activities', 'cooking lessons', 'work in maths and writing' and 'smiley faces when we do well'.
- During the past year, the most able pupils say that they have shown significantly more enjoyment of reading and writing.
- Pupils listen well to one another. Most are well involved in their tasks and enthusiastic in their learning.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Staff consistently celebrate improvements and accentuate positive elements. This aspect is a strength

of the school.

The leadership and management are good

- During 2013/2014, three-quarters of the school's key leaders have been absent. The acting headteacher, supported by the headteacher on leave, senior leaders and the governing body have ensured that despite the temporary staffing arrangements, the school continues to move forward as the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement improve.
- The staff and the governing body are dedicated to the school and to accelerating the learning of pupils of all abilities still further. Consequently, the school's overall effectiveness remains good, as judged at the time of the previous inspection.
- Staff are supportive of leaders' aims and they work together effectively as a team. As a result standards continue to rise.
- The outcomes of the school's checks on the quality of teaching and on pupils' achievement are thorough and used effectively to shape the school's improvement. This includes identifying the most and less able pupils in aspects of reading, writing and mathematics and providing well-matched additional challenge or support sessions for them to enable them to reach their potential. One parent wrote of her daughter's provision, 'We are very grateful to the school for challenging her daily and keeping her focused. Work is being brought in from other school years to stimulate her.'
- Through half-termly progress meetings, senior leaders work together effectively to support pupils to reach their potential.
- The proportion of good teaching has increased considerably since the last inspection. This has been due to clear communication from senior leaders promoting higher expectations and clear feedback following lesson observations.
- Arrangements to check the performance of staff are tightly linked to the school's priorities, such as an increase in the proportion of the most able pupils achieving the highest possible standards.
- The training, development and deployment of all teachers and learning support assistants are linked to these priorities and better quality resources have been provided to support learning, especially in reading.
- Consequently, most teachers have higher expectations of pupils, especially at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Years 5/6, and set them challenging tasks. This is speeding up pupils' learning well.
- The broad and rich range of subjects studied ensures that pupils enjoy a variety of first-hand experiences, which effectively stimulate their enjoyment of learning, such as out-of-school visits and visitors into the school.
- The primary school sport funding, for promoting pupils' greater participation in sport, is used well to coordinate a competitive sporting calendar, and provide an intensive swimming programme and physical education health checks.
- The local authority considers the school has improved significantly and is confident that the school is able to maintain its trend of improvement with minimal external support.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is effective and very committed to the school. Governors contribute to the life and work of the school and have a very good understanding of pupils' progress. They provide good challenge to leaders and methodically hold the school to account. There are a number of examples where this has influenced pupils' achievement very positively, for instance, in good succession planning to ensure that existing staff have been able to take acting positions with confidence.
 - Governors participate fully in checks on the school's performance, including reviewing the school's performance against national data. The governing body is fully aware of the impact of the pupil premium funding on the progress of pupils who are eligible for support. Governors are well aware that pupils' participation and enjoyment in sporting activities are increasing, as a result of the opportunities provided by the primary school sport funding.

- Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures meet requirements.

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	134897
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	444337

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	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Jones
Headteacher	Michelle Ashfield
Acting Headteacher	Sue Wilkins
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2010
Telephone number	01244 981744
Fax number	01244 370277
Email address	admin@thearches.cheshire.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

