

Ashurst Primary School

New Glade Hill, Blackbrook, St Helens, WA11 9QJ

Inspection dates 6–7 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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.

- Highly skilled, committed leadership has inspired and invigorated staff to make the school the best it can be for every pupil. Consequently, attainment has risen and the proportion of outstanding teaching is increasing. There is good capacity to sustain and further extend these improvements.
- As a result of effective provision, children get a good start to their learning in the early years.
- In all key stages, all groups of pupils achieve well, including those who are disabled, those with special educational needs and those who are disadvantaged.
- Improvements in attainment and progress mean that by Year 6 pupils' attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils are taught well. Teachers make learning enjoyable and encourage their pupils to think hard, reason and explain their answers. Pupils know how well they are doing and say comments in teachers' marking are helpful.
- Pupils enjoy school and behave well, are keen to learn and work hard. They become helpful, polite and responsible individuals who understand and respect different religions and cultures, well prepared for life in a multicultural society.
- Well-promoted spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, based on the 'Ashurst Values', instils traditional British values including fairness and consideration for other views.
- Pupils and their families benefit from excellent pastoral care, especially those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, and this helps them learn well.
- Pupils say they feel safe and secure. This is one reason why their attendance is above average.
- Parents who responded to the online questionnaire or spoke to inspectors all said their children are kept safe, and expressed very positive views about all aspects of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is improving securely but does not yet result in outstanding achievement. Occasionally, expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough to ensure that the most able pupils are always fully challenged.
- Pupils sometimes repeat careless spelling errors in their written work across the curriculum subjects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed a range of lessons, including one observed jointly with the executive headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher. They also visited small-group teaching sessions.
- Inspectors talked with a number of parents and held meetings with pupils, staff, the local authority representative and members of the governing body. A telephone discussion was held with the Chair of the Governing Body.
- The inspection team looked at pupils' books, observed pupils outside at break and lunchtimes and listened to readers from Years 1, 2 and 6.
- Inspectors examined systems used by the school to gather an accurate picture of pupil performance, scrutinised current achievement data and looked at how the quality of teaching is checked and monitored.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils were inspected.
- Inspectors looked at the 46 responses recorded online in Ofsted's Parent View, outcomes of the school's recent parent survey and the 21 questionnaires completed by members of staff.

