

Murdishaw West Community Primary School

Barnfield Avenue, Murdishaw, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 6EP

Inspection dates 6–7 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Leaders and managers have not fully ensured that the quality of teaching is consistently good over time. As a result, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014 were lower than in previous years, and below average in all subjects.
- Not enough pupils made better-than-expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they left at the end of Year 6 in 2014.
- Not all aspects of pupils' understanding of life in British society are equally well developed.
- A below average proportion of pupils were secure in their phonic skills and knowledge (linking letters and sounds) at the end of Year 1 in 2014.
- The early years requires improvement. In 2014, the proportion of children entering Year 1 with the skills and knowledge necessary for the next stage of their learning was well below average.
- Tasks and activities set for pupils, especially the most able, are not always at the correct level to ensure that all pupils attain the standards of which they are capable. As a result, achievement requires improvement.
- Marking is not of a consistently good quality. Teachers miss opportunities to make pupils aware of how they can improve their work.
- Too few opportunities are available for pupils to practise their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills across all subjects.
- Teaching does not always fully engage, or capture, the interests of all pupils.
- Middle leaders do not play a full role in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders and governors have taken decisive action to recruit and develop teachers. This is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching. The effectiveness of governance is improving.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Attendance is continuously improving. Pupils enjoy coming to school and say they feel safe and well looked after.
- Pupils' achievement in Key Stage 1 has improved over the last three years.
- Progress is now rapidly improving for most groups of pupils, including children in the early years.
- Parental engagement is improving, particularly in the early years. The vast majority of parents are very positive about all aspects of the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons in all year groups, as well as the teaching for small groups of pupils, and sessions aimed at helping pupils to learn to read. Two lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised during lessons and separately.
- The inspectors considered the 14 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the school's own surveys of parents' views.
- Responses to a questionnaire completed by 22 members of staff were considered.
- Inspectors held meetings with six governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, school leaders, and staff responsible for English, mathematics, provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and children in the early years.
- A meeting took place with a representative from the local authority.
- A range of documents was examined. These included the school's checks on the quality of teaching, development plans, and the school's reviews of its own performance, information about pupils' progress, various records of pupils' attendance, behaviour records and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Lenford White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Julie Downing

