

Horn's Mill Primary School

Denbigh Close, Helsby, Cheshire, WA6 0ED

Inspection dates

25–26 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Since the previous inspection, leaders at all levels have worked successfully to improve the quality of teaching and outcomes for all pupils. Consequently, this school is improving rapidly.
- From below typical starting points, pupils reach at least average standards by the end of Year 6. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in writing and mathematics is above average.
- Teaching is good across the school and in some areas it is outstanding.
- Provision for children in the early years is effective. They settle happily and make good progress.
- Behaviour is good and pupils feel safe at school. Warm and trusting relationships underpin the enjoyment of learning and pupils' sense of being secure and valued.
- Pupils enjoy many memorable learning experiences through a rich and inclusive curriculum. Everyone is included and respected. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have vigorously challenged the school to do even better.
- The headteacher has been highly effective in leading recent changes that have improved the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all pupils make rapid and sustained progress because teachers do not consistently apply the guidance in the new teaching and learning policy.
- Occasionally, pupils do not have enough opportunities to write during literacy lessons and to practise their writing and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Some subject leaders are new to their roles and are not yet fully involved in checking the quality of teaching or pupils' attainment.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited lessons in all year groups taught by seven teachers. She observed sessions where pupils were practising letters and sounds led by both teachers and teaching assistants. The inspector listened to pupils from Years 2 and 6 reading, met pupils at playtimes and attended an assembly.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, members of staff, a representative of the local authority, pupils and members of the governing body.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at development plans, records of pupils' progress, arrangements for safeguarding and arrangements relating to pay and performance of staff.
- The inspector looked at the work in pupils' books in all year groups in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science and topic work.
- The views of parents were gained from the 21 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own survey of 66 families in October 2014, from talking to parents at the start of the school day and from letters handed in to the school office by parents.
- The views of staff were gained from meetings and from a scrutiny of the 17 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Horn's Mill is much smaller than the average sized primary school.
- Children are taught in seven classes.
- The majority of pupils come from White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. A significant proportion of pupils are from Traveller communities.
- Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is average. the pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- 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 headteacher was appointed in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching even more and accelerate pupils', particularly in writing by:
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to write during literacy lessons
 - further extending the focus on teaching the basic skills of writing and ensuring skills in writing and mathematics are practised constantly across the curriculum
 - embedding the school's teaching and learning policy to ensure consistency in all classes.
- Further develop the skills of subject leaders who are new to the role by:
 - giving them more opportunities to check on teaching and learning
 - involving them fully in data analysis, tracking pupils' progress and checking school improvements.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Improvements since the previous inspection have been rapid. The strong leadership and drive of the deputy headteacher and the new headteacher have significantly improved teaching so that pupils' achievement is good. In a short time, the headteacher has managed the pace of change very effectively and created a tightly knit, harmonious community.
- The governing body and the headteacher have an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Planning to bring about change is precise and effective. The record of rapid improvement shows that leaders have a strong capacity to improve the school further.
- The tracking of pupils' progress is rigorous and effective. Staff routinely check that all pupils are on track to make good progress from their various starting points. Pupils who are falling behind are identified so additional support can be provided.
- The checks made on teaching and learning are rigorous so that teaching has improved since the previous inspection. There is more to do in ensuring that all teachers follow the new teaching and learning policy.
- Staff are set targets linked to their performance and the progress pupils make. They are well aware that salary progression is linked to pupils' success and their contribution to whole-school development.
- Subject leaders have successfully managed improvements in English and mathematics. However, the role of some subject leaders is not yet fully effective because some are newly in post and are still developing the necessary skills to check the success of their initiatives across the subject areas they lead.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well and this is reflected in the good progress of all groups of pupils and in the narrowing of the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school. Traveller pupils are welcomed into school and supported so that they can gain as much as possible from the time they attend.
- The school is forging a closer relationship with parents. Parents who responded to the school questionnaire and spoke with the inspector commented on how much the school has improved in recent months and how pleased they were with their children's progress. Parents are provided with help so that they know how to support their children's learning. For example, in the Reception class and Key Stage 1, parents are invited to join their children in tackling the daily learning challenges which are completed at the start of every day. This initiative is to be extended into Key Stage 2 in the near future.
- The curriculum is good. Subjects are taught in a way which promotes the important key skills but also allows for pupils to study themes in depth and undertake research. There are sometimes missed opportunities for pupils to practise literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Each class studies the work of an author each term. Topic work includes research in history, such as ancient Egypt and the Mayan civilisation, and science where Year 4 have done some interesting work on plants and animals this term.
- Effective use is made of the primary school sport funding. Pupils take part in many sporting activities and are very enthusiastic about the new equipment they have enjoyed, the many inter-school competitions set up by a sports coordinator and the wider range of sporting clubs available. The school also uses some of the funding to promote a gardening club to help pupils learn about the importance of healthy diet, as well as fitness.
- Pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They enjoy learning about Christian festivals and those of other faiths. For example, this term they took part in a musical presentation commemorating the First World War, 'Over By Christmas', a harvest festival service and a lantern walk at Chester Cathedral. Teachers have developed a 'values' theme in personal, social and health education which encourages pupils to think deeply. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- The local authority has provided good support for school leaders, teachers and governors which has helped them to evaluate their own effectiveness and improve many aspects of their work. The school has also benefited from the support of a National Leader of Education from a nearby outstanding school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are effective and ambitious and committed to ensuring the school improves further. They set high expectations for everyone, including themselves. Following the previous report, they commissioned a review of their work, undertook extra training and made closer links with different aspects of the school. As a result, they now have a very accurate knowledge of strengths and weaknesses. They know teaching is now good and analyse data to compare achievement in this school with the national picture. They check the pupil premium is used effectively and increases the progress of those eligible pupils. Governors fulfil their statutory duties well, including ensuring that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are effective in making pupils feel safe. They oversee finances effectively and check