Inspection team

Kathleen McArthur, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Carol Machell	Additional Inspector
Sheila Mawer	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ashurst is an average-sized primary school.
- Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding is above 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 children that are looked after by the local authority
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is close to the national average.
- Early years provision is part-time for children in the Nursery and full-time for children in the Reception class.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the time of the previous inspection, there have been a considerable number of staffing changes at all levels, and new governors have been appointed, including the Chair of the Governing Body. The executive headteacher has led the school since September 2014.
- The school provides before- and after-school clubs every day.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning further to outstanding so that achievement becomes outstanding by:
 - ensuring staff always expect their pupils to achieve their very best and provide even more challenging activities that will inspire them to aim even higher and progress all the more rapidly, especially the most able pupils
 - building on and extending the current system of sharing high quality teaching practice and skills between staff so that pupils always receive the best learning experiences in every subject
 - embedding the recently introduced system for spelling to raise the quality of pupils' writing further so they confidently, accurately and consistently use and apply their spelling skills in their work across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The inspiring senior leadership team swiftly evaluated what needed to be done to rapidly raise achievement. They have strengthened the effectiveness of governors and staff in the drive for improvement. Morale is high, achievement is rising rapidly, attendance has risen and teaching is increasingly outstanding. Leaders are not complacent and know that staff expectations for their pupils could be even higher, especially for the most able.
- Providing equal opportunities are high priority. There is no discrimination and good relationships between all pupils and with adults are very evident throughout the school. Additional support and provision for those who are vulnerable or who may find learning difficult enables them to participate fully in all the school offers, such as breakfast at the nurture group or the homework club. Consequently, all groups of pupils in all key stages achieve well.
- Regular checks on the quality of teaching by leaders include lesson observations, planning and book scrutiny, and analysis of progress information. Teachers are required to act on any recommendations and are held to account for their pupils' progress. Outcomes of these checks lead to high quality professional development, which staff report has been extremely valuable in extending their skills and knowledge. The system for staff to observe each other and share good practice has yet to be fully utilised.
- Senior leaders are good role models, both in delivering high quality teaching and in their management roles. Middle leaders check the quality of teaching, learning and progress in their areas of responsibility, and contribute well to school improvement planning.
- Good leadership in the early years ensures children make a secure, happy start in school and progress well.
- Well-targeted pupil premium funds provide small-group interventions and brief one-to-one school teaching sessions. This enables disadvantaged pupils to progress as well and often faster than their classmates. School data show any remaining gaps are rapidly closing.
- The primary school sports and physical education funding has been used to good effect to provide extra facilities, for example sports coaching or transport to competitive events. More pupils are now participating in physical activities, giving them the basis of a healthy lifestyle.
- Good promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has created a very happy, harmonious school. Voting for the school council showed pupils how democracy works and the garden club teaches them to grow their own food, both valuable skills for later life. Pupils study other religions and cultures, for example Chinese New Year. They grow into mature, responsible individuals who respect different religions, lifestyles and cultures and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The rich, well-planned curriculum is carefully adapted to ensure each pupil makes good progress in all subjects, and gains the numeracy and literacy skills needed for the future. They use these skills across the school's 'challenge curriculum', for example calculating the distance and time differences between Britain and countries visited by Charles Darwin, measuring materials for a model Viking longboat or reporting on endangered animals. Careless spelling errors sometimes lower the quality of this work.
- Clubs are varied, well attended, and there is something for every age group.
- Parents are valued as partners in their children's learning. They are kept well informed and receive information via newsletters, reports and the website, and at regular parents' evenings.
- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet all statutory requirements and are effective. Training in child protection is up to date and staff and parents know whom to approach if they have concerns or need advice.
- The local authority has provided good support to staff and governors. The executive headteacher has made full use of this support to enhance provision, develop staff skills, and establish good working links with local schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has strengthened and is now effective. Many governors have been appointed since the time of the previous inspection, including the Chair of the Governing Body. They bring valuable skills, and extensive training has increased their understanding and knowledge, for example their responsibilities in staff appointments. They know the school well, challenge and question leaders rigorously and offer well-informed support. They contribute effectively to school self-evaluation and are not afraid to make difficult decisions.
 - Using data and information from different sources, including school and national data, governors question leaders about how well pupils are doing and compare the school's performance with others both locally and nationally. They know that, although the attainment of those covered by pupil

premium funds has lagged behind their classmates, effective use of the funding is rapidly closing this gap.

