

Underwood West Primary School

Newcastle Street, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 3LF

Inspection dates 10–11 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 do not make enough progress across Key Stage 2. In recent times, standards reached at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics have declined and are below average.
- Teaching over time, specifically at Key Stage 2, has not been effective enough. Some pupils have not been provided with the work and feedback they need in order to make the best possible progress.
- Sometimes, pupils get work that is too easy. This happens most often for the most able pupils.
- School leaders' view of the school's performance has been too generous. They have not acted quickly enough to improve teaching and raise standards, which have dipped since the previous inspection.
- Subject leaders' plans and actions to push standards back up have not yet had the anticipated effect.
- Across the school, the quality of teaching is uneven. Some pupils do not learn enough in lessons; a few of the routines they follow serve to slow their academic progress.
- Governors are supportive of the school's work but, until recently, have not done enough to challenge school leaders about the academic standards reached by pupils.
- Some pupils miss too much school or are late too often without good reason. This hinders their learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Provision in early years is good. From low starting points children get the teaching and support they need. Consequently, they are prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Achievement in Key Stage 1 has improved. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are now close to age-related expectations at the end of Year 2.
- Pupils with special educational needs or difficulties in their lives get plenty of help so that they can make the most of school. Some of the support they receive is excellent.
- Routines to manage pupils' behaviour are effective and pupils feel safe at school. Challenging behaviour is managed well and good behaviour is noticed and rewarded.
- The school provides many worthwhile activities that inspire children to enjoy learning. Classrooms present stimulating environments in which to work and learn.
- Pupils know that their opinions will be listened to, and they have a say in how things are done at school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in classrooms. Some of these observations were carried out with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or assistant headteacher. Inspectors also attended two school assemblies, examined pupils' work in books and on display, and considered school test and assessment data.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour, and the school's procedures at the beginning and end of the school day, at lunch and break times, and when pupils were moving about the school site. The school's procedures for managing the breakfast club were also checked.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, school leaders, subject leaders, governors and a local authority adviser.
- By the end of the inspection, there were eight responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, which are too few to generate a report. Inspectors looked at the results of the school's own survey of parents' views, talked to some parents at school, and considered the responses to Ofsted's school staff questionnaire.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included: information about pupils' progress, the school's own evaluations of its work, records of governors' meetings and school visits, and school improvement plans. Records relating to staff performance management, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Frances Farnorth	Additional Inspector
Louise Smith	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Underwood West Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is larger than the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school is above the national average. The term disadvantaged pupils is used to describe those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority. These pupils receive additional support from pupil premium funding.
- The school operates in two separate buildings about fifty metres apart on the same site. At different times in the school day, staff and some pupils have to move between the two buildings.
- In 2014, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school runs a breakfast club before school each day.
- The school offers full-time early years provision in the Reception classes.
- There is an on-site, privately run nursery. This is subject to a separate inspection at a different time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Boost progress across Key Stage 2 in order to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 by making sure that:
 - all staff have higher expectations of what the middle ability and most able pupils can achieve
 - the most able pupils are always given work that builds efficiently on their previous learning
 - the routine activities that pupils complete in class on a daily basis regularly provide sufficient challenge to help them move forwards in their learning
 - the feedback pupils get about their mathematics work helps them to improve their understanding.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management on the school's performance by:
 - sharpening the focus and accuracy of school leaders' evaluations of the school's work
 - making sure that subject leaders check how well the school's plans and actions to drive improvement are actually working to lift standards
 - making sure that governors use the information they receive about the school's performance to challenge school leaders about the standards being reached by pupils, particularly the middle ability and most able pupils
 - continuing to work with parents and agencies to improve the attendance and punctuality of pupils who miss too many lessons because they are absent or late without good reason.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher has a good understanding of what needs to be done in order to lift attainment in Key Stage 2. Together with other senior leaders, she is taking successful action to improve the impact of teaching. Consequently, academic standards, which dropped in 2013 and 2014, are rising.
- Senior and middle leaders' view of the school's current performance, however, is overgenerous because they thought they were further down the road with their improvement plans than they actually are. In addition, some of their plans are detailed but lack the sharp focus needed to ensure that all staff understand the need to secure the very best achievement for all pupils, especially the most able.
- Similarly, subject leaders are able to provide informed explanations about their work and improvement priorities in the subjects they lead, but are less clear about the impact of their actions to raise expectations and standards.
- While standards in English and mathematics could be higher, the wider school curriculum is well organised and worthwhile. School leaders place a high value on making sure that all pupils have equal access to a broad range of subjects and experiences at school. Through classroom activities, trips and visitors to school, pupils have many opportunities to learn new skills and to see the relevance of learning to their lives beyond school, both now and in the future.
