

# Lark Hill Primary School

Northgate Road, Edgeley, Stockport, Cheshire, SK3 9PH

**Inspection dates** 4–5 February 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- This school lives and breathes its motto of being 'A happy place to learn', where the unique qualities of every child are nurtured and developed.
- The very committed and passionate headteacher has ensured that there is a strong focus on continuously improving the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils.
- Morale in school is high because staff and governors share the heartfelt vision of meeting the needs of the whole child and their families.
- The stimulating range of subjects promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development very well.
- Governors rigorously challenge and support senior leaders in their drive to make the school the best it can be.
- The school has very strong relationships with parents, the wider community and other schools.
- Pupils' behaviour is never less than good. Pupils are proud of their school, enjoy learning and feel safe. They relish attending the many clubs and opportunities to take on responsibilities.
- Exceptionally positive relationships and mutual respect exist between staff and pupils. As a result, pupils grow in self-confidence and acquire a 'can do' attitude that encourages them try their best.
- Teaching is good. As a result, pupils progress well.
- Pupils in the majority of year groups make good progress. By the end of Year 6, they usually reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards across the school are rising.
- Children in the early years achieve exceptionally well from their different starting points. This is due to high-quality teaching and a stimulating and highly nurturing learning environment.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is some variability in the progress made across the year groups in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Sometimes pupils, particularly the most able, are not always given work that is challenging enough.
- Marking is not always focused sharply enough on the improvement of pupils' work and sometimes pupils are not always given opportunities to respond.
- Middle leaders are not always clear how to measure the impact of their work in improving teaching and learning and the achievement of pupils.
- Although there are signs of improvement, the attendance of some pupils is not high enough.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the learning of pupils in all classes across school and checked on pupils' work in lessons, in books and on display around school. They also spoke to pupils both formally and informally about their views of school and listened to some pupils read.
- Inspectors made careful checks on a range of school documentation, including, plans for improvement, the school's own view of its performance, records of the progress of pupils, pupils' behaviour and their attendance.
- Discussions were held with a range of school leaders including, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior and middle leaders. Inspectors also met a representative of the local authority and governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors also checked on the work of governors and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through checking the results from the school's own surveys of parental opinion and the 14 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online survey. Inspectors also spoke with some parents and considered the views of others in letters received.
- The inspectors took account of the views of staff expressed in the 12 responses to the voluntary questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Chris Maloney, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sandra La Porta

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There have been significant changes in governors in the last 18 months.
- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There are only a few pupils from other ethnic backgrounds and cultural traditions, including those who are learning to speak English as an additional language.
- There are significant changes in pupils in some year groups as families move in and out of the local area.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs is high.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium funding is high. This additional government funding is provided for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school works in close partnership with the Stockport Early Years Cluster and the local Edgeley Headteachers' Cluster of schools.
- Children attend the early years on a full-time basis.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding and so accelerate progress and further raise attainment, particularly for the most able in reading, writing and mathematics by:
  - ensuring that all teachers always provide pupils with demanding work that matches their abilities
  - embedding the good practice seen in teachers' marking across school so that it is consistently clear to pupils how to improve their work, and time is given for them to respond.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that middle leaders are always clear about how the success of their actions to improve the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils is to be measured
  - improving pupil attendance, particularly of those who are persistently absent, so that it is at least in line with the national average.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The steely and passionate determination of the headteacher to meet the needs of every pupil has kept the whole child at the forefront of all the school's work. This unrelenting desire to create a happy, safe and nurturing environment where pupils are supported to aim high and try their very best is shared by all staff and governors. The deputy headteacher has provided particularly strong support to the headteacher in leading by example and continually improving the quality of learning opportunities given to pupils. As a result, the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils are improving.
- Morale is high because staff are valued, appreciated and given opportunities to improve their practice through clear guidance, sharing practice in school, observing colleagues in other schools and local and nationally accredited training.
- The regular checks made by senior leaders on how well each individual pupil is learning and the challenge and support to individual teachers to improve their work reflects the commitment to giving equal opportunities to learn. Senior leaders use the information they gather to take decisive actions to provide just the right kind of additional support that pupils need. The learning mentor offers particularly skilled and sensitive support to pupils to help overcome any barriers to their learning.
- Senior leaders ensure that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and that the promotion of good relationships is highly successful.
- Senior leaders know the school well and are fully aware of what needs to be done to make the school even better. They have used this knowledge to produce detailed and well-targeted plans to improve the quality of teaching and achievement of pupils and to ensure that behaviour is managed well. This has led to improvements in the achievement of current pupils across school, particularly in writing.
- Middle leaders work hard and support the vision for continuous improvement in teaching and learning enthusiastically. However, they are not always precise enough as to how they will measure the success of their actions, particularly in the achievement of pupils.
- Subjects are linked together skilfully and creatively in themes such as Mad Science and Book week, visits to Lyme Park, Little Moreton Hall, residential to Whitby and Brathay or visits from the Mayor of Stockport. Pupils enjoy taking part in Young Enterprise events and the many music and sport opportunities, such as learning the ukulele in Year 3, cross country, coding club, art, drama and French.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Activities such as multi faith sports day and celebrations topics help pupils appreciate and celebrate different cultures and traditions. The school actively promotes and celebrates British values of tolerance and respect well, preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. Pupils have many opportunities to help others, such as taking part in MacMillan coffee mornings or the choir singing Christmas songs at the local Plain Tree Nursing Home.
- Strong links exist with parents who feel valued and supported. Typical parent comments about the school were, 'I think it's great', 'constantly getting feedback and letting us know any problems as soon as possible'. Very good links also exist with the local community, in particular the Stockport Early Years Cluster and the local Edgeley Headteachers' Cluster of schools helping to share and improve practice.
- Additional funding for physical education and sports has been used well to support teachers in developing their expertise through the employment of specialist teachers and coaches and increased opportunities for pupils to develop skills such as in gymnastics, dance and tag rugby. Checks show, as a result, an increase in pupil participation in sports clubs and teams.
- The local authority has provided high-quality support in checking on school judgements, sharing practice with other schools and developing a whole-school approach to identifying outstanding teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The Chair of Governors demonstrates a fervent passion for making the school the best it can be. This has galvanised the governors, including the many new to the governing body, to increase the rigour of their support and challenge to school leaders. Governors know the school very well and visit regularly and eagerly to access training to help them improve their work. Regular checks are made to ensure that teachers are working effectively enough and that pupils are learning as well as they should. Targets for teachers are challenging and so their performance management is rigorous. This ensures that any underperformance is tackled head on so that steps are taken swiftly in supporting them to improve. As a result, teachers' pay rewards are appropriate and linked to pupils making good or better progress. Governors keep a very watchful eye on school finances. They ensure that good use is made of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium to ensure that they are progressing as well as others in school. Very effective use is made of extra funding for physical education and sport and they track its impact on pupils. Governors make regular checks to be confident