- Governors ensure the primary school physical education and sport funding has provided staff training and initiatives that have broadened the range of activities on offer and increased participation. They are confident that this will have long-term benefits to pupils' health.
- The finance committee carefully directs funds to support school improvement. Governors ensure professional development is used to improve the quality of teaching and develop staff as future leaders. Any pay rewards for good teaching are linked to outcomes of staff performance reviews.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Inspection evidence and school records show this is typical over time, and pupils and their parents agree. Records show no discriminatory actions or behaviour, and exclusions are extremely rare. Based on the 'Ashurst Values', the newly implemented behaviour management system has resulted in fewer recorded behaviour incidents because pupils know rules are to keep them safe and they say these are fair.
- Pupils comment that the school is 'a good place to make friends', and they work and play happily in the calm, harmonious environment. During the inspection, very wet weather kept pupils indoors all day but they acted sensibly and behaved well throughout.
- Very strong, supportive relationships between pupils and adults ensure learning proceeds smoothly. Pupils cooperate willingly in class, in groups and with other adults such as sports coaches. Their positive approach to every task contributes strongly to their good progress.
- High quality pastoral care is a strength. Pupils and families who may be vulnerable receive pastoral support, and the school provides strong links with external support agencies. Consequently, these pupils participate fully and progress as well as their classmates.
- Attendance is above average and has improved over time. The school sends a clear message to pupils and families that education is highly valued and important.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- 'All the teachers are helpful and protect us.' This was a typical comment showing that pupils feel safe, secure and cared for. They say staff will always listen to any worries and quickly sort them out. Pupils say bullying is not an issue, just some occasional 'falling out'. Anti-bullying and internet safety weeks help pupils understand that bullying may take different forms, such as cyber-bullying, and they know they must always tell if they experience any.
- The safeguarding policy has been thoroughly overhauled and all records are carefully maintained. The pastoral manager and the behaviour and safeguarding team ensure that staff are fully aware of any child protection issues. They receive regular safeguarding training, so they know school procedures and fulfil their responsibilities effectively.
- The nurture group gives those who attend a good start to their school day in a caring atmosphere.
- The school is clean, well maintained and the site is secure. Staff supervise outdoor areas vigilantly and the pupil monitors are always on hand to ensure others move around safely, for example, patrolling the steps or manning the doors.

The quality of teaching is good

- High quality, focused training has increased staff skills and knowledge, for example in the teaching of mathematics. Consistent systems for teaching reading, writing and mathematics and for planning, marking and assessment have successfully raised the overall quality of teaching. Inspection evidence and leaders' monitoring records show that more teaching is outstanding.
- Carefully phrased, open questions encourage pupils to think, reason and explain their answers. This was seen in a challenging activity when older pupils were tasked with teaching inverse and corresponding angles to their partner, a task that deepened their understanding most effectively.
- Well-organised classrooms with good quality displays help pupils with punctuation, vocabulary and mathematical strategies. Staff use resources such as interactive white boards to help pupils learn well,

seen when pupils calculated travel times across continents and time zones.

- Many pupils told inspectors that teachers make learning fun. Tasks build on prior learning so pupils are really keen to learn. For example, studying *The Railway Children* stimulated pupils to consider and think deeply about issues such as poverty and made them want to find out more.
- Reading and writing are taught well, shown in the rate of acceleration in pupil progress. Mathematics teaching had been less effective than reading or writing. However, staff training and input from external consultants has made a big impact, seen in rapidly rising attainment in mathematics. Pupils report that the mathematics 'tool kits' are really useful.
- Skilled learning assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' good progress. They are deployed well and provide valuable support, often for pupils who may find learning difficult and pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. This ensures they progress as well as their classmates.
- Staff use assessment rigorously to check how well their pupils are doing. This information is used to build on learning and plan work that matches pupils' varying needs, to stretch those who find learning easy and direct extra help where needed. Very occasionally, the most-able pupils are not fully challenged.
- Work is thoroughly marked. Pupils are expected to respond and they say teachers' comments are helpful. Homework is set regularly and there is a homework club if pupils choose to receive extra support.