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those supported by pupil premium funding, is more than twice the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. A small number are from minority ethnic groups and few speak English as an additional language.
- Children in the early years provision attend a Reception class on a full-time basis.
- 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.
- Since the previous inspection, a number of new staff have been appointed, including two newly qualified teachers and an early years manager. Two governors and a new Chair of the Governing Body have been appointed. At the time of the inspection, three teachers were on long-term leave and a number of posts were being covered by temporary staff.
- A breakfast club is available to pupils. This is managed by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good and thus raise pupils' achievement, especially in Key Stage 2, by:
 - making sure that work is always set at the right level to ensure that all pupils, especially the most able, make good progress
 - making sure that teachers' marking is of a consistently high standard throughout the school and that teachers take every opportunity to make pupils aware of how they can improve their work
 - providing as many opportunities as possible for pupils to practise their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills across all subjects
 - ensuring that teachers encourage pupils to use the rich variety of information available in classrooms to improve their learning
 - ensuring that teaching always engages and captures the interests of all pupils.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that middle leaders play a full role in improving the quality of teaching and learning
 - making sure that all pupils are aware of the culturally diverse nature of British society.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, school leaders, particularly the headteacher, have operated within very challenging circumstances. They have faced significant turbulence in staffing and difficulties in making permanent appointments, all of which have impacted adversely on the quality of teaching and contributed to a decline in standards in Key Stage 2 in 2014. However, senior leaders have responded effectively to these challenges. Also, governance is improving and becoming more effective in holding school leaders to account. As a result, pupils are making rapidly improving progress in both Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Senior leaders have put into place effective interim arrangements for the coordination of English and mathematics. They have made learning related to problem-solving a priority in mathematics, and ensure that pupils have as many opportunities as possible to practise their reading skills across the curriculum. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' progress in these areas is improving rapidly. However, middle leaders have too few opportunities to be directly involved in improving the quality of teaching and learning because their role is yet to be fully developed.
- Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching are leading to strong improvements in its quality. All teachers are set challenging targets. These are linked to the school's priorities, including raising levels of achievement, and are closely checked by senior leaders and shared with governors. Teachers are appreciative of the professional development they receive, which is helping to improve their practice.
- Pupil premium funding is managed effectively by senior leaders. This has helped to ensure that the attainment gap between eligible pupils and their peers in the school is narrowing rapidly in all year groups, and that their progress is improving apace.
- The school is well on its way to fully implementing its new curriculum. Reading, writing and mathematics are promoted well across all subjects. Pupils enjoy writing about their visits, enjoy problem-solving and are encouraged to read every day in school. However, although there have been improvements in promoting pupils' spelling in English lessons, the school's work to promote spelling, grammar and punctuation across all subjects is not consistently effective in enabling pupils to achieve as well as they should in these aspects of their work.
- Pupils are aware of British values. Their work on the school council helps them to understand the rule of law and democratic principles. Senior leaders ensure that pupils are prepared well for their responsibilities in later life. However, although pupils understand that 'Britishness' covers people from many different cultures and communities, their knowledge of the culturally diverse nature of British society is still not fully developed.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is improving. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are aware of the major world faiths of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism, engage in fundraising activities and are respectful toward each other and their teachers. Pupils enjoy various educational visits linked to, for example, their work on the Second World War and the Victorians, and enjoy playing instruments such as the flute and guitar.
- The school's work to challenge discrimination and promote equality of opportunity is rapidly improving. Senior leaders are fully aware of any achievement gaps between groups of pupils, including boys and girls, and these are continuing to narrow. The school also fosters good relations with all.
- The school's relationship with parents has improved since the previous inspection and is particularly strong in the early years. Parents who spoke to inspectors were of the opinion that the school has a good reputation in the community and the overwhelming majority of those who completed Parent View, and the school's own surveys of parents' views, are of the opinion that their children are doing well.
- Senior leaders and governors ensure the primary school sport funding is well spent. This has a good impact on developing teachers' skills, through their work alongside professional coaches, and is encouraging pupils' participation in sports such as tennis, gymnastics, cricket and rugby. The funding has improved participation in competitive sports and helped with the training of pupil sports leaders.
- Senior leaders have a productive relationship with the local authority which has most recently worked well with the school to improve the quality of teaching and learning and provision in the early years.
- Senior leaders are vigilant and make sure that the school has effective safeguarding arrangements in place and that they meet statutory requirements. All staff know the protocols for ensuring that all pupils, including children in the early years, are safe and looked after well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective and has improved since the previous inspection. Governors know where the school's strengths lie and are acutely aware of what it needs to do to improve further. Governors are well trained, come into school regularly, and report on developments in their various curriculum areas.

