

The District CofE Primary School

Patterson Street, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside, WA12 9PZ

Inspection dates 4–5 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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 Year 6 are below average and too few pupils reach the higher levels of attainment.
- Progress over time and 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.
- Teachers do not always have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils, particularly the most able, can achieve and how quickly they can learn.
- The basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are not taught consistently well as pupils move up the school. They are not developed well in other subjects.
- Marking is variable in quality. Pupils do not always know what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to write at length in literacy lessons or in other subjects.
- Subject leaders' skills in checking on pupils' learning are not yet fully developed.
- Senior and middle leaders' checks on the impact of their actions are not linked well enough to the rates of progress made by pupils.
- The supportive governors do not receive enough information about pupils' progress. This prevents them checking regularly enough that all groups of pupils are doing as well as they should.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils enjoy school. They feel safe and well cared for.
- Children make at least good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Progress has started to speed up and more pupils in the current classes are reaching the standards expected for their age.
- Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are good.
- The school is improving, owing to the strong leadership of the new headteacher and the determination of the governing body and staff. As a result, the proportion of good or better teaching is increasing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 lessons or parts of lessons.
- The inspectors also looked at examples of pupils' work and listened to pupils read. They observed the teaching of reading skills and talked to pupils about the books they have enjoyed and those that they were currently reading.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils and inspectors spoke to pupils about their work. Inspectors held meetings with six governors. They spoke to a representative of the local authority, the National Leader of Education who is working with the school and met with members of the school staff.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day and took account of 23 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own recent parent survey. Inspectors also took account of 18 responses to staff questionnaires completed during the inspection.
- Inspectors visited the after-school club. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including external reviews of the school's work, safeguarding documents, records of current standards and progress, the school's strategic plan and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance. Minutes from governing body meetings and reports produced by the headteacher were also considered.

Inspection team

Lyn Pender, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Additional Inspector

Antony Buckley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than most other primary schools. The number of pupils attending the school has risen since the last inspection.
- Most pupils are White British, with a small proportion of pupils from a range of other heritages and backgrounds. A very small minority of pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. This proportion is continuing to rise.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well above average. A below-average proportion of pupils is supported at school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through pupil-premium funding is high when compared to the national average. This additional funding is provided for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- A higher-than-average proportion of pupils joins and leaves the school at other than the usual times.
- The rate of exclusions is above that of similar schools.
- A very small minority of pupils only occasionally attend off-site inclusion provision provided by the local authority.
- A new headteacher was appointed in January 2013. The school has continued to experience some turbulence in staffing in Key Stage 2 classes since the last inspection. A head of safeguarding was appointed recently to lead the pastoral team.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs are provided by the school for pupils.
- The school is supported by a National Leader of Education who is the headteacher of the local St Mary's and St Thomas' CE School. The school works closely with the local teaching school alliance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is good or better, so that pupils make consistently good or better progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers have higher expectations and pupils, particularly the most able, are provided with work at the right level of challenge
 - pupils are encouraged to extend the range and quality of their writing, by producing longer pieces of work and writing more in literacy lessons and in different subjects
 - all teachers' marking provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve
 - numeracy and literacy skills, including spelling, punctuation and handwriting, are taught effectively in other subjects and are built on appropriately as pupils move up the school.
- Strengthen leadership and management further by ensuring that:
 - subject leaders have the skills to check effectively on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and use the information gathered to increase the rate of pupils' progress
 - senior and middle leaders' checks on the impact of actions taken are closely linked to rates of pupils' progress
 - governors are provided with at least termly summaries of how well all groups of pupils are

