

Dodleston CofE Primary School

Church Road, Dodleston, Chester, Cheshire, CH4 9NG

Inspection dates 25–26 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- The headteacher has identified quickly the key areas for improvement; as a result the quality of teaching and levels of attendance have improved. She has a strong vision for continued improvement which is shared by staff and governors.
- Children start school with skills which vary year on year. They make good progress from their different starting points because activities interest them.
- In each year group, most pupils make good progress. This includes the very small numbers of pupils who have special educational needs or who are disadvantaged.
- The quality of teaching is good. Pupils enjoy activities which interest them and these are usually matched well to their different needs.
- Behaviour is good and pupils say they feel safe. They say that because the school is small, it is more like a family and everyone is friendly. Pupils enjoy school. Pupils enjoy learning and their attitudes to their work are positive. Staff make good links with different areas of the curriculum and pupils enjoy the topics they cover.
- The school makes good use of both its own facilities and that of the village to develop pupils' learning, particularly through the increasingly wide range of sporting opportunities they enjoy.
- Governors are well-informed, have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development for the school and have a firm focus on driving forward improvements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching does not yet result in pupils making outstanding progress.
- Work is not always hard enough for some pupils, particularly the most able.
- Good practice in marking is not yet consistent across all classes or subjects and pupils do not always have time to respond to this.
- Pupils do not always use their knowledge of grammar, spelling and punctuation in their written work in all subjects.
- Subject leaders do not yet use all the information available to plan accurately for improvements and to check on their success.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed a number of lessons, some of which were carried out jointly with the headteacher. The inspector and headteacher also looked together at pupils' books and work.
- The inspector listened to pupils from three different year groups reading, and talked with them and other groups of pupils about their lessons and school life.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, subject leaders, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and scrutinised documentation relating to pupils' progress and to school management, including the arrangements to ensure safeguarding.
- The inspector took account of the 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and also took account of the seven staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Vanessa MacDonald, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Dodleston Church of England Primary School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those from Traveller backgrounds. A very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well-below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below the national average; this is a very small number of pupils. (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 school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes to the leadership and teaching staff the headteacher started in September 2013 as acting headteacher and became the substantive headteacher in April 2014.
- Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes in the morning and three in the afternoon. Of the four teachers, three are new since the last inspection, two of whom started since September 2013. Since the last inspection, there has been significant staff turbulence.
- The school building does not have a hall, and a classroom is used for assembly and dining arrangements. The school also uses the local village hall and playing field to support sports lessons and outdoor learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order that more pupils make outstanding progress by:
 - ensuring that all pupils, especially the most able, are always given work which is hard enough
 - making sure that good practice in marking is consistently applied across all classes and subjects and that pupils are always given time to respond to this to improve their work
 - embedding the school's recent focus on spelling, grammar and punctuation skills and ensuring that pupils use this consistently in their written work across all subjects.
- Strengthen leadership and management by developing the role of subject leaders to use the information about pupils' progress to plan accurately improvements with measurable outcomes so success can be checked.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has swiftly identified the key areas for improvements and has an accurate view of the school. She has a clear vision and high expectations for further improving the achievement of all pupils. After a period of staff turbulence there is now staff stability and, as a result, the quality of teaching has improved. Staff and governors share the headteacher's drive for improvement and work well as a team in this small school. There have been improvements in attendance and in the quality of teaching.
- The headteacher regularly checks on the quality of teaching through lesson observations, scrutinising books and planning. Staff training is directly linked to key priorities and staff have had opportunities to visit and observe good practice in other settings in order to further improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Subject leaders are involved in checking on how well pupils are doing by scrutinising work and observing teaching and learning. However, they do not yet use all the information available to accurately plan for improvements that have clear success criteria so they can check on their success.
- The systems for checking on pupils' progress have improved and there is a clear understanding about how well each child is doing, which is now shared by all staff. Through checking on pupils work, including with colleagues from other schools, staff have identified where pupils learning can be improved. The targets which teachers have for their performance management are closely linked to pupils' progress and there are regular meetings with the headteacher to check on these. This is effectively promoting the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- The curriculum is well organised and takes account of the different ages of the pupils in classes. Links are also made with democracy and the Ancient Greeks, for example, and pupils also write to Parliament to explain their reasons why all children around the world should have access to education. Through this the curriculum helps to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Opportunities for literacy and mathematics to be taught in other subjects are planned for. A range of visits and visitors linked to topics also support pupils' understanding of other subjects.
- Pupils have strong links with their local community and are keen to talk about the different charities that they raise money for. They learn about different cultures and religions through work in lessons and assemblies, which contributes to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Primary school sport funding is used to employ specialist coaches who have extended the variety of sports pupils learn and also the opportunities for pupils to engage in competitions. All pupils last year had an opportunity to take part in a competition. Some girls commented on how they now really enjoyed playing football and taking part in matches, as a result. Teachers have also benefited from training which has improved their expertise.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet current statutory requirements and are regularly checked.
- The local authority has provided a good level of support for the headteacher. It works closely with the school's leadership to support areas identified for development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is fully committed to ongoing improvement and has a very clear understanding of the key areas for development, as well as the strengths of the school. Governors understand how the quality of teaching has improved and understand fully how this is linked to pay progression and how underachievement is tackled. They receive regular reports from subject leaders and the headteacher about pupils' progress. As a result, they are now better informed and are able to challenge leaders about school performance more fully. Governors have managed the different funding streams for sports and pupil premium effectively, through the use of specialist coaches in sport and additional staff to support disadvantaged pupils. They have also been successful in obtaining grants to provide additional resources for sports and information technology equipment.
 - The governing body has also had some changes to its membership and is looking carefully at how new members' skills can complement and support the governing body and school to improve further. Governors access a range of training to support them in their roles and meet with different staff to check on different aspects of the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Behaviour around school is good. The vast majority of responses from