that safeguarding arrangements are effective and meet requirements.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are courteous, polite, welcoming to visitors and try hard. The highly positive relationships they have with staff and their enjoyment in learning is reflected in their eagerness to tell inspectors just how much they like school. A typical pupil comment was, 'I love this school because teachers are kind and we all work as a team'.
- Pupils play safely and get on well with each other, including those from different ethnic and cultural heritages. They respect other cultures and faiths. As one pupil said, 'It's ok to have different beliefs because we are all equal'.
- When teachers provide pupils with work that motivates them and is closely matched to their learning needs and abilities, their behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. However, when tasks are not challenging enough some pupils lose concentration, slowing their progress.
- Pupils happily take on the wide range of opportunities to take on responsibility, including eco-team, play leaders, buddies to Reception children and the school council, whose pledge is, 'Only our best is good enough'.
- The wide range of visits, visitors, clubs and residential trips to Whitby or Brathay in the Lake District are much enjoyed by pupils and help to develop their abilities and self-confidence. One pupil said, 'Whatever kind of person you are there is a club for you'.
- Historically, attendance has been below average. Although senior leaders are taking decisive action to make sure that families understand the importance of education for their children and attendance is improving, too many pupils are still persistently absent and this is keeping overall attendance figures below average.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know how to stay safe and keep others safe, particularly when using the Internet. 'Never give your personal information unless you are sure who you are talking to', said one pupil.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying, particularly cyber-bullying and bullying as a result of prejudice. They are confident bullying is not a problem, but know that it will be dealt with fairly and swiftly, if it does happen.
- Responses in Parent View, the school's own surveys and in discussion with parents show parents are confident that their children are kept safe and feel safe.

## The quality of teaching is good

- Staff share the whole school vision of developing the whole child and teachers and teaching assistants take pride in getting to know pupils very well as individuals. This helps pupils to develop their unique personalities and learn well.
- The behaviour of pupils is managed very well by staff who confidently build highly respectful relationships and use lots of encouragement and reward to motivate pupils to try their best.
- Teachers use their good knowledge of pupils and how well they are learning to plan interesting tasks that motivate pupils. They use their good subject knowledge to prompt and challenge pupils' thinking. However, teachers do not always grasp the opportunity to stretch pupils' abilities by moving them on to more challenging tasks as soon as they are capable. This slows the progress pupils are making, particularly of the most able.
- Staff actively promote a love of reading. Reading skills are taught skilfully and systematically and additional targeted support is given to those who need it.
- Teachers provide pupils with many opportunities to extend their writing skills in creative, enquiry-based activities across subjects. They use 'visualisers' very well to help pupils see their work on the interactive white boards. They then discuss ways of making further improvements to their own work and that of others in class. This has led to increased progress in writing and more pupils reaching the higher levels.
- There is a strong emphasis on the revision of basic skills and concepts in mathematics so that pupils develop a more secure understanding of how to apply these when solving problems.