that performance management systems link salary increases to success. Governors have a good range of expertise which enables them to check the work of the school rigorously. They have good links with parents and regularly visit the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils very much enjoy school and are very enthusiastic about their lessons and what they are learning. In class, they concentrate and work hard and listen with all their attention to what teachers are saying. Pupils take pride in their work and their books are neat and tidy.
- The working relationship between pupils and adults is excellent. Pupils say lessons are not disrupted by any bad behaviour. They respect their teachers and appreciate all the many interesting activities, trips and outings that are planned for them.
- Conduct around the school is orderly, friendly and well-mannered.
- Each class has produced its own class charter in which they decide what matters most and how they should behave. They are unique to each class. For example, Year 6 has decided that being role models and providing leadership are important, while the Year 2 charter is focused on listening, being friendly and trying hard. Year 4 have agreed not to use the words 'can't' or 'never' when talking about their work.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about the rewards system introduced by the headteacher, 'Mouse Mania'. At the beginning of the week each class decides how it would like to spend mouse mania time on a Friday enjoying films, sport, extra art, using computers etc. The length of time each class has to spend depends on good behaviour during the week. There is also an award in each class for the pupil who has made the most effort; this person is 'the big cheese'. The title 'mouse mania' comes from the fact that the school's logo is a windmill and is inspired by the song, 'There Once was a Windmill in Old Amsterdam'.
- The school council is effective so that pupils feel they are consulted on many aspects of school life.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Staff successfully create a very positive climate for learning where pupils feel valued and secure. Pupils are regularly consulted on when and where they feel safe and any insecurity is dealt with immediately. For example, pupils like the fact that there are now large school gates, which are locked during the day.
- Pupils insist that there is little or no bullying or name-calling relating to race or gender. They are well aware of rules for safety on the internet. They learn about the hazards of different types of drug and alcohol abuse and how to keep safe walking to and from school.
- Attendance is broadly average. The majority of pupils attend regularly.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers plan work for every ability level so that pupils make good progress, whatever their starting points. There is a good focus on pupils explaining their answers to deepen understanding. The daily learning challenge facing pupils as soon as they arrive at school sets the tone for the day.
- The teaching of letters and sounds to support early reading is highly effective. As a result, more pupils meet the expected standards at the end of Year 1 than is found nationally.
- Writing is taught well and displays across the school and effective use of dictionaries is widening pupils' knowledge of using a rich and varied vocabulary. This results in some imaginative and interesting writing. For example, Year 2 have built beautiful lighthouses and written book reviews about their favourite lighthouse story. Occasionally, pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise writing and record their ideas.
- The teaching of reading is successful. Staff put strong emphasis on the importance of reading. Guided reading sessions take place every morning, when pupils tackle an interesting variety of reading challenges in their reading response books. Class authors ensure that children research the author as well as reading the books. Teachers succeed in promoting a love of reading.
- The teaching of mathematics is very effective with a good focus on number work and on problem-solving. Teachers make work relevant by setting mathematical questions in real-life situations such as understanding bus timetables, reading football league tables, working out costs and ingredients for recipes

and checking whether sale bargains really are really bargains.