staff and parents agree. There are positive relationships with all adults and there is a calm and happy atmosphere around school. During assembly and at lunch, pupils are well behaved and attentive to adults and one another.

- Pupils show respect for one another and are polite to each other and visitors. Pupils are proud of their school and take on their different roles with pride. These roles include school councillors, sports ambassadors and road safety officers. The school council have recently met together with the sports coach to discuss the use of the playground and the new equipment to improve activities at lunchtime. As a result, there are sessions where pupils work with the coach to learn how to use the different sports equipment.
- Pupils and staff manage the limited space very well, particularly when turning a classroom in to a space for assembly or dining. Very little time is wasted and older pupils take responsibility for managing resources well to enable this to happen. Older pupils help at lunchtime, setting tables and clearing up.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. In lessons, they show that they are eager to learn and enjoy working in pairs and small groups, discussing aspects of their learning with enthusiasm. Occasionally, when their learning does not keep them as interested as they should be, they can, become distracted.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying. They say that bullying hardly ever happens in their school and there is no use of derogatory language. They say that, because the school is so small, everyone is friendly and it's like a 'family'.
- Pupils confirm they feel safe in school and also when using the village hall and field. They understand how to use the different playground equipment safely. Visits from the police and fire service have supported pupils' understanding of how to keep safe in their environment.
- Attendance has improved. The most recent figures show that attendance is currently in line with the national average overall. The absence of a small number of pupils reduces the overall attendance figures for the school. Procedures to check on pupils' absence are thorough and the school works very well with external agencies and families to improve the attendance of a few pupils