- There are some examples in pupils' books of high-quality marking by teachers that help pupils to improve their work and evidence of teachers checking that pupils have responded and understood. However, this effective practice is not consistent across school, which hinders progress for some pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants do provide regular verbal feedback to pupils in response to individual learning needs.
- When pupils are fully engaged in their learning and given interesting and challenging work to match their abilities, they progress at a rapid rate and produce work of a high standard. This was seen in a Years 4 and 5 English lesson. All pupils were engrossed in discussing how to improve their writing about Mount Everest. The teachers inspired highly motivational learning and used their excellent subject knowledge to deepen pupils' understanding and share strategies. This helped to produce high-quality writing such as, 'It was formed when the Indian tectonic plate rushed up against the Asian plate'.

### **The achievement of pupils is good**

- Standards by the end of Key Stage 2 have been rising steadily over time and are usually broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics by the time pupils leave Year 6. The standards pupils achieved in Year 6 in 2014 were not as good. However, the progress of these pupils from their different starting points was as good or better than the nationally expected levels. The work and progress of current pupils in school and records of progress over time clearly show that all groups of pupils are generally making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and attainment is rising.
- Although there is some variability in the achievement of current pupils, the success of the school's actions to improve the achievement of pupils and raise attainment is clear to see. Increasing proportions of pupils are making good or better progress and more are now reaching the higher levels of attainment than last year in school.
- This is because expectations have been raised and teachers are more focused on stretching pupils' achievements. This is particularly evident in the success of the school's actions to improve the quality of writing, with pupils responding eagerly to opportunities to think deeply about the vocabulary they are using. The writing of the most-able pupils reflects high-quality development of ideas and skilled use of language. This is becoming more evident in the work of younger pupils. A Year 3 pupil wrote, 'I slumped back in the plane's seat and looked out of the window. I was glad to be out of grim and dreary London'. However, this challenge to the most able is not yet consistent across school.
- Current pupils are making better progress in developing their spelling, punctuation and grammar as a result of focused teaching to help pupils apply the skills they are taught more effectively. Pupils eagerly share their writing with others in class with the help of a 'visualiser' to improve it still further.
- Pupils make good progress in reading due to skilled and systematic teaching. Skilled and sensitive support is provided for those pupils who need it. Although the results in the Year 1 national screening check on reading in 2014 were below average, improvements are evident in the work of current pupils, reflecting their increasing understanding of the sounds that letters make. Pupils continue to develop a love of reading and they make good progress through school in developing fluency and understanding.
- In mathematics, pupils are benefitting from regular consolidation of basic skills and concepts and opportunities to apply these with confidence, either independently or with a partner. They particularly enjoy practical tasks that stretch their thinking and deepen their understanding. For example, in Years 5 and 6 pupils confidently placed angles together that they had cut to check that angles in a triangle equal 180 degrees so they could then apply their knowledge of algebra to work out missing angles.
- Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) resources confidently and accurately to support their work.
- The early identification and skilled and sensitive additional support ensures that the few pupils from minority ethnic groups, including the few who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, make good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- Although there is some variability, disadvantaged pupils are progressing and attaining as well and sometimes better than others in school. In Year 6 in 2014, the gap in the attainment of what was a large number of disadvantaged pupils, most of whom had additional learning needs, compared to other pupils in the school closed significantly. Indeed, they were between one and two terms ahead in reading, writing and mathematics. Compared with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, they were two terms behind in reading and writing and two and a half terms behind in mathematics. Their overall progress was somewhat slower than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

**The early years provision****is outstanding**

- Children achieve exceptionally well from their different starting points which vary considerably year on year. They enter Reception with skills and knowledge which are mostly underdeveloped for their age. Many children have limited language and communication skills and are behind in their personal development.
- Clear routines and exceptionally positive relationships with parents help children to settle quickly and thrive in a highly nurturing environment, where staff do all they can to get to know the children as unique individuals. All staff have high expectations and deliver consistently high-quality teaching. As a result, all children, including the most able and those with special educational needs make excellent progress. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development is rising and close to the national average.
- Children develop their early reading, writing and mathematical skills very well and demonstrate increasing confidence in recognising the sounds that letters make. This is due to the way in which highly skilled staff use their excellent knowledge of how children learn to provide an exciting range of activities that are led by adults or that children choose for themselves both inside and outside. Staff make detailed observations of what children can do and their attitudes to learning in 'learning journeys' and use this information to capture the interests of individual children, and re-shape and extend their learning very well.
- Children eagerly grasp the many opportunities they have to talk about their learning, such as when being challenged to count in tens or identify the different ways of adding numbers together or counting backwards. Children quickly learn how to form letters correctly when writing and improve their confidence in reading instructions or shopping lists.
- The behaviour of children is excellent. They listen attentively, learn and play cooperatively and share equipment safely and sensibly, demonstrating a good awareness of personal safety and how to keep others safe. Children showed great motivation in responding to guidance from 'Toby' the puppet and increasing perseverance such as when building a fire station.
- The leadership of the early years is outstanding. The leader has an excellent understanding of strengths and areas for further development and shares the vision for continuous improvement and the focus on developing the whole child.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	106056
<b>Local authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	448292

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	182
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Kay Poor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Hazel Williams
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 March 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 4806295
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