

Victoria Road Primary School

Victoria Road, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 5RE

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement. Pupils do not make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics between Years 1 and 6. As a consequence, the standards they reach by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 have been consistently below the national average.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement. Teaching over time has not been good enough to counter previous underachievement and accelerate pupils' progress.
- Teachers do not always use assessment information accurately. As a result, in mathematics, the activities planned are too difficult for some pupils.
- Older pupils in Key Stage 2, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are still establishing a secure foundation in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) on which to build their reading skills.
- Pupils do not read regularly enough for purpose in different lessons, in order to check or find out information for themselves. They have insufficient opportunities to apply their extended writing skills in subjects other than English.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent and does not always ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Leadership and management require improvement. Senior leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are not sufficiently rigorous. They do not always take account of the quality of work in pupils' books.
- Plans for improving the school's effectiveness do not always focus sharply enough on the impact that actions are intended to have on improving teaching and pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- School leaders, managers and governors, recognise the school's strengths and areas for improvement and have identified the correct priorities to secure improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement. Their actions are now improving the overall performance of the school.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and the pupils who speak English as an additional language, now achieve well from their starting points.
- Attendance has improved rapidly since the last inspection.
- Provision in the early years is good. Children get off to a good start to their education and make good progress in the early years.
- The teaching of phonics has improved. As a result, pupils' performance in the national phonics screening check was broadly in line with the national average last year.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are safe and well cared for in school.
- There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered and reviewed a range of evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching over time. This included observing a number of part-lessons, including one observation carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Work in pupils' books was reviewed during lessons and a detailed scrutiny of work completed.
- Meetings were held with members of the school's leadership team and a group of governors, and inspectors also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 14 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and held informal conversations with a small number of parents.
- Inspectors reviewed 27 inspection questionnaires completed by members of staff. Inspectors examined a range of school documents. These included the school's evaluation of its own performance, development planning, records of teachers' performance management, data about the achievement of pupils both currently in the school and who had left recently, governing body information and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Neil Dixon, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michelle Murray

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than average sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those for whom the school receives the pupil premium funding is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is broadly average.
- In 2014, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There have been a number of changes to staff, including leaders, since the previous inspection. The headteacher joined the school in September 2013.
- There is nursery provision on the school site. This is run by external providers and is subject to a separate inspection. Inspection reports for this setting may be viewed at www.ofsted.gov.uk.
- Early years provision in the school consists of a full-time Reception class.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club.
- The school currently holds the Eco-Schools award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils' progress is consistently good or better across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information more accurately in mathematics so that activities in class are not too hard for some pupils
 - ensuring pupils have opportunities to apply their extended writing skills in subjects other than English
 - ensuring that pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils in Key Stage 2, make up any remaining gaps in their phonics' knowledge, develop and practise regularly their reading skills and read for purpose in lessons
 - ensuring that the school's revised marking policy is applied consistently and effectively by all teachers so that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring school leaders check frequently that the steps taken to raise achievement are having sufficient impact
 - ensuring checks on the quality of teaching pay greater heed to the evidence contained in pupils' books.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. Actions taken to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement have not had sufficiently swift impact. Consequently, teaching is not consistently good across the school and pupils' achievement requires improvement.
- It is evident, however, that improvements have been made since the last inspection and senior leaders demonstrate the capacity to improve the school further. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the national phonics screening check taken in Year 1 has improved and is in line with the national average. The gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school is closing. Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language now achieve well because of improvements school leaders have made in tracking pupils' progress and attainment. This means these pupils receive effective support to meet their specific needs.
- Leaders' work to improve attendance, which had been consistently and stubbornly low, has proved very successful and attendance has improved considerably. Pupils are in school more often and have a better chance to learn.
- School leaders, including governors, have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas to improve and have established plans for improvement. Leaders do not check frequently that planned actions are having the desired impact on teaching and learning and so the pace of improvement is not as fast as it should be.
- The leadership of teaching is improving. Senior leaders, well supported by increasingly effective middle leaders, check regularly on the quality of teaching and learning and make sure the good practice evident in the school is shared. However, leaders' checks do not take sufficient account of the learning and progress of pupils seen in the quality of work in pupils' books.
- The headteacher and assistant headteacher provide determined and enthusiastic leadership. They have established successfully an ethos throughout the school where staff are flourishing, highly motivated and eager to improve. The success of this work is evident in the improvements in the achievement of pupils currently in school.
- Staff access training opportunities that help them to develop their skills and knowledge, and this is helping to improve the current quality of teaching in the school.
- Leaders ensure that arrangements for monitoring teachers' performance are robust and teachers are held to account for the progress pupils make.
- The school has clear systems in place for tracking pupils' performance and for identifying those pupils who need extra help. Regular meetings are held with class teachers to discuss the progress pupils are making, ensuring that teachers are now held to account more rigorously for pupils' performance. The school's accurate internal tracking information, confirmed by the quality of work seen during the inspection, shows pupils' progress improved across the school last year but not sufficiently to raise the end of key stage performance from below average.
- Leaders have made changes to the way in which the pupil premium is used so that disadvantaged pupils do better than has previously been the case. The funding is used increasingly effectively in a variety of ways, including to pay for additional staff and to provide access to the school's breakfast club. Gaps in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils compared with others in the school are narrowing so that, in 2014, the attainment and progress that disadvantaged pupils had made by the end of Key Stage 2 was the same as that made by other pupils. This reflects the school's commitment to ensuring that every pupil is given an equal opportunity to succeed.
- The school provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A whole-school focus on Remembrance Day and the anniversary of the start of the First World War, including a visit to school by the author of the book 'Where the Poppies Now Grow', produced some striking work in art and literature, thinking of rights and responsibilities. This work contributes to pupils being well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils through well chosen, engaging, topic-based themes that are enhanced by a range of visits and visitors, such as theatre companies and authors. The school grounds are used well to provide pupils with a wide range of different experiences, including helping to look after the school's hens.
- The primary school sport funding is used effectively. Pupils have access to a range of sporting activities and staff have received training to increase their confidence in teaching different aspects of physical