doing, including those supported by the pupil premium, so that they are better informed and can hold leaders fully to account.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because the progress made by pupils between Y1 and Y6 is uneven. Over time, too few pupils reach the national standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Some weaker teaching in the past has had a negative impact on pupils' progress. Basic literacy and numeracy skills, particularly in Key Stage 2, have not always been built on as pupils move from class to class. The new headteacher and staff are tackling this issue, but gaps in pupils' knowledge are still to be overcome securely. More stable staffing, improved teaching and better use of information about pupils' progress is starting to help current pupils make faster progress from their starting points. However, some teaching still requires improvement and this is preventing progress from being even more rapid.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 was below the national average in 2013. Too few pupils made the progress expected of them as they moved through Key Stage 2 and very few did better than this. Although attainment in reading, writing and mathematics of current pupils remains below that expected for their age, more pupils are working at the level expected of them and a few more are doing better than this.
- Given their starting points and abilities, pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs make similar progress to that of their peers. The very few pupils who, on occasion, attend the off-site provision for short periods also make similar progress to that of other pupils in the school.
- Pupils who start at different times during the school year, many of whom enter the school working at below average levels, and the few who speak English as an additional language make at least similar progress to that of other pupils.
- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill levels well below those typical for their age. Consistently good teaching ensures that children make at least good progress. They enter Year 1 with skills much closer to the national average in most areas, although reading and writing skills are still a little lower than those typical for their age.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 have been consistently in line with the national average for a number of years.
- As a result of good teaching in Year 1, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the screening check in phonics (knowing letters and the sounds they make) in 2013 was higher than the national average. At the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment in reading is close to that expected for their age; however, at the end Year 6 reading is below the national average.
- At the end of Year 2 in 2013, the attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium improved and gaps between these pupils and the national average closed. The attainment of eligible pupils in Key Stage 2 also improved, but their attainment was still behind that of other pupils by at least a year. Extra support is helping current pupils supported by this funding make more rapid progress across the school and the gaps with their peers are closing.
- The most-able pupils are starting to make more rapid progress, but this is not yet consistently good across classes because work set is not always hard enough to ensure that they consistently make enough progress in lessons.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Inspectors' observations of teaching and a scrutiny of pupils' work, together with reviews of the quality of teaching by the headteacher and local authority, indicate that the school's determined focus on improving the quality of teaching is proving successful. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching requires improvement, particularly between Year 2 and Year 5, to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' progress sometimes slows because teachers' expectations are not always high enough,

particularly for the most able. Work does not stretch pupils sufficiently or move them on to harder work quickly enough.

- Teachers' knowledge of the subjects they are teaching is good. However, leaders are aware that the teaching of the basic skills in numeracy and literacy, including spelling, grammar and handwriting, are not built on consistently well as pupils move up the school.
- Where teachers' marking is most effective, pupils are given clear guidance about the next steps that they need to take to improve their work. However, the quality of guidance provided is not yet consistently good across the school.
- Most pupils say that they enjoy writing, particularly when working on their 'mighty write' projects. However, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve when writing in literacy lessons and at other times are sometimes too low. As a result, the amount of written work produced is sometimes limited. For example, the use of worksheets can, on occasion, limit the amount of writing pupils produce which slows the progress made, particularly by the most-able pupils.
- Teaching assistants are skilful at supporting pupils, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs. A few pupils who sometimes find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are helped to do so sensitively by adults. As a result, little disruption to learning occurs.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is consistently good. Imaginative and interesting activities are well-planned and promote the development of children's social and other skills effectively. They play and learn happily together. Children are fascinated by the garden they have helped to create in the outdoor area. They take great delight in showing visitors how well the plants they have planted are growing.
- Consistently strong teaching is evident throughout Year 6. Pupils show great perseverance because of the challenging activities provided, which prompt deep thinking. For example, during the inspection pupils were working as 'apprentices' who had taken on the responsibility for planning all aspects of a music festival. During the lesson they worked on the catering requirements, skilfully calculating the amount of food required, but ensuring that the costs remained within their budget.
- New technology is used very effectively by pupils throughout the school. Displays and work provided by teachers include barcodes that pupils can use to visit websites where they can find out more about the topics being studied.
- The school recognises that pupils supported by the pupil premium funding have made less progress in Key Stage 2 than other pupils in the school. Careful deployment of this funding, for example, to provide smaller teaching groups and individual teaching has begun to close the gaps in reading, writing and mathematics with their peers.
- Across the school, warm relationships exist between pupils and adults. Effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants contributes well to pupils' learning, especially those who are disabled or have special educational needs and those pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are proud of their school. They are friendly and polite and generally behave well around school. Pupils who join the school at other than the normal time are made very welcome and are helped to settle down quickly.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school is a caring, happy place that addresses any concerns of pupils and parents quickly. Pupils feel safe and have a secure understanding of e-safety. They trust all adults in the school to look after them.
- Pupils usually behave well in lessons. They are keen to learn and cooperate well with teachers, enabling lessons to run smoothly. Where, on occasion, a few pupils find it difficult to manage their own behaviour, they are helped to do so calmly by the adults and little learning time is lost.
- Pupils say that behaviour is good and that bullying of any sort is 'not allowed'. If it does occur it

is dealt with quickly and firmly by the adults. Pupils like the way that they can always talk to an adult if they have any concerns. They particularly appreciate the 'worry boxes' used to share any concerns they have with the learning mentor. All are adamant that their worries are always followed up. Rules and rewards systems are understood by all. Pupils think these are applied fairly by the adults.

