

Pikemere School

Pikemere Road, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST7 2SW

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
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.

- Pupils' achievement is good. From starting school with knowledge and skills which are typical for their age, children make good progress.
- Standards attained by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics were above average in 2014 at the end of Year 2.
- Progress this year in writing has improved since a dip in achievement in 2014. This is because of the clear focus of school leaders on ensuring that pupils now learn to write well.
- The quality of teaching is good in all subjects and helps pupils to achieve well. Pupils learn to read extremely well because of effective teaching.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in their learning. Effective support from teaching assistants helps them to learn well.
- The provision in the early years is effective, helping children to make a flying start.
- Pupils report categorically there are no incidents of bullying. They report that no type of bullying would be tolerated by staff or their fellow pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. On the playground, pupils play nicely together and care well for each other, ensuring their peers enjoy their breaks fully.
- Pupils are kept exceptionally safe in school. They report they feel very secure in school because teachers and all other staff care well for them. The responses to Parent View and staff questionnaires strongly support this view.
- School leaders and managers have an exceptionally clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They share an exceedingly clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school further.
- The visionary headteacher is ably supported by senior staff and middle leaders. The powerful governing body holds school leaders robustly to account for pupils' achievement. Together they have improved teaching well and successfully addressed the dip in writing achievement.
- The school continues to improve well because of leaders' very strong, strategic direction and the shared vision which permeates through the whole staff.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in mathematics and writing is not as strong as it is in reading.
- Marking methods are not tightly enough focused on helping pupils to improve their work further.
- Occasionally, a few teachers accept work from pupils which is untidy or poorly presented.
- Now and again, a small minority of teachers mark incorrect answers in mathematics as correct giving pupils a false impression of how well they are achieving.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons and part lessons. No lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher at her request.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, school staff and seven members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body. The lead inspector spoke with the school improvement partner by telephone.
- Inspectors held discussions with parents and groups of pupils. Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils in lessons, during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised the work pupils produced during lessons and in a wide range of their books over time. They also listened to a small number of pupils from Year 1 and Year 2 read.
- Inspectors closely observed the work of the school and looked at the latest school data on pupils' achievement and the progress they are currently making. Other documentation scrutinised included the strategic school development plan, safeguarding information, behaviour logs, attendance records and minutes of recent meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 74 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and four emails from parents. They also considered the 18 responses from staff to the inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Declan McCauley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Lawrence

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is slightly above the national average. Many of these pupils have particularly complex learning needs.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average. The term disadvantaged pupils is used to describe those pupils who are or have been eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority. These pupils receive additional support through the pupil premium funding.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- Children attend Nursery sessions part time and the Reception class full time.
- The school works in partnership with other schools in the Alsager Community Trust.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of the quality of teaching to strengthen all pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics so it is at least as high as their achievement in reading by:
 - reflecting on, developing and implementing a successful method of ensuring all teachers provide pupils with high quality feedback on their work to help them improve further
 - ensuring incorrect answers are always marked as such in mathematics books, in order to not give pupils a false impression of how they are achieving
 - ensuring all teachers only accept pupils' work which is tidy and well presented.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Exceptionally effective school leaders, with a shared vision of wanting the best for all pupils, have successfully created a culture of high aspiration where pupils achieve well. The headteacher is highly ambitious for all pupils to achieve the best possible outcomes. This vision is shared by the whole staff who fully support her in her quest to improve the school further.
- Governance is highly effective. Governors play a key role in ensuring the school is highly successful in providing a good education for pupils.
- Teaching is well led by senior and middle leaders who have an exceptionally clear view of the strengths and relatively minor weaknesses in their subject areas. Middle leaders are effective in their roles. The exceptionally strong leadership of literacy has resulted in the dip in pupils' achievement in writing being addressed well.
- Every opportunity is taken by school leaders to extend and improve teachers' knowledge and teaching skills. The importance of continuing to develop teachers in all subject areas is given a high priority. It is a key feature of the well-focused strategic school development plan, which very astutely promotes further improvement. This is impacting well on pupils' achievement.
- The pupil premium funding is being used very effectively to accelerate disadvantaged pupils' achievement. The latest school data shows disadvantaged pupils are making even more rapid progress in their learning than in 2013-2014 because of the exceedingly effective targeting of additional support.
- All pupils are treated equally in the school and discrimination in any form is not tolerated by staff. Pupils work and learn in a culture where tolerance and mutual respect are expected at all times. Good relations abound within the school and permeate all aspects of school life.
- The curriculum has been exceptionally well developed by school leaders and staff. It provides pupils with exciting as well as rich and diverse learning opportunities. The curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of pupils and promotes effective learning across the well-linked subject areas. In a Key Stage 1 lesson, pupils were observed studying the Claude Monet painting of the Poppy Field near Argenteuil. In addition to art, pupils also learned about the geography of France, the historic significance of poppies in relation to the First World War, and some scientific facts about transparent and translucent materials.
- The curriculum prepares pupils well for living in modern Britain. Pupils spoke about lessons in which they had participated based on British values, such as tolerance of other faiths and cultures, respect for everyone, which they say should be mutual, and democracy. At the time of the recent general election when the school was used as a polling station, pupils elected the new members of next year's school council, following political-style electioneering debates in the school hall. This extended pupils' knowledge and understanding of the importance of democracy in society.
- Safeguarding arrangements in school are highly effective. All relevant and essential checks are robustly made before anyone is admitted to the school building.
- Additional funding to develop sports provision in school is used very effectively. Teachers explained how their confidence in teaching specialised sports, such as gymnastics, had been improved very well through the additional coaching they received from expert sports coaches. Pupils participate well in a very wide range of sports.
- The school receives regular visits from a school improvement partner working on behalf of the local authority. This good level of support has helped the school to improve further. Very strong links established with other schools in Alsager Community Trust have benefited improvements in Pikemere School very well. For example, the most able mathematicians in Year 6 have attended mathematics lessons at the local high school to provide them with even greater levels of challenge and to extend their learning further.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body perform their role in school improvement diligently. The Chair of the Governing Body rightly describes himself as a facilitator for school improvement. The governing body has been a catalyst for improvements made since the previous inspection. Governors have a very clear understanding of what the school does well and what must still be improved for the school to become outstanding. They forensically analyse performance data and ask very challenging questions of the school's leaders about any perceived minor weaknesses. Governors know much about how well the school is performing compared to others because of their detailed scrutiny of the school's and national data.
 - Governors manage the performance of teachers well. They do not accept underperformance and only permit high-performing teachers to continue to work at the school. Governors and school leaders tackle

