

Wharton CofE Primary School

Greville Drive, Winsford, Cheshire, CW7 3EP

Inspection dates 18–19 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		Requires improvement	3
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

- Pupils' achievement over time has not been good enough.
- Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is inconsistent across the school because teaching does not always enable pupils to do well across all year groups. Tasks set are sometimes too easy, particularly for the most able pupils.
- By the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils making or exceeding the progress expected of them is below average, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils occasionally lose concentration when the work set does not provide an appropriate level of challenge.
- A few instances of poor behaviour in some lessons interrupt pupils' learning.
- Teachers' marking does not always tell pupils how they can improve their work, or make sure that, when advice is given, pupils follow this up quickly.
- Senior leaders and governors do not rigorously check and evaluate pupils' progress to ensure that all groups of pupils learn quickly. This is particularly so for the most able pupils and those supported through the pupil premium funding.
- Senior leaders and governors do not always ensure that improvement plans set out clear and well-focused actions to improve the quality of teaching and more rapidly raise pupils' achievement.
- Middle leaders are not always used effectively to support senior leaders and drive forward school improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are polite and are well mannered to each other and to visitors.
- Children get off to a good start in the Reception classes because teaching is good.
- Every pupil is equally valued. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are looked after well. This view is supported by the very large majority of parents.
- Senior leaders and the governing body are committed to improving the school further. They know the school's strengths and have identified the areas for further development. They have already been successful in improving some aspects of teaching.
- The curriculum contributes well to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 18 part-lessons. Inspectors also visited several classrooms to look closely at the work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, 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 attendance, behaviour and safeguarding and the school's data on pupils' progress.
- Inspectors talked with pupils and listened to some pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with staff and six members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the school's external consultant.
- The inspectors took account of the 43 responses from parents recorded in the online questionnaire (Parent View) and a letter from a parent. Inspectors also had informal conversations with some parents at the end of the school day.
- The inspectors took account of the 45 responses to the staff questionnaire provided by Ofsted.

Inspection team

Alan Parkinson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Paul Smith

Additional Inspector

Declan McCauley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Wharton CofE Primary School is much larger than the average sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is similar to the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above the national average. The proportion of those supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection, there have been several staff changes, including the restructuring of the school's leadership team that was completed in April 2013.
- The school is currently being supported by a National Leader of Education from the Cheshire School Teaching Alliance.
- The school accommodates a pre-school nursery and before- and after-school clubs for some pupils from the school. This provision is not managed by the school's governing body and is subject to a separate inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it consistently leads to good or better progress for all groups of pupils, and raise levels of attainment further, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - teachers' marking is consistently effective in driving rapid improvement in pupils' work
 - teachers expect more from pupils, particularly the most able
 - activities and work set provide all pupils with an appropriate level of challenge so that they are fully engaged in their learning and make at least good progress across all subjects
 - instances of poor behaviour during lessons are eliminated, so that pupils' learning can continue without interruption.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
 - making more effective use of the school's new systems to track and monitor pupils' progress in order to accelerate the progress of all groups of pupils across all subjects and year groups, especially the most able and those eligible for the pupil premium
 - ensuring that the school's plans for improvement set out clear actions to more rapidly improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement
 - further developing the role of middle leaders to enable them to make a more effective contribution to improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils do not make consistently good progress across the school.
- Although achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is improving, the improvement has not been rapid enough and by the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils making the progress expected of them, across Key Stage 2, in each subject remains below the national average.
- The progress made by pupils in mathematics, reading and writing varies across year groups. Progress slows across Years 3, 4 and 5 but accelerates in Year 6. This is because teaching has not been good enough in all classes to ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress across all year groups.
- At Key Stage 1, although attainment fell in 2013, there is an improving trend in pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Current school data show that pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2.
- Current school data show that the progress being made by the most able pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is inconsistent and is sometimes below that of other pupils. This is supported by the work seen in pupils' books that sometimes shows repetition of work and tasks that does not give an appropriate level of challenge to enable them to achieve well.
- Overall, the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below that of their classmates. However, the targeted support they receive from teaching assistants and other adults is leading to improving progress, particularly in reading at Key Stage 2.
- The majority of children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are slightly below those typically expected for their age. The good teaching in the Reception class enables children to learn well. By the end of the Reception Year, the majority of children have achieved a good level of development across all areas of learning.
- The whole-school reading programme is effectively helping to develop pupils' literacy skills well, particularly at Key Stage 1. Pupils make good use of their skills in phonics (linking letters to the sounds that they make) to help them read difficult words. This is helping to support pupils' learning across a range of subjects and topics.
- Pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning are given additional support. For example, one-to-one or small-group work supports those pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding. By the end of Year 6, the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is less than one term behind all other pupils in mathematics and reading and it is ahead of them in writing. This supports the school's aims of providing equal opportunities for learning and success for all pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it does not consistently help pupils to make good or better progress.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations. They do not always set tasks and activities that challenge pupils and enable all pupils to achieve well. As a result, learning slows because pupils, particularly the most able, sometimes spend too much time on work that is too easy for them to make good progress.
- Although teachers regularly mark pupils' work and use praise to encourage pupils, marking does not always provide pupils with clear and specific written comments on what they need to do to improve. When comments do tell pupils what they need to do, teachers do not always ensure that advice is quickly followed up by pupils which means that pupils' chances to quickly take learning further forward are missed.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, good teaching provides children with exciting activities that stimulate them so that they are actively engaged in their learning and make good progress. For

example, when they were learning about Victorian times, children clearly enjoyed their learning and talked confidently about things from the past and could explain what they were learning about. The outdoor area, where children have use of a wide range of equipment, is used well to support and extend their learning.

