

Astmoor Primary School

Kingshead Close, Castlefields, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2JE

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

- Leadership and management require improvement. Leaders have not maintained good quality teaching and achievement since the previous inspection.
- Targets set for teachers and those set in plans for improving the school's effectiveness are not closely linked to pupils' progress. The steps to measure progress toward reaching these targets are not precise enough to help leaders check if actions are having the right effect.
- Governors do not have the skills and knowledge necessary to hold school leaders to account for standards at the school.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement because teachers do not always set tasks that build upon what pupils already know and can do. Neither do they always check that pupils follow the advice provided when their work is marked.
- Staff have not had enough opportunity to observe things other teachers do that are leading to good or better learning.
- Achievement overall requires improvement especially in mathematics. The profile of mathematics is not high enough. There are too few opportunities for pupils to practise and develop mathematical skills across other subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- The skills of middle leaders have improved since the previous inspection.
- The headteacher and governors have taken effective action to eradicate inadequate teaching.
- Behaviour is good in class and around the school.
- Pupils take care in presenting their work and are proud of their vibrant, happy school.
- The needs of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are met well.
- Pupils feel safe in school and are cared for successfully by adults.
- The teaching of reading is good. Attainment and progress in reading are above national levels.
- The quality of teaching and learning in writing is improving so that it is mostly good across the school.
- Provision in the early years is effective and children make good progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes taught by teachers and in activities taken by teaching assistants. They also made brief visits to different parts of the school to look at learning.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils and observed and spoke to pupils during lessons, play times and at lunchtime. They also listened to pupils reading.
- The headteacher was away on an exchange visit but had a lengthy telephone conversation with an inspector.
- Meetings were held with staff, senior leaders and managers, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. An educational consultant spoke to an inspector on the telephone.
- An inspector met informally with parents as they dropped their children off at school and attended the mathematics workshop taking place in the Reception class.
- A range of documents were considered by inspectors, including the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, checks on the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings, and records relating to attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors also examined work in pupils' books.
- There were too few responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for them to be taken into account.
- Inspectors considered 18 staff responses to the inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Louise Murphy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila O'Keeffe