- Special events such as 'super learning days' (when whole-school themes, such as 'What makes us British?' or 'Diversity' are used to link different subjects together) help to promote worthy values, such as respect or integrity, and also raise pupils' awareness of how others live in Britain and the wider world.
- All pupils are treated fairly by staff. Pupils of all ages learn about rights and responsibilities and are taught the difference between right and wrong. The work of the school council demonstrates pupils' understanding of how democracy operates and messages given in lessons and assemblies prompt them to reflect on the values and beliefs that guide them and others.
- Specific funds, such as the pupil premium, are spent appropriately. Pupil premium funding has been used to provide extra tuition and activities for targeted pupils, and to fund specialist support, such as 'nurture' provision and speech and language therapy. These actions are bringing benefits and the improving achievement of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school illustrates leaders' commitment to creating equal opportunities for all to succeed.
- The primary sport funding has been used to help fund the employment of specialist sports coaches, to purchase equipment and to cover the cost of staff training. The range and amount of sport and physical education on offer have increased, and staff and pupils' skill levels have risen. School records report a direct link between increased participation and achievement in sport and improved attitudes towards learning and achievement in other aspects of school life.
- In recent times, the local authority has provided a low level of support and has commissioned external support from other sources. This support has helped leaders to target their improvement plans on appropriate areas, but has not provided them with a realistic view of the school's current performance.
- Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are supportive and keen. During this inspection, for example, governors were quick to come forward and share their views about the school's work. They did so with eloquence and passion.
 - The governing body is well informed about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching because governors receive information from staff and leaders, and regularly visit the school to see teachers and pupils at work. Individual governors have specific responsibilities, for pupil premium for instance, and can explain how they stay up to date with what is happening in their particular areas of interest.
 - Nevertheless, while governors receive regular and reliable information, they have not, until recently, brought enough challenge to the school's work. They have accepted progress data too readily and have not checked carefully to see if all pupils are doing as well as they should. Similarly, they have endorsed school leaders' overgenerous view of the school's current performance without sufficient challenge or questioning.
 - On the other hand, governors do bring rigour to the management of staff. They ensure that systems for checking on teachers' work are in place. Effective teaching is highlighted and this information is used to make decisions about the deployment of staff. Throughout the school, teaching staff have the opportunity to learn from one another's practice in order to improve the quality of their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In classrooms, on the playground, at clubs, or when moving around the school, pupils usually get on well with one another and follow the school rules.
- The school has well-understood routines in place to manage pupils' behaviour; these work well. Pupils know that poor behaviour will be dealt with promptly and that good behaviour will be noticed and praised.
- Some pupils find it difficult to control aspects of their behaviour. These pupils get patient, firm and kindly support that helps them to understand what to do when they feel angry, frustrated or upset. Pupils who have found it hard to cope in other schools have come to Underwood West Primary and been helped to overcome difficulties, improve their behaviour and feel success at school.
- Pupils' attendance at school has improved over the past three years and this is testimony to the school's work to promote good attendance and to challenge unnecessary or unexplained absence. For the current year so far, attendance is just below average, but about half the absences recorded have been for non-essential reasons. In addition, some pupils are regularly late for school; they miss the start of lessons and this hinders their progress.
- There have been no permanent exclusions, but fixed-term exclusions have been used from time to time when necessary. School leaders aim to keep pupils at risk of exclusion in school so that they learn to understand expectations and raise their own aspirations and self-esteem. To this end, there are some well-organised systems to manage poor or uncooperative behaviour in a constructive fashion, which bring benefits for all.
- Pupils have a say in how things are done at school. The school council regularly seeks pupils' views about different aspects of school life. Pupils of all ages know that they will be listened to and that their opinions and actions can bring about change for the better.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- At break times, pupils usually get on well together but there are some occasional disagreements and bumps and knocks do occur when pupils engage in rough play. There are high levels of supervision and staff are quick to act if anyone needs attention or help with a problem. Consequently, the school day runs smoothly and pupils feel safe and secure in school.
- Pupils have a detailed understanding of different forms of bullying and understand that bullying, in any form, is not acceptable. They say that if it ever happens, it is stopped. Pupils are confident that adults at school will always help them, if needs be.
- Supervision at breakfast club, break times, after-school activities, and when pupils are moving between the two different buildings on the school site, is good. Staff receive appropriate training and are attentive to safety matters.
- Pupils are taught about some of life's risks, such as using roads or the internet, and learn how to manage these in a sensible way.
- School leaders give safety a high priority. The site is carefully maintained and appropriate security measures are in place.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Over time, teaching in Key Stage 2 has not been strong enough to maintain the standards seen at the time of the previous inspection. In contrast, teaching in Key Stage 1 has continued to be effective and has lifted the standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 2.
- Work in pupils' books, observations of teachers at work and progress records show that, across the school, teaching is improving and standards in Key Stage 2 are rising again. In some year groups, pupils make good progress because staff keep a close check on what pupils already know and use this information to move learning on with brisk, purposeful efficiency. Nevertheless, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are still not high enough.
- Sometimes, pupils are given work that is too easy for them. The most able pupils have to spend time going over work they already understand or they complete routine tasks that do not require them to think or further their understanding. This means that they do not learn enough and do not reach the standards that they should.
- Recently, staff have focused on improving the impact of their teaching, with a particular focus on