- The focus on individual needs ensures that disabled pupils and those who have special education needs, those who are gifted and talented and those who speak English as an additional language are supported effectively and progress well. Children from the Traveller community are welcomed into school and supported so that they have the opportunity to close any gaps in their skills and knowledge.
- Teaching assistants work with small groups and make a strong contribution to the progress of individual pupils.
- Marking has improved since the last inspection and is now exemplary. Mistakes are identified and good advice is given as to how pupils can improve their work. There are many examples in books of pupils responding to comments and adding to, or improving, their answers.
- Some inconsistencies in teaching remain because not all teachers follow the school's teaching and learning policy. For example, teachers do not always consistently develop pupils' mathematical and writing skills across other subjects.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Evidence in pupils' books and a review of records of pupils' progress show achievement has improved and is now good. The results of the Year 6 national tests in 2014 showed pupils made good progress reached average standards in reading, writing and mathematics from below average starting points at the end of Year 2. A higher proportion of pupils than is found nationally made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Provision has improved in the early years ensuring pupils have a more secure base for their learning when they start in Key Stage 1. Teaching is now effective in Key Stage 1 and pupils make good progress. At the end of Year 2, pupils reached the national standards in the 2014 national assessments. Data shows pupils currently in Year 2 are also working at the level expected for their age. This shows a marked improvement from 2013 when standards were significantly below average.
- The proportion of pupils in Year 1 reaching the nationally expected standard in the check made on their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) rose to well above average in 2014. This is as a result of better teaching and effective staff training. Pupils' skills in reading are rising. Pupils in Year 2 apply their skills to tackle new words and older pupils are more confident when researching for information because they are better equipped to make sense of the texts.
- Work in mathematics is secure. Pupils understand and use the language of mathematics well and have good mental arithmetic skills. The daily challenges are increasing skills in calculations and pupils are growing in confidence in using these skills.
- Although progress is good in writing, it is not as good as it is in reading and mathematics. Some pupils lack security in their basic skills and opportunities are missed for pupils to develop writing skills in other subject areas.
- The gap in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils is narrowing rapidly. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Key Stage 2 lagged behind other pupils in the school by 18 months in reading, 20 months in writing and 24 months in mathematics. Compared to other pupils nationally, they were behind by 18 months in reading, 12 months in writing and 22 months in mathematics. The gap has narrowed since the last inspection. Numbers of pupils are small in this school and so the difference can vary widely but it is clear that the overall progress of these pupils is good.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the same good progress as other pupils because they receive good support according to their individual needs. Some of these pupils achieved well above similar pupils nationally. This shows that the school fully meets the needs of these pupils.
- The most able pupils make good progress. They thrive because of the extra challenges provided by teachers and teaching assistants. The work in their books shows that they write confidently in different genres with some particularly impressive work about the plays of Shakespeare. This term they have researched unfamiliar words in Shakespeare's plays and written stories set in Tudor times. They are encouraged to use adventurous vocabulary and constantly challenged to refine and develop their work.

The early years provision

is good

- Most children start in the Reception Year with skills below those typical for their age. They settle quickly into the stimulating and enticing environment and make good progress in all areas of learning. The school

now has good links with a Nursery which shares the same site and so children are familiar with the school and the staff before they start. By the end of the Reception Year children make good progress and are increasingly prepared for learning when they start in Year 1.

- Children's attitudes to learning are very positive. They work and play well together and maintain concentration for long periods of time. They respect each other, adults and the learning environment. During the inspection, they enjoyed weaving their own stories around a village they had built in the construction area and were listening carefully to each other.
- Teaching is good because adults encourage learning by asking questions and ensuring children explain and develop their answers fully. Children are confident because they like and trust the adults.
- Teachers put a strong emphasis on the importance of language skills and encourage plenty of role play where children can explore different use of words. The role play areas this term are a baby clinic and a puppet theatre and are proving to be very popular.
- Adults constantly assess children's progress and build up a file of photographs, examples of their learning and identify the next steps for each child. This ensures the needs of the differing abilities are fully met.
- Children feel safe and well cared for in the early years and parents are confident that their children are well looked after. All welfare requirements are fully met.
- Leadership of the early years is good. Leaders are well aware that opportunities for learning outdoors are limited by the lack of space and a suitable covered area. Despite this, they ensure that good use is made of the space and resources available and that plans are in place to develop the outdoor learning environment as soon as funds allow.

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	111129
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	432112

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	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Dobson
Headteacher	Sharon Wyatt
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2013
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