

Legh Vale Primary School

Legh Road, Haydock, St Helens, Merseyside, WA11 0ER

Inspection dates 10–11 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- Teaching is good. As a result, pupils make good progress in lessons and over time.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in both mathematics and English is above average. Pupils' progress from their various starting points is good.
- Carefully tailored support for pupils with special educational needs and also for disadvantaged pupils enables these pupils to make good progress and to participate fully in activities.
- Behaviour is good and attendance is above average. Pupils have very positive attitudes, enjoy coming to school and have very good relationships with each other and with adults. Their conduct is outstanding. They feel safe in school.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, strongly supported by the deputy headteacher and governors, provides clear direction. Senior leaders have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school further. Leaders have secured recent improvements to the quality of teaching that are resulting in good achievement for pupils.
- Good promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables pupils to thrive in a very supportive learning community. Pupils have frequent opportunities to pursue a variety of interests through the taught curriculum and a wide variety of opportunities to extend their learning beyond the classroom.
- Provision in the early years is good. Children settle quickly and learn rapidly; consequently, they are well prepared for entry into Year1.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not outstanding. Work is not always set at the right level so that some pupils do not always achieve their full potential.
- Pupils are not always given good guidance about how to improve their work nor do they always act upon the comments their teachers make.
- Subject and curriculum leaders are not yet fully involved in driving improvement in teaching and learning in their subjects in order to spread effectively the best practice which exists in the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons and made short visits to other activities led by teachers and trained assistants. Of these observations, inspectors carried out 20 jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.
- Two groups of pupils met with inspectors and inspectors also talked to a number of pupils in lessons and around the school. Inspectors held discussions with staff, including senior leaders. They also conducted meetings with the Chair and members of the governing body and with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 126 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also held discussions with some parents. They also took account of the 46 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work with senior leaders and read a range of documents. These included documents about the school's strategies to enable leaders to gain an accurate view of its performance, school improvement plans, data on pupils' progress, policies and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Judith Tolley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anthony Buckley	Additional Inspector
Paul Copping	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Legh Vale Primary School is a much larger than average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is low, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those supported by the pupil premium funding (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is broadly average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is higher than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Children attend the nursery on a full or part-time basis.
- The school shares a site with the Legh Vale Children's Centre. This is inspected separately and receives a separate report which is available on the Ofsted website.
- The school has a number of awards including Healthy School status, Activemark and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further by:
 - ensuring that work is always set at the right level so that all pupils are effectively challenged
 - making sure that pupils are always given good guidance about how to improve their work and the time to respond.
- Further develop the role of subject and curriculum leaders so that they are directly involved in spreading best practice in teaching and learning in their subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leadership team have an accurate view of what the school does well and what needs to be improved and provide very clear direction. As a result of the actions the school has taken in response to the recent dip in English results, attainment and the rate of progress pupils make in reading and writing have improved and a greater proportion of pupils are now on track to exceed their targets.
- Leaders regularly and rigorously check pupils' progress, effectively hold teachers to account, identify training needs for teachers, and trigger interventions for individual pupils when their progress slows. This, together with the introduction of revised whole-school policies for assessment and marking, has been an important factor in securing recent improvements in teaching and learning.
- The school works hard to ensure all pupils have an equal opportunity to achieve their potential. Pupil premium funding is used to good effect to support disadvantaged pupils. As a result, gaps in the performance of disadvantaged pupils have closed in reading and mathematics and are closing rapidly in writing. Similarly, leaders have used primary school sports funding to good effect to provide specialist coaching for pupils and to improve the quality of teaching in physical education across the school. This has also led to increased participation rates in extra-curricular and sports activities across the school.
- Subject leaders are involved in how the school checks on its performance and school improvement planning procedures but they are not directly involved in improving teaching and learning in their subjects through, for instance, working alongside teachers to improve their practice or to drive improvement in their subjects across the wider curriculum.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, meets pupils' needs and aspirations well and prepares them well for citizenship in modern Britain. It is enriched by music, including instrumental lessons, as well as drama and French. Pupils also benefit from specialist coaching in physical education, dance and from working alongside artists. They also take part in regular trips and visits, including residential visits, which extend their learning outside the classroom. Pupils also benefit from links with the local high school, for example, in science and sport. The curriculum is enriched by a wide variety of extra-curricular and other activities such as a variety of sports and other clubs and gardening. Pupils also have the opportunity of extending their learning outside the classroom through the woodland area managed by the school.