improving the quality of pupils' writing. Their efforts are meeting with some success. Around the school, pupils' written work is given a high profile; this is evident in displays of work. In addition, pupils are provided with activities that stimulate their ideas and give them reasons to practise and develop their writing. During this inspection, for example, pupils returned from a trip to Chester full of enthusiasm and inspiration to write about life in Roman Britain. Teaching staff were quick to seize upon this and pupils produced some good quality written work.

- While the focus on improving pupils' writing is starting to pay off, teaching staff know that there is still more work to be done to boost pupils' progress in both English and mathematics. To date, the teaching of reading and writing has been given more attention than the teaching of mathematics. This is apparent in the work in pupils' books and the school's recent progress data, which demonstrate that pupils are further ahead in their reading and writing than in their mathematical knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers' marking is regular and helpful, although more so in English than in mathematics. In response to pupils' written work, teachers frequently provide a brief analysis of strengths and development areas and direct pupils to edit and refine their work. In mathematics, however, especially for the most able, there are many ticks and encouraging words, but less evidence of pupils being required to extend their thinking or build further on an aspect of their earlier work.
- The school organises a lot of extra support and tuition for pupils with particular learning needs. This is often led by specialist staff and suitably trained teaching assistants. The work they do is effective and, in some instances, remarkably so. Pupils who need extra help receive bespoke programmes of support, often in small groups or on a one-to-one basis. They thrive at Underwood West Primary and the school has received local recognition for its good work to help pupils overcome barriers to learning.
- Teachers and pupils take pride in their classrooms. Without exception, classrooms are well organised and tidy with many displays that celebrate pupils' work and help to support their learning and development. Work in pupils' books is usually neat and carefully set out.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress across Key Stage 2 has slowed. Consequently, standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 have declined and, for the past two years, were below average, with standards in mathematics being the lowest.
- During this same time period, however, progress in the early years and across Key Stage 1 has improved and it is clear that, as pupils move up through the school, standards are rising. Even so, some pupils, particularly the middle ability and most able pupils, still need to make faster progress across Key Stage 2 in order to fulfil their academic potential at the end of Year 6.
- The vast majority of pupils start school with levels of knowledge and skills below those typical for their age. Most make good progress up until the end of Year 2 and, in 2014, pupils reached standards in reading, writing and mathematics that were just below average. This is a significant improvement on the standards seen in previous years.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress has not been quick enough and standards have declined. There have been a number of reasons for this, including an above average proportion of pupils leaving or joining the school just before the end of key stage tests and the particular needs and circumstances of some pupils. Nevertheless, progress data and inspection evidence show that the middle ability and most able pupils do not always reach the standards that they should. This is because some of the teaching they receive does not meet their learning needs with sufficient precision or challenge.
- Having said this, some of the most able pupils do reach high standards. In 2014, for example, two pupils reached Level 6, the highest level possible, in the Key Stage 2 tests. However, across the school the achievement of the most able pupils is variable. They make faster progress in some classes than in others and this means that some do not reach the high standards of which they are capable.
- Disabled pupils and those with special education needs do well at Underwood West Primary because they get plenty of support and expert help. This is a significant feature of the school's work. While many of these pupils may not reach high academic standards, they are given plenty of opportunities to experience success and to feel good about their achievements. Pupils with a wide range of learning and/or medical needs, some of which are complex and require a lot of specialist help, are able to make the most of school because of the good level of care, support and tuition they receive.
- Within the school, disadvantaged pupils reach similar standards to those of non-disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. In fact, in 2014, disadvantaged pupils at the school did slightly better in reading and writing. When compared with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, the standards reached by disadvantaged pupils at Underwood West Primary were over four terms behind in reading and writing, and

close to six terms behind in mathematics. School leaders are aware that both groups of pupils, disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged, could do better. Fortunately, teaching is improving and current progress records show that standards for all pupils are on the up.

The early years provision

is good

- Good leadership has created well-resourced indoor and outdoor areas where children receive good teaching that feeds their curiosity. Consequently, they become confident learners who feel safe, enjoy school, can cooperate with others and are able to concentrate on tasks. These good learning habits, which they develop in the early years, prepare them well for their start in Year 1. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) and early reading skills, in particular, are well organised and effective.
- The vast majority of children start school with levels of knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age. For some pupils, skill levels are significantly below typical expectations, particularly in their literacy, mathematics and communication skills. They make good, and in some cases excellent, progress and the proportion that reach a good level of development by the end of the reception year is increasing over time. In 2013, for instance, it was just 18%; this doubled to 36% in 2014 and, in 2015, the proportion is set to increase further. While these figures are still some way below the national figures, there is no doubt that the improving trend represents good progress from children's starting points.
- Children make good progress because the early years team nurtures and motivates them to do their best. Children with particular learning needs get expert support so that they can make the most of their first year at school. In the main, children respond well to this extra help and do well.
- Good communication between home and school means that parents get regular updates about their children's progress and learning needs. In addition, the school provides workshops and information sessions to explain about school routines and aspects of teaching and learning. Consequently, parents and children understand the school's expectations.
- Children appear happy and relaxed at school. They play happily alongside one another and their behaviour is good.

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	133271
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	456177

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	446
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Abberley
Headteacher	Jane Tomlinson
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2012
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