The quality of teaching

is good

- The headteacher has been focused on improving the quality of teaching so that it is now good overall. Changes in staffing since the previous inspection slowed the rate of some improvements. Inspection evidence shows that improvement is now more rapid, particularly in writing.
- Teachers have high expectations, and relationships between pupils and staff are very positive, which support their positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are keen to share their ideas with one another as was apparent in a lesson where pupils were looking at non-fiction books on old toys to identify key features to use in their work.
- Teachers plan lessons which interest pupils. Good links are made between the topics pupils are learning about and their written work. In one class pupils were enthusiastically writing 'magic medicines' using their knowledge well to write instructions, having to include items from the Stone Age such as mammoth teeth.
- Pupils say that they are enjoying the new topics. There are good cross-curricular links with these. Year 1 pupils were finding out which material would make the best roof for the 'Naughty Bus', then writing a letter to him to let him know their results.
- The small number of teaching assistants are deployed very effectively to support all pupils in class, including the most able. Additional support is also provided for the very small numbers of pupils who have special educational needs or who are disadvantaged so they make good progress.
- Marking has improved and there are now examples of marking which give pupils clear guidance on what to do to improve their work. In the best examples, pupils are also given opportunities to improve their work in response to the guidance given. However, this is not yet consistent across all classes and subjects.
- The recent focus on improving pupils' grammar, spelling and punctuation skills has resulted in marked improvements in their attainment of these by the end of Key Stage 2. Although pupils' skills have improved they are not yet consistently using these in their written work across the curriculum, which slows their progress.
- Overall, teachers plan activities to meet the different needs of the pupils and, as result, most pupils make good progress. Pupils comment that it does not matter what year you are in, the work is matched to the individual and is at the right level. Occasionally though, pupils do not always have work which is hard enough, particularly the most able.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most pupils start in Year 1 with average skills though this varies year on year and some children have skills below this. The skills of pupils in the mixed-age class of Reception and Year 1 are built upon successfully. Those pupils whose skills are below those typical are provided with activities which match their needs well so they continue to make good progress.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the required standard in the Year 1 check on their phonic skills (letters and the sounds they make) was in line with the national average in 2014. This was an increase on 2013. Pupils enjoy reading and read a wide range of books by different authors. Older pupils particularly like Roald Dahl and David Walliams. Younger pupils show they are able to use their phonic skills to break down words. Older pupils read with fluency, using their understanding of the text to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils reach standards which are in line, and sometimes above, the national average, particularly in reading. The majority of pupils make good progress from their different starting points, in reading, writing and mathematics.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, the vast majority of pupils reach the standard expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels is usually at least in line with national figures and often above these. The recent emphasis on teaching spelling, punctuation and grammar showed marked improvements in pupils attaining the higher levels in 2014 compared to the previous year.
- Over the last three years, the vast majority of pupils made the progress expected of them by the end of Key Stage 2. The number of pupils making more than expected progress varies year on year and is usually in line or above the national average. The headteacher has rightly identified the need to accelerate progress further so that more pupils make better than expected progress. More opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in lessons have been introduced and there are increased opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes, including in different subjects. The vast majority of current pupils across Key Stage 2 are now making good progress and some are doing even better.
- The very small number of pupils with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language, those from different minority ethnic backgrounds and also those whose circumstances make them vulnerable make good progress overall because their attainment and progress are checked carefully and appropriate support is put in place for them.
- The most able pupils make good progress and benefit from additional support from a teaching assistant. These pupils usually undertake tasks which challenge them to reach their potential although there are occasions when these are still not hard enough and they could make even better progress.
- There are very small numbers of disadvantaged pupils in the school. There were none in Year 6 in 2014. It is not possible, therefore, to make any meaningful comparison of their attainment with that of other pupils in the school. School data show that disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their different starting points because they are provided with regular additional support from a teaching assistant. There is also support from an additional part-time teacher so older pupils benefit from smaller class sizes.

The early years provision is good

- Children start the school with skills that vary year on year. Each year, there is a proportion of children who start school with skills which are below those typical for their age. Some years, this is a significant proportion. Most children make good progress from their different starting points and most reach a good level of development. As Reception children are in a class with Year 1 pupils, they have opportunities to work alongside these pupils for some activities. This ensures that they are well prepared for Year 1.
- Children settle in well because there are a series of regular, planned visits before children start school. Good links and regular meetings with the local pre-school setting ensure that children make a smooth transition to school. Once they start school, the regular 'stay and play' sessions for both Reception children and Year 1 pupils, ensure that parents are involved in their child's learning.
- The teacher and teaching assistant work very effectively together to ensure that all the children in the setting are working at an appropriate level and have access to a good range of activities both indoors and outside. Reception children are able to engage in activities which arise from their own interests. They plan what they want to do, are able to choose the resources with which to do it and then review the outcome with a member of staff. Children talked enthusiastically to the inspector about their treasure map and

treasure chest, the crowns they had made and a rainbow owl sculpture.

- Teaching is good and phonics is taught well. Children across the setting work in small groups, practising their sounds both through speaking them and also by writing and forming words which contain different sounds. This understanding is built on successfully so they make good progress in phonic skills. These transfer well to their written work.
- Children are cared for well and they are encouraged to select their own resources, showing they are able to use these safely and sensibly. Their behaviour is good and they play and work harmoniously with one another.
- Inspection evidence shows that, through their topic focus, children have looked at healthy eating, the work of an artist, making fruit pictures of faces and understanding their own feelings. This contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The leadership of early years is good. The teacher is relatively new to the role but has a clear understanding of the key areas for development. She has worked closely with both the headteacher and teaching assistant to improve the provision and has also accessed support from the local authority.

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	111272
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	448425

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	81
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Tunnicliffe
Headteacher	Julie Boyes
Date of previous school inspection	27 May 2010
Telephone number	01244 981080
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	admin@dodleston.cheshire.sch.uk

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