- The teaching of reading is effective and children enjoy their reading. Most read fluently and with understanding, are able to explain in detail what they have read and make inferences. The impact of this can clearly be seen in their own writing. The library is popular and children regularly do research using the internet. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to develop their reading skills to the full in reading sessions when they are working on their own.
- Safeguarding procedures are robust and meet government requirements.
- The school works closely with parents and actively encourages them to be involved in the school's work and their children's learning through, for instance, workshops and other activities such as opportunities for them to 'stay and play' in the early years provision. In discussion, parents say that they appreciate the opportunities they have to talk to teachers and be involved in their children's learning.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this good school.
- **The governance of the school:-**
 - The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas which need to be improved. Its members regularly check the school's performance, including data that show pupils' attainment and progress. They are able to talk confidently about how the school is narrowing gaps in the performance of different groups through successful intervention. Governors have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and the performance of staff, including how good performance is rewarded and any underperformance is tackled. The efficiency of spending is scrutinised, the effectiveness of the use of the primary sports and of the pupil premium funding, for example. They are actively involved in the life of the school and have strong, positive relationships with senior leaders. As a result they are able, through open and honest challenge and support, to hold leaders effectively to account.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their conduct is usually outstanding. They are courteous and polite. In lessons and around the school it is clear that they have excellent relationships with each other and with adults in the school. They help younger pupils around the school, play well together, and help one another in lessons when working with a partner or in small groups.
- Pupils take responsibility very seriously and are proud of their contribution to the school, for example as school councillors and members of the Eco committee. They take responsibility for the school vegetable garden and their produce is used in the school kitchen. They regularly organise fund-raising events for a variety of charities and are proud of their contribution to the local community.
- Pupils come to lessons equipped and ready to work. They take pride in their school and take care of their classrooms and playground. They work responsibly and with enthusiasm. On rare occasions they lose concentration when activities are too easy or the pace of learning slows. They listen carefully to others and respect each other's views. Pupils take pride in their work and are careful with their handwriting and the way they present their work. When given the opportunity to work with others to solve problems they do so enthusiastically.
- Some pupils enter into a lively written dialogue with their teachers about how to improve their work; however, this is not always the case.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say they feel safe and are confident that any poor behaviour is dealt with promptly and effectively. They are aware of the different forms of bullying, such as name-calling, homophobic bullying and cyber-bullying that can take place and know how to deal with it.
- Pupils know how to stay safe and have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy using the equipment in the playground and the wide range of opportunities they have to participate in sports and dance. They are enthusiastic about the wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, that are provided and which have a positive impact on their health and well-being.
- Pupils who may have challenging behaviour are supported very effectively to make good choices and, as a result, they are able to learn effectively and make good progress alongside their classmates. Incidences of poor behaviour are very rare.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good across the school over time, and there are examples of outstanding practice.
- Teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to solve problems, individually or in small groups, which not only excite and absorb pupils but also increase their confidence and their speaking skills. Clear modelling by teachers coupled with effective questioning enable pupils to understand and apply new ideas successfully.
- Frequent opportunities to share and explore their ideas increase their skills in communicating their ideas clearly in speech and in writing. For instance, Year 6 pupils made rapid progress in developing and planning a balanced argument as a result of this. However, on some occasions, they do not always get sufficient opportunity to explore ideas for themselves or explain their working and their progress slows because their understanding is not secure enough.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together and ask pupils searching questions to see how much they have understood. As a result of activities which were very well matched to their needs and enabled them to investigate ideas, Year 5 pupils moved rapidly on from finding out the probability of throwing particular numbers on a dice to expressing this in terms of fractions. However, on occasions, pupils find tasks too easy or too difficult because work is not always so well matched to their capabilities.
- Similarly, Year 1 and 2 pupils moved rapidly from constructing simple sentences in response to throwing dice depicting a setting, a character and an object to storytelling in small groups, with some making up their own dice to do so. This was as a result of very effective modelling and questioning by the teacher.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and there are examples of outstanding practice. Where this is the case, information about pupils' progress determines the next steps in learning for individual pupils and this feeds directly into lesson planning. Pupils themselves maintain a dialogue with teachers about what they need to do next and are given extra challenges to complete. However, marking and advice are not always to this high standard. Pupils do not always receive the specific guidance they need to help them improve their

work, particularly the accuracy of their spelling or opportunities to respond to advice.