education and games. The playground is well resourced and provides further opportunities for pupils to be active and stay healthy.

- The local authority is providing monitoring and support for the school in areas such as the management of behaviour and of assessment. This is helping the school to move forward.
- The school provides a high level of care and support for those pupils most in need of help and for their families; this is reflected in parents' strong support for the school.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and pupils are looked after well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very committed to the school. Following the previous inspection, they recognised that governance needed to be more effective and so accessed appropriate training on using data to evaluate the school's performance. Governors have also ensured that their skills and expertise are matched to their various roles, although some governors have only been in their specific roles for a short length of time.
 - Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and have a realistic view of the areas in which need to improve.
 - Governors receive appropriate information on the quality of teaching, and on pupils' and teachers' individual performance from the headteacher. They use this to ensure that decisions about increases in teachers' pay are justified and to ensure that school leaders are taking appropriate steps to challenge any underperformance in teaching or pupils' achievement.
 - Governors ensure the school's finances are used well. The school buildings are well maintained and have been enhanced by attractive additions, such as the 'story castle' in the school hall, which was developed to encourage pupils to read more.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and welcoming. They show good manners and behave well when moving around the school and at playtimes.
- Pupils say behaviour around the school is good and talk about the ways in which they feel behaviour is improving. They particularly like the house system introduced recently. Pupils say this helps them to mix with pupils of different ages and encourages them to do well on behalf of their house team.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive, as can be seen in the range of attractive displays of art and written work in classrooms and around the school.
- On occasions, when pupils do misbehave, incidents are dealt with in a calm and effective manner by the staff and, as a result, pupils' learning is not affected.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in the school and explain how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including when using the internet.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of different forms of bullying, including name-calling and homophobic bullying and say that incidents of bullying in their school are rare. Pupils are confident that the adults in school would deal effectively with any problems or concerns that they may have.
- School leaders have worked successfully to improve attendance, which had been stubbornly low. As a result, attendance is rising year on year so that, at the time of the inspection, it was average. This provides pupils with a better chance to succeed because they are not missing as much learning.
- Parents' comments and responses to 'Parent View' online survey show that the very large majority of parents are pleased with the standards of behaviour and safety in the school. Almost all the parents who responded to 'Parent View' said that they would recommend the school to another parent and this view was shared by parents who spoke with inspectors.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time has not been good enough to enable all pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 to make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Due to the now more rigorous monitoring by leaders, the quality of teaching is now improving, as seen in the work in pupils' books.
- School leaders have revised the school's policy and procedures for marking pupils' work. There is evidence of some good-quality marking in pupils' books that helps pupils to improve their work. However, this policy is not applied consistently by all teachers. This inconsistency in marking prevents all pupils from having a clear idea of how they could improve their work.
- The teaching of mathematics requires improvement across Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils' mathematics books show that teachers do not always use assessment information effectively when planning mathematical activities. As a result, some pupils are presented with tasks that are too hard for them. This hinders their progress.
- The teaching of writing is improving, but has not had time to show a significant improvement in pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 or 2. Although pupils are taught writing skills more effectively, they have insufficient opportunities to use these skills to write at length or in different areas of the curriculum.
- Reading is now taught more effectively across the school, and particularly in Key Stage 1 where improvements in the teaching of phonics have helped to ensure pupils' progress in phonics is improving at a good rate. As a result, the proportion of pupils currently in Year 2 who are working at the expected level in reading is higher than in recent years, and their attitudes to reading are positive. Older pupils also say they enjoy reading, but are typically less confident using their phonics skills to help them to read accurately. This is particularly true of disadvantaged pupils who did not previously have access to the levels of support for reading in school they now receive.