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than most primary schools.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well above the national level and increasing year on year.
- Most pupils are of a White British heritage and there are no children at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The school provides full-time places for children in the Reception class and part-time places for three- and four-year-old children in the Nursery.
- The school provides a breakfast club and a 'wake and shake' activity before lessons start.
- Four teachers have joined the staff since the previous inspection in 2012.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning so that pupils make at least good progress, especially in mathematics, by making sure that teachers:
 - use all assessment information available to plan tasks that challenge all pupils effectively and build upon what they already know and can do
 - use the revised marking policy effectively so that pupils have the opportunity to improve their work
 - raise the profile of mathematics across the school by providing more opportunities for pupils to practise mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management including governance by:
 - making sure that targets set in the school development plan and those set for teachers link closely to pupils' progress and that the achievement of these targets is easy to measure
 - providing more opportunities for teachers to observe others and identify strategies that they themselves could use to achieve outstanding learning for pupils
 - urgently developing the skills of the governing body so that they hold school leaders fully to account for standards at the school.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The work of the headteacher and other school leaders has not been fully effective in ensuring that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement have been maintained since the previous inspection.
- Middle leaders, many new to their role, are being supported to develop their skills well. Although they are not fully effective they are becoming increasingly involved in leading their subjects forward. They monitor teaching and support colleagues to develop their practice. However, there are too few opportunities for staff to observe others teaching, and to identify strategies that they could try to improve learning in their own classrooms.
- Targets set in the school development plan and those set for teachers clearly link to appropriate school priorities. However, these targets do not link closely to pupils' progress. There is not a clear way to check when these targets are achieved to help school leaders evaluate the impact of their actions and raise standards quickly. This also makes it more difficult to assess when teachers' performance has improved enough to be rewarded by a salary increase.
- This is a school that fosters good relations and leaders are committed to making sure that any form of discrimination is effectively tackled. For example, leaders ensure that pupil premium money is wisely spent and the progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving as they move up through the school. However, there is still work to do to ensure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed by raising achievement to at least good, particularly in mathematics.
- The curriculum is based around topics and is beginning to improve pupils' literacy skills, although there is still some work to do to improve mathematics skills across subjects.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop their understanding of fundamental British values. All pupils learn of democracy by voting for pupil councillors. Tolerance and respect for different cultures and religions are developed through visiting religious buildings and learning about festivals such as Diwali and Chinese New Year. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is given good attention. Pupils work and play well together and a focus on learning about human rights and cultural diversity prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- The primary school sport funding is spent effectively. Specialist coaches work with pupils and staff to help develop their sporting skills. The school offers a variety of after-school sporting activities and pupils are involved in a range of inter-school competitions. The health and well-being week was particularly effective in encouraging pupils to take more exercise and eat healthy food. As a result, more pupils are participating in sporting activities and developing increasingly healthy lifestyles.
- More recently, the local authority has been providing an increased level of support to the school. For example, local authority officers are brokering support for the headteacher from an effectiveness partner and have provided staff training to develop problem-solving activities during mathematics lessons.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good and meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance requires improvement. Governors have been too dependent on reports from the headteacher and other staff to help them to find out about the quality of teaching and learning at the school. They do not have a secure understanding of how to analyse national performance data and recognise that they need to reassess the level of challenge that they provide, as standards have not been maintained since the previous inspection. Governors are better informed about the quality of teaching and know about the arrangements for checking on teachers' performance. They understand that rewards for good teaching must be linked to pupils' progress. What is more, they have played an effective part in supporting the headteacher in swiftly tackling underperformance.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is bright and vibrant. Pupils have created stunning artwork to decorate the corridor walls and shared areas, they keep their classrooms tidy, the work in their books is well presented and they look smart in their uniforms.
- Pupils say they are happy at school. They are well mannered, take good care of each other and show respect for the adults around them. They say that they like their teachers because they help them with their work and make learning fun. Most pupils behave well and the small minority of pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are supported effectively so that learning continues without interruption.
- School councillors are proud of their achievements. For example, they chose lunchtime equipment that helps children to play together well. They also arrange a variety of activities to raise funds for a number of local and national charities because they want to help others less fortunate.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school because they know that the adults care for them well. Pupils confirm that there is always a member of staff who will listen to them and help to sort out any concerns.
- Pupils explain different forms of discrimination and bullying and understand the difference between bullying and falling out. What is more, pupils confirm that bullying is rare and are confident that staff and 'worry wardens' would help them to deal quickly with any problems that did occur.
- Staff make sure that pupils have a good understanding of risk, including those associated with using the internet. Junior safety officers check that the school environment is safe and run competitions and award prizes in school to make sure keeping safe is always high on the agenda. They have also presented information to Reception children on how to keep themselves safe on the road.
- Pupils whose current circumstances might make them vulnerable are very well supported by school staff who will work closely with external agencies when necessary.
- The well-attended breakfast club provides a calm start to the day and makes sure that the pupils who attend are on time for their lessons and ready to learn. Pupils also choose to join in the 'wake up and shake up' activity that runs daily in the school reception area.
- Attendance is broadly in line with the national average and the number of pupils who miss school regularly has reduced.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Information about pupils' progress, observations of teaching and work in pupils' books indicate that while much of the teaching is now good, the quality of teaching has not been good enough over time to help pupils to make consistently good progress, especially in mathematics.
- As a result of the implementation of the recently revised marking policy, the quality of teachers' marking has improved. Teachers compliment pupils on work that is done well and provide guidance to pupils on how to improve work even more. However, some teachers do not make sure that pupils act upon advice and correct their work. Neither do they provide pupils with the strategies needed to help them to successfully learn from their mistakes.
- Teachers question pupils skilfully to assess their level of understanding. However, they do not use all of the information available to them to plan work that successfully builds on what pupils know and can do, particularly, though not exclusively, in mathematics. As a result, classroom activities do not challenge all pupils effectively; they are too hard for lower ability pupils and too easy for the most able.
- There has been a drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning in writing. When possible teachers now link writing to practical experiences to make it more enjoyable for pupils. For example, pupils were invited to dress as characters from the Harry Potter books and the school hall was decorated to look like the great hall at Hogwarts. Such exciting experiences help pupils to produce more interesting and exciting pieces of writing and are having a positive impact on standards. Children's writing is practised in subjects other than English and celebrated through being attractively displayed around the school. This provides examples of good work and motivates pupils to do their best.
- The teaching of mathematics requires improvement. Activities do not always take learning forward

because they do not match closely to pupils' ability. Mathematics does not benefit from the same high profile around the school as reading and writing, and skills are not promoted in other subjects.