- Governors receive regular reports on the quality of teaching. They are prepared to reward teachers for their work, but only if they are satisfied that they are meeting their targets. Governors ensure specialist support is available, for example, to improve mathematics, and make sure that comprehensive training and professional development are available for newly qualified teachers. They have a good understanding of achievement data.
- Governors oversee performance management arrangements closely. They hold senior leaders to account for the performance of teachers and for the achievement of pupils. They ensure that any underperformance by teachers in the classroom is addressed with rigour. This has helped to secure better standards, especially in Key Stage 2, this year.
- Governors know that support through the pupil premium is making a positive difference for disadvantaged pupils, and that the steps taken by school leadership to achieve this are continuing to improve the standards attained by eligible pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The vast majority of pupils enjoy coming to school, evidenced by their much improved attendance. They enjoy learning with their friends and are respectful towards adults and each other. Their regular participation in breakfast club helps them to catch up on learning, and ensures that they are punctual.
- Pupils, including children in the early years, behave sensibly when moving around the school and during break and lunch times. They are appreciative of their well-equipped play areas and of their generous green spaces, and make a good contribution towards ensuring that these are looked after well and kept tidy.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well in class, listen to what their teachers have to say, and value the contribution of their classmates. Teachers, teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors are highly skilled at managing the behaviour of a small minority of pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour.
- Pupils are of the opinion that behaviour is good most of the time. They say that it is not good all of the time because sometimes, in their words, 'People are noisy and don't follow the rules.'
- The majority of parents who completed Parent View, as well as all those who completed the school's own surveys of parents' views are of the opinion that behaviour is good. Inspection evidence, including discussions with parents and a full examination of the school's behaviour logs, reveals that behaviour is typically good.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and know how to respond in emergency situations. This was demonstrated during the inspection when, unexpectedly, the school fire alarm sounded. Pupils from all year groups, including those in the early years, came out of their classes in single file and calmly and quietly assembled on the playground while the headteacher investigated the incident.
- The vast majority of parents who completed Parent View and all parents who completed the school's own surveys of parents' views are of the opinion that their children are safe and secure at school.
- Pupils are of the opinion that bullying is rare, and say that they are confident in talking to any member of staff, including the headteacher, if they have any concerns.
- Pupils have a good awareness of most forms of discrimination-based bullying, such as racism, which they say is 'Making fun of someone because they are different.'
- Pupils know what cyber bullying is and say that it can take place on 'anything that is connected to the internet', including laptops, hand-held games and mobile phones. They know never to visit any websites that are 'too old for you', and to always seek the advice of adults if they are unsure about any aspects of surfing the internet.
- Pupils learn about dangers and risks through assemblies and their personal, social, health and citizenship education programme. They know always to wear a helmet when on their bicycles, never to go into closed-off areas such as building sites, and not to talk to strangers.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, over time, it has not been effective enough to ensure that pupils' achievement, particularly in Key Stage 2, is consistently good. Some aspects of teaching have improved since the previous inspection. For example, pupils are more confident in sharing their ideas in class and teachers' work to help pupils develop and apply their problem-solving skills is very effective. In addition to this, a number of initiatives have been put into place aimed at challenging pupils in their learning, and providing opportunities for them to review, and improve their work. However, many such initiatives are relatively new and it is too early to see their full impact on outcomes for pupils.
- Teachers develop pupils' skills in using technology well. This was exemplified in an upper Key Stage 2 English class where pupils made good progress, while demonstrating their well-developed skills in using word-processing programmes and searching the internet for information. Pupils worked exceptionally well together to find out about the birth of the recent addition to the Royal Family and were very excited about sharing their ideas in preparation for writing an e-book and sharing their research with pupils in Year 1. However, pupils' progress is not always this good, particularly when teaching fails to engage their interests fully.
- The work of most teachers to develop pupils' problem-solving skills is good. This was evident in an upper Key Stage 2 mathematics class where pupils were fully engaged in different challenging activities linked to weights, measures and shopping. While the teacher ensured that one group of pupils fully understood their task, others quickly calculated the cost of various ingredients needed to bake a cake. A third group compared prices, from three different supermarkets, and converted imperial and metric measurements for milk, flour and sugar. However, at times pupils' progress slows, particularly for the most able, who are not always fully challenged in their learning.
- Some pupils, particularly those in Year 6, know what they need to do to improve their learning. Some who spoke to inspectors said that they could improve their English by 'using better punctuation' and 'picking out important information from a text', and their mathematics by, 'using different ways to solve problems', 'and 'always showing methods used in calculations'. However, pupils' understanding in this area is inconsistent because marking is not of a consistently high standard as teachers miss opportunities to make pupils aware of how they can improve their work
- Pupils learn in stimulating and well-thought-out classrooms with lots of information available to help them with their reading, spelling, punctuation, calculations and problem solving. However, pupils are not always encouraged to take advantage of this information and, at times, wait to be helped by teachers and teaching assistants before finding things out for themselves.
- Across Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers have recently introduced a competitive 'super hero' spelling programme. Pupils are regularly tested on their spelling and compete to move up through various levels in different ability groups. Clubs are available to support pupils with their spelling and special assemblies take place to recognise and reward their hard work. This has already captured pupils' interest and is rapidly improving their spelling in their English work.
- Pupils' reading skills are improving across the school because teachers are careful to identify as many opportunities as possible for them to practise reading. This was the case in a Year 2 class where pupils were tasked with writing a persuasive letter to an alien threatening to shut down the school. Before writing their letters, pupils were encouraged to read words such as 'fantastic', 'fascinating', and 'remarkable' from the board before coming up with words including 'awesome' and 'superb' to be used in their plea to keep the school open.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are well trained. They are increasingly working together effectively to plan a variety of exciting activities which stimulate and engage pupils of different levels of ability. This is helping to ensure that the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is improving.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because it has not been good over time, particularly in Key Stage 2. In 2014, at the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in reading, writing, mathematics, grammar, punctuation and spelling was below average. Their progress in reading and mathematics was below average, and broadly average in writing. Pupils' achievement in 2013 had been better, and had continuously improved over a period of three years, but had still not resulted in pupils making consistently good progress across Key Stage 2.
- However, inspection evidence, including school data and work in pupils' books, show that things are beginning to improve and that the current Year 6 pupils are making good progress and attaining the

standards expected nationally for their age. This is better than the performance of Year 6 pupils in 2012/2013 and much better than in 2013/2014. Pupils' overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has improved each year for the last three years in reading, writing and mathematics, and at a faster rate than their peers nationally.

