

Allanson Street Primary School

Gaskell Street, Parr, St Helens, WA9 1PL

Inspection dates 14–15 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- This is a school which meets the needs of its pupils and its community exceptionally well.
- An inspiring headteacher, supported by a group of vigilant governors and conscientious senior leaders, provides a very effective learning environment for its pupils. The motto 'be the best you can be', is successfully met by all pupils.
- Overall, the achievements of all pupils are outstanding, including those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs. From starting points that are very often below those typically found, pupils make excellent progress. By Year 6, standards are above, and sometimes well above, the national average.
- The children get off to a good start in the early years. They do particularly well in the Reception classes. However, the best practice is not yet spread across all the early years classes.
- The pupils themselves bring a lot to the school; their thirst for learning, their excellent attitudes and their impeccable behaviour contribute well to the progress they make.
- Pupils are very happy at school and voice strongly how safe they feel and how much they enjoy school.
- Pupils' progress is enhanced by the excellent relationships they have with the adults who teach them. Everyone has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and what can be achieved.
- Teachers plan interesting, meaningful tasks for pupils, which challenge and move them on with their learning.
- Opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills are excellent. The success of these experiences is reflected in very warm, caring environment the school has created.
- The rigorous checking, by senior leaders, of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement have helped the school improve since it was last inspected.
- The money the school receives for disadvantaged pupils is used very well to support these pupils, both academically and in their social and emotional development.

Information about this inspection

- The three inspectors looked at learning in lessons, or parts of lessons, and conducted learning walks across different parts of the school. The headteacher accompanied the lead inspector for some observations. The inspectors talked to pupils about their work and heard a number of pupils read.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including systems for checking pupils' progress, records relating to attendance and behaviour, safeguarding procedures and the school's analysis of how well it is doing and how it plans to improve. Records on checks on the quality of teaching and the minutes of the governing body meetings were examined.
- The inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work across the school in a range of subjects, especially in numeracy and literacy books.
- Several meetings were held, including with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. A telephone call took place with the school's external School Improvement Partner and a meeting was held with a representative from the local authority.
- Questionnaires from 29 members of staff were scrutinised. The inspectors also took account of the 42 responses made on Parent View and informal discussions with parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Gordon Alston, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Julie Webster	Additional Inspector
Faheem Chisti	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils are taught in single-age classes but in ability groups for literacy and numeracy.
- The school makes provision for Nursery and Reception aged children in the early years. Children attend on a part-time basis in the Nursery, for either five morning or five afternoon sessions.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been changes to the school's leadership team since the last inspection and a number of teachers have joined the school since then.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that provision in the early years is consistently outstanding across all classes.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is inspirational and has created a school where every pupil and adult is valued. This is reflected in the school's motto 'to be the best that you can be' and ensures that the school promotes equality of opportunity effectively. The care of pupils is a high priority and considered to be as equally important as academic achievement. There is an ethos in which excellent teaching and learning and behaviour can flourish. The support of a conscientious senior leadership team is an integral part of the driving force in helping create this happy school.
- The leadership of teaching is strong. Teachers are set targets based on how well pupils achieve and their progress over time is rigorously monitored by senior leaders. A strength is the speed at which pupils who fall behind are identified and support provided to help them catch up.
- The monitoring of teaching in lessons is a regular feature and carried out by senior leaders. All staff are observed and feedback is given to further improve the learning for pupils. Staff feel this is a positive feature which helped them improve as teachers.
- Many teachers hold middle management responsibilities and contribute well to the development of the school. Their monitoring and feedback helps identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. This provides an accurate view of the school and informs the school development plan. The plan focuses correctly on the key areas for improvement and is one of the reasons why the school has improved and maintained such high standards.
- The pupil premium funding the school receives for the high proportion of disadvantaged pupils is used exceptionally well. Provision is made through extra staffing to support these pupils' learning through small group and one-to-one sessions which are highly effective. The learning mentors and parent liaison staff, funded by pupil premium money, have a very positive impact on supporting pupils and families. Consequently, pupils are helped to overcome problems, grow in confidence and their school work improves.
- The school provides an exciting and broad range of subjects within which pupils are also to apply their reading, writing and mathematics skills they have learnt. An excellent range of additional activities, trips, clubs and visitors enrich the curriculum. Pupils of all abilities say how interesting they find the topics they cover and how their ideas and interests are taken into account when teachers decide what they study.
- The opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. The curriculum provides many of these opportunities but assemblies also have an important impact. 'Thinking Assemblies' present pupils with the chance to think about a variety of important issues. Other assemblies reward pupils' academic successes and share pupils' personal achievements. Pupils' sharing of successes helps promote the harmony that exists across the school. Pupils learn to respect themselves and others and this shows in how well they support one another's learning and in the care older pupils display to younger pupils. The school fosters good relationships and tackles any form of discrimination swiftly.
- The school ensures that pupils are fully aware of life in a multicultural society and know all about British values. This ensures pupils are well-prepared for life in modern Britain. There are also strong links with other schools and other countries, such as South Africa, to help promote pupils' understanding of different cultures.
- The school has made highly effective arrangements for spending the primary sports funding. It is used to provide a wide variety of opportunities for pupils to take part in sports activities, and to improve teachers' expertise through working with specialist coaches. This has led to an increase in the number of pupils taking part in sporting activities. The school has numerous teams which enable pupils to compete successfully against other schools.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has recently achieved the 'Governor Mark' award in recognition of the work it does, particularly on its impact on holding the school to account. It works very closely with senior leaders and has a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas which could be further improved.
 - Governors have a good view of the quality of teaching across the school, not only from reports they receive, but also from first-hand experience in lessons and talking to pupils.
 - Governors have access to assessment data and have a good understanding of what this means. They have ensured that very good use is made of pupil premium money and are regularly updated on how well disadvantaged pupils and other groups of pupils are achieving.
 - Governors are fully involved in strategic planning and their decisions are well-informed. They set clear targets in managing the performance of the headteacher and staff, making sure teachers' pay increases