- The teaching of reading is good. Training has improved the teaching of phonics (letters and their sounds) and teachers accurately assess reading skills. As a result, staff provide focused help for any pupil requiring additional support. There is a wide range of books available for pupils to choose from and all children, including those in Nursery class, are encouraged to read and share books at home.
- Teaching assistants are now well trained and work closely with teachers to provide a good level of support to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Progress made by pupils from their individual starting points is uneven across the school and not always good enough, especially in mathematics. As a result, achievement requires improvement.
- Since the previous inspection, end-of-key-stage test results show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 usually vary between below and well-below national levels. In the 2014 national tests, the attainment of Year 6 pupils improved in reading and was above average. Though attainment remained below national levels in writing and well below in mathematics, inspection evidence indicates that this is improving. Attainment in reading is now above average, in writing broadly average and in mathematics is below average although starting to improve.
- In 2014, most pupils made the progress expected of them in reading and writing. The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in reading was high compared to national figures and in writing compared favourably with the national figure. Assessment information and inspectors' observations show that the progress made by pupils currently in school is good overall in reading, improving and often good in writing and requiring improvement in mathematics.
- Pupils are encouraged to read regularly and from low starting points make good progress in reading as they move up through the school. In 2014, fewer than half of the Year 1 pupils reached the required standard in the national phonics screening. However, Year 2 pupils who read to an inspector used their phonics skills well to help them to sound out words. Older pupils who spoke to an inspector reported that they enjoy a range of opportunities to read at school and particularly like reading out loud because it fills them with confidence.
- Progress in writing is improving because there has been an emphasis on developing basic skills, and more pupils now write interesting, grammatically correct sentences. However, the level of challenge for the most and least able pupils is not always focused accurately enough to ensure consistently good progress.
- The proportion of pupils making expected and more than expected progress in mathematics was below national levels in 2014. Training for staff to improve mathematical subject knowledge and increased levels of support from the subject leader are in place. These strategies have not been in place long enough to have had a positive impact on standards in mathematics although progress has increased. There are still too few opportunities for pupils to practise problem-solving skills in mathematics and in other subjects, and pupils are not challenged at precisely the right level to help them to move forward quickly.
- There are too few opportunities provided to boost the skills of the most able pupils. Tasks provided by teachers do not always challenge the most able pupils effectively or encourage them to think hard. With the exception of reading at the end of Key Stage 2 proportionally fewer pupils attain at the higher Levels 3 and 5 than do so nationally. The progress made by the most able pupils in school is not consistently good and requires improvement.
- The needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are now met in full. Though the proportion of pupils with additional needs is increasing and needs are becoming more complex they are identified early and effective strategies put into place to address learning and pastoral needs. The school also works well with other agencies when necessary to enhance support. However, this well-focused support that is now regularly checked for effectiveness has not been in place long enough to ensure consistently good progress for all pupils with additional needs.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2014, disadvantaged pupils in school attained at approximately two terms behind non-disadvantaged pupils in reading, two years behind in writing, and five terms behind in mathematics. When compared to other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils attained at a similar level in reading, five terms behind in writing and over two years behind in mathematics. Pupils did not progress as well as other pupils nationally in writing or mathematics; progress in reading, however, was well above the national figure.
- The school rightly recognised that gaps between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils had to narrow and successful strategies are now in place. There is very little

difference between the progress made by disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils currently in school. In a number of classes disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than other pupils.

The early years provision is good

- Most children start in Nursery and Reception classes with knowledge and skills lower than those typically expected. Though individual starting points vary year on year, approximately one third of children start school with skills and knowledge that are significantly lower than expected for their age. This is because language skills are not well developed and an increasing number of children are joining the Nursery class wearing nappies and using a dummy.
- Staff recognise that the most able children could be challenged more effectively and are now tackling this. However, they work well together and with other agencies to develop children's language and understanding, and these improvements to communication skills support children so they make good progress overall. By the time they leave early years, communication, number, physical, personal and social skills are all well developed. However, because of the ground children have to make up from their low and very low starting points reading and writing skills are not so well developed. Approximately half of the children are not fully prepared for the work that they will meet in Year 1.
- As a result of effective leadership, the quality of teaching and learning in the early years is good. Staff plan activities carefully to appeal to children's interests and which encourage them to get actively involved in their learning. For example, one group of children gleefully shared their ideas and worked very well as a team to build a rocket. Another group sent toy cars down a ramp, enthusiastically predicting which number the car would land on.
- Behaviour is good and relationships are highly positive, adults are caring and children feel safe and secure. The importance of health and well-being is emphasised. For example, children washed their hands thoroughly to clean away any germs before making their healthy snacks that they then sat and enjoyed together.
- Effective leadership ensures staff deployment is good and assessment is used to identify priorities. Partnerships with parents are good. Parents who spoke with an inspector felt well informed about how their child was doing at school and were pleased with the progress being made. One comment identified that children could not wait to get into school. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning. Sessions are held twice each week to show parents how they can support their children with phonics, literacy and number skills. These are always attended well.

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	111217
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	456165

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	152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Lloyd
Headteacher	Louisa Aldridge
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2012
Telephone number	01928 565053
Fax number	01928 574627
Email address	sec.astmoor@halton.gov.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