The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of pupils make good progress in all key stages and the majority now exceed the progress expected of them. They are well prepared for further learning.
- Attainment has varied over time. In previous years, when pupils left the school at the end of Year 6, attainment typically matched national averages and not enough pupils reached the higher levels. Leaders' rigorous actions, based on their determination to raise attainment, have resulted in an improving picture of achievement in both key stages, with rapid and sustainable gains in pupils' outcomes and progress.
- At the end of Key Stage 1, school assessment records and pupils' books show that those currently in Year 2 are well on course to exceed the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents a significant increase in the proportion expected to reach the higher levels.
- Inspection evidence, school data and the work in pupils' books show that pupils currently in Year 6 are working at above average levels. They are well on course for better outcomes in all subjects and more are expected to reach the higher Level 5.
- Staff training has seen considerable improvements in the way mathematics is taught, which benefited all pupils, and outcomes have risen rapidly across the school. When compared to national measures, just over half the pupils currently in Year 6 have exceeded their expected progress in mathematics and are on course to reach the higher level, with a small proportion expected to attain the higher Level 6.
- Pupils write confidently and at length in English and on a variety of topics across the curriculum, for example in history. However, careless spelling errors, such as 'cheese' spelt 'chese', sometimes lessen the quality of their work. The new system for teaching and learning spellings is at an early stage of implementation and has yet to become fully effective in improving pupils' spelling skills.
- Pupils achieve well in reading. In 2014, the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the national sounds and letters (phonics) screening check was below the national figure. Rapid actions by leaders and staff included changing how daily sessions were delivered so that pupils learn in small groups closely matched to their ability. Consequently, pupils now progress rapidly in learning to sound out and blend letters into words. Year 1 pupils are securely on track to match or exceed the national standard in 2015.
- Pupils say they really enjoy using the new library and school councillors represented their views on what books were purchased. Consequently, pupils select from an extensive choice of quality books. Older pupils read with great enjoyment and Michael Morpurgo is a favourite author. They demonstrate good understanding of the text. 'I read whenever I get a chance' was a typical comment from pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well, make good progress and often progress more rapidly than their classmates. In 2014, their attainment in reading and mathematics was just over a term behind other pupils nationally but about a term ahead of their classmates. In writing, their attainment was about two terms behind others in the school and one term behind others nationally. Careful analysis of the impact made by pupil premium funding, such as support in small groups, shows that any remaining gaps are very rapidly closing.
- Provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well managed and they receive thoughtfully planned extra help with learning. As a result, they progress as well as their

classmates.

- Although sometimes the most able pupils are not fully stretched to reach their full potential, when they are given additional challenges in lessons these deepen their knowledge and understanding. Overall they do well, for example in mathematics when investigating corresponding and alternate angles. Those who show a particular talent, such as in art or gymnastics, may be signposted to a specialist club or entered for external competitions. 'Change for Life' training is offered to pupils who show leadership skills and pupils carry out duties as school councillors or monitors very responsibly.

The early years provision

is good

- Most children enter the Nursery class with skills below those typical for their age, particularly in mathematics. They make good progress and move into the Reception class with skills closer to those expected for their age. By the end of Reception class, most children, including those who are disadvantaged, have acquired the skills expected for their age. A significant proportion has exceeded them and has reached a good level of development. They are well prepared for Year 1.
- High quality care means children feel very safe and secure, seen in the confident way they choose and tackle their tasks, behave well and respond to adults. Children from the Nursery and Reception classes work and play happily together, organise their equipment, take turns and are willing to share. The transition between classes is smooth with very little interruption to children's learning
- Good teaching provides a wide range of imaginative, fun activities that tempt children to investigate. The Gruffalo Café in the mud kitchen thrilled them. Staff take every opportunity to develop language and mathematical skills, encouraging the children to order imaginary foods such as snake soup or owl burgers, or to count plates and customers.
- Daily stories and sessions focusing on letters and the sounds they make prepare children well for reading and writing. Reception children quickly spotted their new letter, 'k' and had great fun scribing it in the air, saying, 'We go down the kangaroo's back, then his leg and his tail.'
- The outdoor area is much improved and resourced since the previous inspection, with activities in all areas of learning. Children are keen to work outside and, despite heavy rain, they happily got into their waterproofs and remained actively learning, building crates to form another café, counting plates and discussing the menu.
- Children's progress in all areas is rigorously assessed, monitored and moderated to ensure accuracy. This information is used well to plan activities that reinforce and extend children's skills, and to ensure none slip behind.
- Good leadership is based on extensive knowledge of all requirements and a passion to improve outcomes for every child. The work of learning assistants is a strength and their skills contribute effectively to children's good start in school.

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	104771
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	462306

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	256
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Councillor S Murphy
Headteacher	Pam Potter
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2013
Telephone number	01744 678150
Fax number	01744 678151
Email address	ashurst@sthelens.org.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 2015