are linked to competence.

- The governors ensure that the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements, and that these arrangements are highly effective.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. This results in a harmonious and calm atmosphere in classrooms, around school and in the playground. Pupils show a keenness to take part in all activities and do so enthusiastically. Parents are very happy with pupils' behaviour and praised the school for the work it did in this area. Pupils speak very positively about behaviour in school.
- Relationships are very warm and caring between pupils and other pupils and adults. Pupils show a thirst for learning. They work very hard in lessons and their ability to organise themselves to work with a partner or in a small group is very impressive. Pupils are proud of their school and take great care over the site, building and learning resources, all of which are kept in excellent condition.
- Pupils have developed an exceptionally positive attitude towards their learning and believe in the school's motto 'to be the best you can be.' They attempt new tasks with great confidence and determination to do their best. They fully engage with their work and show a pride in their work.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly average and there are rigorous procedures in place to further improve it, alongside the effective support given by learning mentors.
- Pupils support the school well, helping as peer mentors, play leaders or guardian angels which reinforces and supports all the school does to cultivate a warm, caring environment.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and parents fully support this view. Effective teaching about internet safety, 'stranger danger' and road safety are examples of how the school heightens awareness of how to keep safe. 'Thinking Assembly' often presents topics which raise important matters about safety.
- Pupils raised their eyebrows with surprise when asked by an inspector about bullying; they said 'it doesn't ever happen.' They are confident that if they are in any kind of difficulty they can trust any adult to help them.
- Training in all aspects of safeguarding is rigorous. Making sure pupils are safe has the highest priority in school and there are very effective systems in place to identify vulnerable pupils and support them. This can sometimes involve supporting pupils' families as well as the pupils themselves.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Pupils' outstanding progress and the standards achieved over time show that the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and achievement in reading, literacy and mathematics is outstanding. A hallmark is the very warm, relaxed learning environment that adults create in which pupils respond well, participating and engaging eagerly because lessons are interesting. This was clear in a mathematics lesson where pupils were given the opportunity to create their own problems using fractions and write the answer in code form for other pupils to solve. The adults' gentle coaxing spurred pupils on.
- Strengths include the excellent classroom organisation, high quality resources and information on 'working walls' to encourage pupils' independence. Routines are well established and this consistency means that no time is lost as pupils move around school to different ability groups.
- Pupils are clear about what they are learning and how they can succeed. Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to ask probing questions that check pupils' progress and understanding during the lesson. In a lesson where pupils were learning about the use of similes and metaphors, they could clearly explain the differences between these two types of image and how they would use them to compose an interesting poem.
- Tasks are carefully matched to pupils' abilities and provide just the right amount of challenge to ensure that pupils make rapid progress. Teachers are very good at adding an 'extra challenge' during a lesson when they realise that some most able pupils need pushing on even more with their learning.
- Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly with encouraging comments and explain simply how they might improve their work. Pupils reflect carefully on their teachers' feedback and refine their work accordingly. .

