

Fairfield Primary School

Peelhouse Lane, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 6TH

Inspection dates

13–14 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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.

- This is a popular and successful school that keeps the development of the whole child at the heart of all it does.
- The passionate and determined headteacher, very ably assisted by the deputy headteacher, provides highly skilled leadership in driving the school forward and improving the quality of teaching, the achievement of pupils and their attendance.
- Staff and governors are fully united in working for the benefit of all the pupils, their families and the local community. Morale is high.
- The rich and broad range of subjects is extremely well organised and promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development very well.
- The school has excellent relationships with parents, the wider community and other schools.
- Governors have skilfully helped to develop this new school. They offer rigorous challenge and support to senior leaders in their passionate determination to make the school the best it can be.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and sometimes outstanding. They have highly positive attitudes to learning and are proud of their school. Pupils feel safe. They enjoy the wide range of clubs and opportunities to take on responsibilities.
- Pupils' exceptionally positive relationships with staff help them to develop mutual respect, grow in self-confidence and try hard.
- Teaching is usually good and sometimes outstanding. As a result, pupils are progressing well.
- Pupils in the majority of year groups make good progress. By the end of Year 6, they reach standards that are broadly average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Standards across the school are rising.
- Children in the early years achieve well from their different starting points due to good teaching, a highly stimulating learning environment and staff that care about them as individuals.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is some variability in the progress made across the year groups and achievement is not as good in reading and writing as it is in mathematics.
- Sometimes pupils, in particular those of lower ability and the most able, are not always given work that is demanding enough.
- Pupils do not always receive clear guidance on how to improve their work or given time to respond to advice given.
- Middle leaders are still developing their role so that they can become even more effective in improving teaching and learning and the achievement of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the learning of pupils in all classes across the school, including a joint observation with the headteacher.
- Inspectors checked on pupils' work in lessons, in books and on display around the school. They also spoke to pupils both formally and informally about their views of school and listened to some pupils read.
- Inspectors made a careful check on a range of school documentation, including the school's own view of its performance, plans for improvement and records of the progress of pupils and their behaviour.
- Discussions were held with a range of school leaders including the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior and middle leaders. Inspectors met governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors also checked on the work of governors and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through checking the results from the school's own surveys of parental opinion, the 41 responses to Parent View, the online survey, and the 331 responses to the school's own recent survey. Inspectors also spoke with some parents.
- Inspectors took account of the views of staff expressed in the 45 responses to the voluntary questionnaire.

Inspection team

Chris Maloney, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Platt

Additional Inspector

Maureen Coleman

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Fairfield Primary School was created following the expansion of Fairfield Junior School in January 2014 to include the age ranges of Fairfield Infant School. This new school has not previously been inspected.
- There have been significant increases in pupil numbers and changes in staff and governors in the last 12 months.
- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There are only a few pupils from other ethnic backgrounds and cultural traditions, including those who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil-premium funding is high. This additional government funding is provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals 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' achievement and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school provides a before- and after-school club, which is subject to separate inspection.
- The school works in close partnership with the Connect 5 group of local schools and Wade Deacon High School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and so accelerate progress and further raise attainment, particularly in reading and writing, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers provide work that closely matches the learning needs of all pupils, particularly those of lower ability and the most able
 - embedding the school's marking policy, always making it clear to pupils how to improve their work and giving them time to respond.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - fully developing the skills of middle leaders, particularly those new to role, so that their actions link more closely to improving the quality of teaching and the achievement of the pupils.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher clearly demonstrates high expectations and a heartfelt and steely determination to continuously improve this recently established school. She has worked tirelessly to successfully create a whole-school ethos, where all members of the school community are valued, appreciated and respected. The deputy headteacher has provided particularly skilled and strong support to the headteacher in galvanising other senior leaders, staff and governors in focusing on developing the whole child and in continuously embedding and improving all aspects of the school's work. As a result, the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils are improving and attendance is rising.
- Plans to raise the quality of teaching and achievement of pupils are well focused on what needs to get better and the headteacher ensures that they are continually reviewed and improved. This has led to improvements in the achievement of current pupils across school at the higher levels of attainment, particularly in writing and effective use of the pupil premium. Senior leaders' knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement is robust and accurate.
- Morale is high because staff are encouraged, supported and given clear guidance on how to improve their work through the 'Outstanding Teaching Programme' and specific coaching. A typical staff comment was, 'Every person in this school is committed to helping our children achieve their best.'
- The passionate commitment to giving every pupil equal opportunities to learn is reflected in regular checks made by senior leaders on how well all groups of pupils are learning. The information gathered by senior leaders is used to track pupils' progress and provide them with additional support when needed. Indeed, the headteacher keeps a personal watch on the progress of all pupils through the excellent 'big book' in which she keeps photographs of all the pupils and detailed records of their progress.
- Senior leaders continuously challenge and support teachers to improve. They are given good opportunities to share their practice in school and with colleagues in other local schools.
- Middle leaders, including those new to role, fully support the vision for continuous improvement and are eager to improve their work. However, they are still developing the skills they need to check on the success of their actions to raise the quality of teaching and achievement of pupils.
- Subjects are linked together in a skilled and creative way. Themes such as 'Inclusion Week', 'Dragon's Den' or 'Heroes' promote enjoyable learning. Pupils enjoy the many music and sport opportunities as well as French.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Themes such as 'One World Art Week' and 'Places of Worship' help pupils appreciate and celebrate different cultures and traditions, as do the excellent links with an orphanage in Tanzania. The school fosters good relationships and takes effective steps to ensure there is no discrimination. It actively promotes and celebrates British values, preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Additional funding for physical education and sports has been used well to support teachers in developing their expertise and increase opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in areas such as swimming, cricket and dance. Checks show increased participation in sports clubs and teams.
- Strong links exist with parents who feel valued and supported. A typical parent comment was, 'This is a lovely school and I have no concerns.' Very good links also exist with the local community, in particular the Connect 5 group of schools, helping to share practice, and Wade Deacon High School, helping to support the most able pupils.
- The local authority has provided high-quality support in helping the creation of this new school, checking the accuracy of school judgements and staff and governor training.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are particularly well led by the Chair of the Governing Body and share a determination to drive the school forward. They have managed the creation of the new school well, ensuring staff morale is high and the whole-school community is united. They are very well trained and have strengthened the range of their skills, expertise and experience. Governors know the school very well and visit often. Regular checks are made to ensure teachers are working effectively enough and that all groups of pupils are making the progress they should when compared to others locally and nationally. They ensure that teachers' pay rewards are appropriate and rigorously linked to the pupils making good or better progress. Governors make regular checks on policy and practice to be confident that safeguarding arrangements are effective and meet requirements. Governors keep a very close eye on school finances. They ensure that leaders make good use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium to make sure they are progressing as well as others in school. They have made very effective use of extra funding for physical education and sports and track its impact on

pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are happy, have extremely positive attitudes to learning and wear their new school uniform with pride. Pupils have exceptionally strong relationships with all adults in school, who know them very well as individuals. This contributes to their eagerness to learn and good achievement. A typical pupil comment was, 'Teachers are kind and make learning fun.'
- Pupils get on well with each other, including those from different ethnic and cultural heritages, and play safely and cooperatively. They respect other cultures and faiths and the rights to hold different beliefs.
- Pupils are polite, helpful, considerate and welcoming to visitors. They generally listen attentively and are eager to try hard. When teachers provide pupils with work that keeps them engrossed and stretches their thinking, their behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. However, when tasks do not meet their learning needs sufficiently well, a few pupils sometimes begin to drift off task, slowing their progress.
- Pupils enthusiastically grasp the wide range of opportunities to take on responsibility, including as members of the school council, play leaders or peer mentors to younger children.
- Pupils eagerly develop their abilities and self-confidence through an exciting range of sports, extra-curricular clubs, visits and residential, such as to France.
- Attendance is broadly average and rising.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know how to stay safe and keep others safe, including when faced with risks on the road, from strangers or on the internet.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying, particularly cyber-bullying and bullying as a result of prejudice. They are confident that on the rare occasions it happens, staff deal with it quickly and fairly.
- Responses in Parent View, the school's own surveys and comments to inspectors show parents are confident that their children feel safe and are kept safe.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers and teaching assistants make sure that they know pupils well as individuals. This helps to promote highly positive relationships that encourage a love of learning and a determination in pupils to try their best. This focus on the whole child means that pupils feel special, helping them to learn well.
- Teachers check on how well pupils are learning and use this information to plan interesting and engaging tasks that motivate pupils. They use their good subject knowledge to question, prompt and challenge pupils' thinking. They provide pupils with 'ladders for success' to help pupils know how to reach the next level. These are made familiar by giving them names of chocolate bars or animals. However, teachers do not always plan tasks that stretch the abilities of all pupils, particularly the lower ability and the most able and this sometimes hinders the progress they make.
- The behaviour of pupils is managed well by staff who confidently use the 'Sunshine' and 'Traffic Light' system to encourage pupils to earn 'smilies'.
- A love of reading is promoted well by all staff. Reading skills are skilfully and systematically taught and those pupils who need it are given targeted additional support.
- Pupils are given increasing opportunities to extend their writing skills in creative activities across subjects, with a big focus on using exciting books to stimulate writing. This has led to increasing numbers of pupils reaching the higher levels in writing.
- Teachers ensure that mathematical skills are taught securely with a clear focus on regular revision of basic skills and use of practical resources. They regularly probe pupils' thinking in their knowledge of key concepts and different ways to solve problems.
- Although there are some excellent examples of marking that help pupils to improve their work and of teachers checking that pupils have responded, not all staff are consistently following the school's new marking policy. As a result, not all pupils are clear on how to improve their work. Pupils are not always given the time they need to respond to teachers' comments and advice.
- Pupils' excellent enjoyment in working on highly stimulating tasks was seen during a Year 6 English lesson. Pupils were engrossed in discussing whether horses should have been used in the First World War,

following use of the book and video clip of *War Horse*. Pupils enthusiastically wrote a balanced argument making excellent use of their success ladders. The teacher inspired highly motivational learning by using excellent subject knowledge to probe pupils' thinking and share strategies to produce high-quality writing such as, 'long violent battles caused unnecessary suffering'.