- Where pupils' learning and progress develop more rapidly, teachers use effective questioning to challenge and check pupils' understanding of the work. They provide opportunities for pupils to work well together, to share and develop ideas, and set work that pupils can relate to and which provides an appropriate level of challenge and captures their imagination. This helps to make learning enjoyable and effective. However, this does not happen consistently throughout the school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs learn well, for example, when teaching assistants help them to develop their skills by providing effective support that is well matched to their needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although pupils generally have positive attitudes towards learning, there are occasions when they lose concentration, particularly when the work set does not engage them fully.
- In a few lessons, there are instances when learning is interrupted because of some poor behaviour which is not managed effectively enough. Some pupils do not always pay attention or chatter and this distracts others and prevents all pupils from focusing on their work. As a result, they do not learn well enough.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. The relationships among pupils and between pupils and adults are good.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils behave sensibly and safely in the playground at breaks and are well supervised by staff. Pupils say they feel safe because they are well cared for by teachers and other adults. They understand how to keep themselves safe and learn about road safety, how to use the internet safely and about how far they can trust people. For example, during the inspection, Year 6 pupils were taking part in 'Bikeability', teaching them how to ride their bicycles safely on roads.
- The vast majority of pupils have a clear understanding of the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and they report that bullying is rare. Pupils say that, should any instances of bullying occur, they are quickly resolved.
- The responses to the parental survey (Parent View) indicates that a very large majority of parents agree that pupils behave well in school, that they are not bullied, that they are well cared for and that they feel safe at school. The large majority of parents would recommend this school to other parents.
- The school has made good use of the new primary school sport funding to provide additional sporting activities including, for example, fencing and street dance. As a result, more pupils now take part in physical activities and are developing new skills in a range of sports. In addition, specialists work alongside teachers to coach and develop teaching skills so that they can teach physical education well. This is contributing effectively to develop healthy lifestyles and physical well-being for pupils.
- The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop responsible attitudes, for example, by being members of the school council, or as 'Eco-Warriors'. Last year the 'Eco-Warriors' organised a 'Switch-Off Fortnight' to raise awareness of energy use and sustainable lifestyles. Pupils also work hard to help others by collecting food collections at Harvest, the Christmas Shoe Box appeal and by raising money for charities, such as Children in Need.
- The school's work to reduce the number of persistent absences and improve attendance has been effective. Attendance is in line with the national average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are not good enough over time. Actions to bring about improvement are not sufficiently focused on improving the quality of teaching in order to raise pupils' rates of progress rapidly.
- Middle leaders do not play a full enough part in supporting the headteacher to drive forward school improvement, especially in improving the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas.
- Senior leaders and the governing body do not use well enough the systems to check pupils' progress to ensure that all groups always make at least good progress. This includes, in particular, the most able pupils and those pupils supported through additional funding, such as the pupil premium.
- Although changes in staffing and improvements in staff training since the previous inspection have resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching, there is still more to be done to enable pupils to make consistently good progress.
- The headteacher is well supported by the new senior leadership team and together they demonstrate a good capacity to improve. They have accurately identified the school's strengths and areas for further development. Along with members of the governing body, they demonstrate a passion and commitment to improve provision for pupils and to raise standards further, particularly in mathematics, by improving the quality of teaching.
- Regular observations of lessons carried out by the senior leaders provide teachers with accurate feedback on their performance. This information about the quality of teaching is used well when providing training opportunities for staff and to advise the governing body about teachers' pay awards.
- The curriculum contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about other cultures and faiths through events such as 'One World Week'.
- The school has effective procedures in place to protect and support pupils, especially those pupils whose circumstances are likely to make them most vulnerable. The school has strengthened its partnership with parents through the effective work of the Family Support Worker and links with external organisations. This is having a significant impact.
- The school's safeguarding procedures and policies meet statutory requirements.
- The school has valued and benefited from the local authority's effective advice and support to improve the quality of teaching and learning and assessment processes.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and what needs to be done to improve it further. However, its members do not ensure that actions for improvement are clearly focused on rapidly improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They are well informed about the quality of teaching and give appropriate attention to the connection between the quality of staff's work and the arrangements for pay progression. The information they receive from the new senior leadership team, together with that from their own regular visits to the school, enables governors to provide support and challenge to the school. As a result, members are beginning to hold the school leaders to account for the school's performance. They demonstrate a firm commitment to ensuring that the quality of teaching improves and standards are raised further. They have a good understanding of the finances and have taken decisive action on staffing matters to address and avoid a significant deficit budget in the future. However, they do not rigorously monitor the use of the pupil premium funding to check on its impact on pupils' learning in order to ensure that it is being spent effectively.

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	135635
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	442429

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	385
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Duncan Fitzgibbons
Headteacher	Claire Spinks
Date of previous school inspection	11 September 2012
Telephone number	01606 288110
Fax number	01606 862550
Email address	admin@wharton.cheshire.sch.uk

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