- Pupils' skills in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) are improving rapidly. The proportion of pupils identified as secure in their phonic skills in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2014 was below average. However, a higher-than-average proportion of pupils were secure at the check in Year 2. Pupils, especially in Key Stage 2, enjoy reading books from a variety of authors. Younger pupils, including children in the early years, are developing their phonic skills well to sound out and read unfamiliar words.
- Most pupils made good progress in writing in all year groups in 2014, and are making accelerated progress this year. Pupils are benefitting from increasing opportunities to practise their writing skills across all subjects and enjoy writing about their many trips and educational visits. However, their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills are not promoted well enough in subjects other than English.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics in 2014 was below average at the end of Year 6, as was their attainment at Levels 4 and 5. However, pupils made good progress in mathematics in most other year groups, often from very low starting points. The school's own data, and work in pupils' books show that pupils are now making more rapid progress in mathematics and that achievement is improving in most year groups.
- There are too few pupils from minority ethnic groups, or who speak English as an additional language to make any meaningful comparisons between their performance and that of similar groups of pupils nationally. However their performance is closely tracked and they are now making similarly improving progress as their peers.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well cared for by highly skilled and well-trained teachers and teaching assistants. They provide a variety of tailored small-group and one-to-one support that effectively meets these pupils' needs. Their progress, often from very low starting points, is good and improving in most year groups. Almost half of all pupils in Year 6 in 2014 had special educational needs. Their attainment in all subjects was lower than that of similar groups of pupils nationally. Their progress in reading and writing was good, but below average in mathematics. Their attainment in all subjects in Key Stage 1 was better than similar pupils nationally.
- The 2014 Year 6 cohort contained a very high proportion of disadvantaged pupils. They were approximately two terms ahead of their peers in school in mathematics, almost a year behind in reading, and half-a-term behind in writing. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment was just under a year behind non-disadvantaged pupils nationally in mathematics and reading, and just over a term behind in writing. The progress of disadvantaged pupils was below average in relation to other pupils nationally in mathematics, broadly average in reading, and above average in writing. The school's own data show that currently these pupils are making much improved progress in all subjects across the school and that gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils are rapidly closing.
- The school's work with the most able pupils is developing well. Pupils in Year 6 are completing work in mathematics at the highest possible Level 6. Extra challenges in class, booster classes and higher expectations of what pupils can achieve are all helping to ensure that they are now making more rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Early years provision is well led and managed by an experienced and well-organised Reception teacher. Under her leadership teaching, relations with parents and children's progress have greatly improved this year. However, early years provision still requires improvement because, over time, teaching has not been good enough to ensure that children achieve well in all areas of learning.
- Almost all children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities below those typical for their age. School data show that children's speaking and listening skills are especially weak. However, over time, teaching has not been good enough to ensure children's good progress. As a result, in 2014, the proportion of children entering Year 1 with the skills and knowledge necessary for the next stage of their learning was well below average, particularly in reading, writing and numbers.
- Teaching has improved this year. This is having a positive effect on children's achievement. Staff are well trained and very caring. They make learning interesting, ensure that children are looked after well, and have high expectations of what they are capable of achieving. Staff take all opportunities to develop children's counting, speaking and listening skills, provide exciting opportunities to enrich children's learning and plan regular visits to places of interest such as farms.

- Children quickly become familiar with daily routines in the Reception class. They are highly inquisitive, enjoy learning and playing with their friends, and are very keen to engage in conversation with adults about their learning.
- Staff ensure that children are safe at all times. Children conduct themselves sensibly when playing outside with wheeled toys such as baby buggies, bicycles and shopping trolleys, and when using various equipment and apparatus.
- Both indoor and outdoor learning and playing areas are much improved this year. They are stimulating and well thought out. Children's work is celebrated and exhibited around the classroom. They have plenty of opportunity to explore areas of interest such as painting, making play-dough cakes and biscuits, construction and using technology.
- Children behave well. This was exemplified when they prepared for their physical education class. With the minimum of fuss they got changed into their kit, formed into teams and carefully followed their teacher's instructions.
- Staff have an improved understanding of how well children are performing. They assess children's progress accurately and use information on their performance to plan activities that engage their interest. This information is now shared with parents, who are happy to participate in 'stay and play' activities with their children and participate in adult education classes. Parents are of the opinion that their children are safe and looked after 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	111174
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	462334

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	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Stockton
Headteacher	Charlie Stanley
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2013
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