- Pupils play an active role in the life of the school, for example, as members of the student- and eco-councils or as members of the worship committee. Older pupils read with younger ones and act as play leaders on the playground.
- The number of pupils excluded from the school is slightly above that seen in other primary schools. However, school records show that staff work closely with parents and always follow the school's behaviour policy. Partnerships with the local authority and other agencies are well-established to provide additional support for pupils, including those who occasionally spend time attending off-site provision. Staff ensure that pupils are welcomed back to school and make sure no learning opportunities are lost.
- Attendance is average and continues to improve because the school has implemented an increasingly effective range of strategies to ensure that pupils attend regularly.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because, although improvements in teaching have been secured, there is still more to do to ensure consistently good or better teaching across the school.
- The headteacher is an effective leader, and ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has created a positive climate for improvement in the school. Staff morale is high and high staff absence rates seen in recent years have reduced significantly. A culture exists where leaders, governors and staff work together as a team, strongly committed to moving the school forward.
- Checks on the quality of teaching are more regular and rigorous, although not yet fully effective in resolving all weaknesses. Nevertheless, staff now share good practice and training is provided to improve skills, where needed.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance, but currently too much rests on the shoulders of the headteacher. The role of subject leaders, including those for English and mathematics, is not fully developed. The full effect of their actions is yet to be fully seen in improvements in standards and the quality of teaching. This is because checks on actions taken are not yet fully linked to the progress made by pupils. As a result, leaders are not yet fully clear about which actions are having the biggest impact on improving pupils' progress.
- Systems to check pupils' progress are in place; regular meetings are held to review how well pupils are doing. However, outcomes of these meetings are not yet shared with governors to enable them to hold leaders fully to account.
- The vast majority of parents say they feel well-informed about the school and about their children's progress. They describe the school as 'friendly and caring' and say staff are approachable and helpful.
- The curriculum brings subjects together in interesting topics and pupils say how much they enjoy their lessons. Visits, including residential trips, visitors and well attended, after-school activities, all add enrichment. However, staff do not yet plan enough opportunities for pupils to develop the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics across subjects.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is underpinned by the school's Christian ethos and is a strength. Pupils' musical and artistic talents are given many opportunities to blossom.
- The primary sport funding is used wisely to promote sport across the school and develop staff expertise. Activities are well attended and pupils try out lots of different sports and participate in a range of clubs that improve their fitness and well-being well.
- Breakfast and after-school clubs provided pupils with a wide range of enjoyable activities which capture their interests well. Parents and their children say how much they value the holiday

clubs which the school provides.

- Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements. The pastoral team has effective partnerships with agencies to support pupils and their families who might experience difficulties.
- The local authority has undertaken regular reviews of the school. Local authority officers support the school in securing short-term off-site provision for pupils who may need some extra help with learning to manage their own behaviour. The headteacher works closely with a National Leader of Education and the local teaching school alliance to share good practice and commission training for staff.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body understands that the school needs to improve rapidly. Regular training and visits to the school, which provide first-hand views of its performance, have helped governors to see how to challenge the school further. Governors have intensified their scrutiny of pupils' progress. They are provided with useful information about the quality of teaching. However, they do not currently receive the timely information gathered by leaders about the progress of all groups of pupils and the standards reached. This prevents governors holding leaders fully to account for achievement soon enough. The performance management of the headteacher is rigorous and teachers' salary progression is firmly linked to the progress made by pupils. Governors have a clear overview of the school's finances, including the primary school sport funding which is successfully promoting a more active and healthy lifestyle for pupils. Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements 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	104792
Local authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	442329

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	382
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Councillor Gareth Cross
Headteacher	Diane Bate
Date of previous school inspection	18 December 2012
Telephone number	01744 678250
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