- Reading is taught effectively and even the youngest take pleasure in applying their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) to read and write words and simple sentences or read out what they have written. The effectiveness of reading sessions when not guided by an adult varies across the school. In some lessons, activities lack variety and pupils do not have enough opportunity to explore texts or to examine, for instance, how authors use language to create atmosphere or depict character.
- The impact of teaching on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have frequent opportunities to increase their understanding of their own and other cultures. Pupils' work is celebrated in high-quality displays around the school which reflect the variety of experiences they have through the taught curriculum as well as through visits and events at the school.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children enter Year 1 with skills and knowledge broadly typical for their age and are confident learners, well prepared for the Key Stage 1 curriculum.
- Overall, pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. By the end of Year 6, standards in mathematics, reading and writing are above average. Standards dipped in 2014 in reading and writing to broadly average. Standards in mathematics have improved steadily over the last three years because of a whole-school focus on mathematics and are above average. Work in pupils' books and the school's own data indicate that standards in reading and writing have risen and are now also above average again.
- The proportions of pupils making and exceeding the progress expected of them from their starting points are both above national figures. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards in reading, writing and mathematics have risen over the last year and the rate of pupils' progress has also increased so that the proportion of pupils making more than the progress expected of them has also increased. A higher proportion of pupils are now on track to make good progress in relation to their starting points.
- The most able pupils usually make good progress from their starting points in mathematics, reading and writing, with some reaching the highest levels by the end of Year 6. School data and work in pupils' books indicate that a higher proportion of pupils are currently on track to reach the highest levels.
- Pupils write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences and use a good range of vocabulary and structures.
- Progress in reading is good. Pupils are taught phonics effectively and are able to apply their knowledge in reading and writing.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as their peers as a result of the extra help they are given, according to need, both in class and in groups. Teaching assistants usually provide sensitive and effective support, enabling these pupils to participate successfully in whole-class activities.
- The extra support, such as extra help in the classroom and support from teaching assistants, the school provides using the pupil premium enables disadvantaged pupils to reach their targets and to make the same good progress as their peers. Gaps between the attainment of these pupils in mathematics and reading and their classmates have closed and in writing they are closing rapidly. Over the last three years pupils have moved from up to one year to one term behind the rest. In reading and mathematics they reach the same standards as other pupils in the school and higher standards than disadvantaged pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.

The early years provision is good

- Children make good progress and achieve well in the Nursery and Reception classes, as a result of consistently good teaching. Most children start in the early years provision with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age, but many begin with skills that are low, especially in their communication, language and personal and social skills.
- As a result of very well-established routines and very effective procedures for making sure their transition from home or pre-school settings is a smooth one, children settle in quickly and behave well. They clearly enjoy the activities planned for them, take turns and learn and play well together.
- Children make particularly good progress in developing their speaking, reading, writing, mathematical skills as well as their personal and social skills.

- The provision is well led and managed. Adults work together very effectively to ensure all children are able to make good progress. They monitor individual progress on a daily basis and use this information effectively to plan next steps for children's learning.
- Activities led by teachers and teaching assistants are well planned and designed to excite and interest children. For instance, children delighted in making a balloon rocket and were confident in providing the missing instruction. They frequently share their ideas and their discoveries with others, for instance one group explaining that the rocket went up instead of down if it was turned the other way.
- Similarly, children in the Nursery were completely absorbed in making cakes, could list the ingredients and explain how they were measured with scales. Adults take every opportunity to engage children in conversation to extend their learning and to consolidate their mathematical, reading and writing skills and children respond enthusiastically. As a result, they make rapid progress in developing their language and communication skills. The outside area is used effectively with well planned activities, which excite children's interest and enable them to make the next steps in their learning.

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	104782
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	453375

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	566
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dennis Marsh
Headteacher	Andrew Howard
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2007
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