- Good relationships between pupils and adults are a strong feature of the very large majority of lessons. This helps to create a positive climate for learning within the school. Teachers are enthusiastic about teaching and ensure the activities they plan interest pupils. This was evident in science in Year 6 when pupils were fascinated to find out how much blood was in a human body. They discovered and used very effectively the appropriate biological vocabulary such as 'veins', 'arteries' and 'plasma'.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Between Year 1 and Year 6, pupils' achievement requires improvement. Pupils do not make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and, as a result, pupils' attainment in 2014 was below average in both Key Stages 1 and 2.
- School data and inspection evidence, however, show the attainment and progress of pupils currently in the school are improving. For example, more pupils in Years 2 and 6 are now working at the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check rose significantly in 2014 to be in line with the national average. This is because school leaders have ensured that the teaching of phonics has improved and consequently, pupils are making rapid gains in their phonic knowledge.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils requires improvement. In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was in line with other pupils in the school, which represents a significant improvement on previous years when disadvantaged pupils' attainment was typically around a year behind other pupils in the school. This gap narrowed rapidly because more effective tracking of the progress made by disadvantaged pupils, and well-targeted support, helped to ensure that disadvantaged pupils made typically similar progress to other pupils in the school.
- Despite this improvement, disadvantaged pupils' attainment was still two terms behind that of other pupils nationally in mathematics, three terms behind in writing and four terms behind in reading. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils making or exceeding the expected amount of progress was also below the average of other pupils nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive good support from teachers and teaching assistants. Their progress is monitored closely by school leaders. As a result, these pupils achieve well from their often low starting points.
- Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress and reach levels of attainment that are typically in line with other pupils in the school.

- The progress made by the most able pupils is inconsistent across the school and is related directly to the effectiveness of teaching in different year groups. Because of this inconsistency, very few pupils reached the higher Level 3 at the end of Year 2. Although a larger proportion of pupils reached the higher Level 5 at the end of Year 6 in 2014, compared to 2013, the proportion is still below average, particularly in mathematics and writing.

The early years provision

is good

- Most children start in the Reception class with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age, particularly in the areas of speaking and listening, personal, social and emotional development and number.
- Teaching is good over time. Therefore, children make good progress from their individual starting points and achieve well during their time in the early years. This includes disabled children and those with special educational needs, the most able and those for whom the school receives additional funding. Assessment information about the performance of children in 2014 show that the proportion of children reaching a good level of development had risen and was average. This is because the early years leader and team plan very effectively together, providing children with many opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills and to engage in a range of activities to encourage them to work and play together.
- The early years provision includes a safe, attractive and well-resourced learning environment, both inside and outside. The children are cared for and nurtured very well and their behaviour is good.
- In the Reception class, staff place a strong emphasis on developing children's early phonic skills and their mathematical understanding, as was seen in a session where children made and described with enthusiasm different shapes, using the language of shape and size. As a result, children are well prepared for moving into Year 1.
- The early years is led and managed well and is building on established good practice. The leader has a good understanding of how well children are progressing through careful recording and checking of their development, and this information is used effectively to move children's learning on at a good rate. Good relationships between staff and children help to ensure that children enjoy their time in the Reception class and find learning fun. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress and achievements and are encouraged to share information about things that children have done at home by filling in 'star' observations.

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	111226
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	452026

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Hill
Headteacher	Cathy Lord
Date of previous school inspection	5 June 2013
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