Sometimes, however, there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to take steps to improve their work.

- Homework is used well to support learning at school, especially reading, spelling and number facts.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs receive excellent teaching. This is often in small groups or one-to-one with talented teaching assistants. These staff prompt pupils to think hard about their tasks, and offer them advice about where answers may be found, so that pupils still remain independent learners. These pupils achieve as well as their peers.
- Teachers celebrate learning through high quality displays which can be found all around the school and in classrooms. What is noticeable is the interest pupils show in these displays, especially in the work from other classes.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils make excellent progress through Key Stages 1 and 2 and, as a result, by the end of Year 6, standards are above, and sometimes well- above, average.
- Pupils make rapid progress through Key Stage 1 and at present are achieving broadly average standards in reading, writing and number. This shows an improved picture since the last inspection.
- Rapid progress continues through Key Stage 2 and is reflected in the well-above average standards that were achieved by Year 6 pupils in 2014 national tests in reading, writing and above average standards in mathematics. All pupils made expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics and the proportion making better-than-expected progress was high in reading and writing but not quite as strong in mathematics when compared to the national average. As a result, the school investigated reasons for this and have implemented programmes to improve pupils' mental skills and problem-solving ability.
- The most able pupils are challenged successfully, often with opportunities to discover things for themselves. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in Year 6 in 2014 was above average, and significantly so in reading. Although not always successful, a number of Year 6 pupils have followed a challenging curriculum in an attempt to achieve a Level 6.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs make the same rapid progress from their starting points as other pupils. They are exceptionally well supported and their progress is rigorously checked every half term when any necessary adjustments are made to the support they receive. The learning mentors successfully support pupils with social and emotional issues which are hampering their learning. As a result, their confidence is lifted and they soon begin to make better progress.
- By Year 6, any gaps in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in school and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally have almost disappeared. All make at least expected progress and a significant proportion make better than expected progress.
- Pupils achieve very well in reading and writing. In writing, pupils are given interesting and imaginative tasks in a number of subjects. High quality discussions in reading sessions guided by an adult add enjoyment to pupils' reading. Books are well matched to pupils' ability and interests. Their reading skills are further developed through the effective use of laptops and computer tablets.
- In mathematics, pupils do well. They particularly enjoy the practical way that mathematics is taught and how they learn to develop sharper mental skills. Pupils' use of mathematical language is good and enables them to explain their strategies to others. In 2014 national tests, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who did better than expected was not as strong as in reading or writing. The school responded quickly and introduced new resources and external support for teachers through training to improve their skills.

The early years provision

is good

- Many children start school with skills that are below those typical for their age and a large number have skills that are significantly below those typical for their age, particularly in language. They make good, and at times outstanding, progress in the early years. The proportion reaching the expected level for their age is rising but remains below the national average. The majority of children are ready to enter Year 1 at the end of their Reception year.
- Provision is not yet outstanding because the high quality provision seen in Reception, where rapid progress is being made, is not yet spread across all the early years classes. In Reception, the children are rigorously assessed and very good use is made of this reliable information in the planning of activities, both in the inside and outside areas. This is not as strong in Nursery and results in, at times, the most

able children not being sufficiently challenged.

- The provision is well led and managed and the leader is aware of the inconsistencies between classes. Plans are already in place to ensure that the outstanding practice is evidenced in the experiences the children receive in all classes. The school is aware that boys do not do as well as girls and well-judged steps are being taken to increase their engagement.
- Parents are happy that their children are safe and well cared for and are appreciative of the many opportunities they are given to be involved in their child's learning for example, stay and play sessions and phonics workshops.
- There is a high level of adult support. These adults provide high quality interaction with the children, focused effectively on the children's needs, especially in relation to their communication skills.
- Children are inquisitive and work exceptionally well together. They enjoy sharing their resources, playing together and talking about their learning. Staff ensure there are lots of opportunities available for children to develop their reading, writing, number, artistic, communication and technology skills independently. These opportunities are of particularly high quality in Reception but are not quite so strong in the Nursery.

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	104758
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	453278

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	452
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Halsall
Headteacher	Patricia Farnell
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2007
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