The achievement of pupils is good

- In 2014, standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 were broadly average, although standards in mathematics in Year 6 were above average. The work and progress of current pupils in school and records of progress of pupils over the last twelve months clearly show that, in all key stages, all groups of pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and attainment is rising, particularly at the higher levels.
- In 2014 in Year 6, the proportions reaching the higher Level 5 were slightly below average in reading and writing. However, the success of the school's actions to improve progress and standards in mathematics across the school is reflected in the significantly above average proportions of pupils reaching the higher Level 5.
- Although the achievement of current pupils shows some variability between year groups, the success of the school's actions to improve the achievement of pupils and raise attainment, particularly in reading and writing, is paying dividends. Increasing proportions of pupils are now reaching the higher levels of attainment, particularly in Years 2 and 6. This is because most teachers are providing pupils with more challenging work to stretch their abilities as soon as they are ready. This is particularly evident in writing, where pupils are being given increasingly creative and stimulating opportunities to write, resulting in the writing of the most able pupils reflecting high-quality development of ideas and skilled use of language. This is evident in this extract from a letter home from a soldier in the First World War written by a Year 6 pupil, 'Oh, how all my positive emotions are locked away and you are the key to the redemption of my happiness.' However, this approach is not consistent across the school.
- Pupils make good progress in developing their spelling, punctuation and grammar as a result of effective teaching. Pupils eagerly apply the skills they are taught and share their writing with others in class with the help of a 'visualiser' to improve it still further. This was clear when pupils in Year 5 were improving their writing descriptions of a scene for a highwayman.
- Pupils make good progress in reading due to skilled and systematic teaching and the additional support they receive from well-trained teaching assistants. The results in the Year 1 national screening check on reading in 2014 were average, reflecting their good understanding of the sounds that letters make. Pupils continue to develop a love of reading and they make good progress through the school in their accuracy and understanding.
- In mathematics, pupils demonstrate an increasingly secure understanding of basic skills and concepts and confidence in applying these to solve problems. They particularly benefit from the regular revision, partner working and practical tasks that stretch their thinking and deepen their understanding, such as in Year 2 where pupils confidently used different units of measurement as a life skill. Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) resources confidently and accurately to support their work, such as when Year 1 pupils used computers to create anti-bullying posters.
- The extremely caring and skilled additional support ensures that the few pupils from minority ethnic groups, including the few who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, make generally good progress.
- The work of disadvantaged pupils in the school and records of their progress show that, although there is some variability, most are achieving as well as, and sometimes better than, others in school in all classes. In Year 6 in 2014, disadvantaged pupils were two terms behind other pupils in the school overall and one and a half terms behind other pupils nationally. They were two terms behind others in school in mathematics and reading and one and a half terms behind in writing. Compared with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, they were a term behind in mathematics, one and a half terms behind in writing and two terms behind in reading.

The early years provision is good

- Children settle quickly from their many different settings and feel safe, thanks to highly nurturing and caring staff, a stimulating learning environment, well-established routines and the excellent links with parents. Children thrive because of the high expectations of staff and consistently good teaching. As a

result, all children, including the most able and those with special educational needs, make good progress from their different starting points which are usually below and sometimes significantly lower than those typical, especially in their language and personal development. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development is improving but children are not yet fully prepared for learning in Year 1.

- Staff demonstrate a thorough knowledge of how children learn. They develop and capture children's interests and extend their learning well. They make detailed observations of what children can achieve and their attitudes to learning in 'Learning Journeys'. These are used to ensure individual children have opportunities to make the most of activities children choose for themselves and those led by adults. This helps children to develop their early reading, writing and mathematical skills well. Children demonstrate increasing confidence in recognising the sounds that letters make, thanks to the re-shaping of tasks and the skilled building on what children already know.
- The indoor and outdoor learning environments are organised very effectively and staff ensure children move between areas with little fuss. Children have good opportunities to talk about their learning and explore good-quality resources to support the development of writing, such as forming letters correctly when writing labels, confidence in using numbers, recognising shapes and problem-solving skills.
- The behaviour of children is good. They learn and play cooperatively, listen attentively to adults and share equipment safely. They demonstrate a good awareness of personal safety and how to keep others safe. Children show considerable perseverance and self-control, as when taking part in peer massage. They enjoyed the opportunity to reflect and showed respect to others in the way they treated them.
- The leadership of the early years is strong. The leader has clear understanding of strengths and areas for further development and shares the vision for continuous improvement. Children are kept safe through detailed and effective risk assessments.

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	111197
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	444060

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	529
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Busow
Headteacher	Irene Hodgkinson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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