any underperformance of teachers robustly and with vigour. Good teaching is well rewarded.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are exceedingly smartly turned out in their colourful uniforms which they wear with pride. Pupils display an immense amount of pride in their school. One pupil explained how important it is that all pupils behave exceptionally well when out of school on trips, because they are representatives and ambassadors for the good name of the school.
- Pupils care exceptionally well for each other in lessons and on the playground. Pupils enjoy socialising with their friends during breaks. They include each other well in their games so that no one is left out or discriminated against.
- Learning progresses well in lessons because pupils enjoy learning and behave well. They do not cause disruptions of any sort and so all can learn at a good pace.
- Those pupils who spoke with inspectors categorically stated that there is no bullying in their school because it would not be tolerated by anyone. They have an exceptionally clear understanding of what it means to be bullied and the forms it can take. Pupils are taught to be considerate and to treat others in the way they would wish to be treated. Parents and staff agree that pupils are exceptionally well behaved and bullying is not a concern in this school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school site is very safe and secure so pupils know that only adults admitted to the site after undergoing exceptionally rigorous checks are permitted to be in the school building or to mingle with them on the playground.
- Exceedingly careful checks are undertaken by school staff before anyone is employed as a staff member or permitted to volunteer to work with children. The record of these checks is exceptionally well maintained by highly efficient administration staff.
- School staff work very closely with a range of professionals from outside agencies, such as social services. Staff ensure child protection is to the fore at all times and ensure that procedures to keep pupils safe at highly effective.
- Pupils proudly report they feel exceptionally safe in school and have a very strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe outside of school. Pupils' awareness of how to stay safe when using the internet is strong because of how well it is taught in school.
- Pupils recognise the importance of being in school regularly in order to have a good education and consequently, their attendance is above average.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching is resulting in pupils learning and achieving well in reading, writing and mathematics. The teaching of reading is a particular strength. Younger pupils are taught the sounds which letters make (phonics) very well. In the national phonics screening check in 2014, pupils reached above average standards. The latest school data show that standards now are even higher than last year. Learning in lessons proceeds at a fast pace. Lessons are well planned to excite, interest and motivate pupils' thirst for knowledge. During the inspection, young pupils were observed excitedly participating in mathematics learning about capacity and estimating volumes of liquids using multi-coloured liquids and an array of vessels in order to produce potions.
- Skilful questions are asked of pupils to extend their learning and ensure they can provide the reasoning behind their answers in order to check how well they are learning. The most able pupils are challenged well in lessons. A group of older pupils were observed undertaking a very demanding investigation of the Fibonacci sequence when producing spirals. A pupil was selected to effectively explain his understanding of the sequence to the rest of the class using information and communication technology (ICT).
- ICT is used well to support learning. Young pupils were observed using tablet computers to successfully finding out interesting facts about caterpillars. This was a challenging task, in which they were excitedly engaged and subsequently, learned at a fast pace.
- Pupils and teachers regularly assess how well learning is progressing. If pupils are ready to undertake more challenging learning tasks they are rapidly moved on. Learning time is not wasted.

- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving and to which pupils respond well.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught effectively in a learning environment which is bright and stimulating for all pupils.
- Teaching assistants make a positive impact on learning in lessons and when working with small groups of pupils.
- Marking does not always focus well enough on helping pupils to improve as feedback is occasionally not of a high enough quality. Occasionally, a small minority of teachers mark pupils answers in mathematics as correct when they are incorrect, giving the impression pupils are achieving better than they are. Work in a small minority of pupils' books is untidy and poorly presented.

The achievement of pupils is good

- From starting school with knowledge and skills typical for their age, children make strong progress in the early years, and many are well prepared to join Year 1 when they leave the Reception Year. Progress continues to be good through Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- The school's latest progress data show progress is fast across year groups and in a range of subjects. Pupils' progress has increased well since 2014 in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress in writing and mathematics is now accelerating and catching up well with that made by pupils in reading.
- From their individual starting points, disadvantaged pupils are progressing well now as seen in the latest school data. They are now making faster progress in their learning than in 2014, with many making faster progress than other pupils in school. This is helping them to begin to close the gaps in their attainment compared to other pupils in the school.
- There were no disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2013 so it is not possible to comment on whether attainment gaps closed in 2014 at the end of Key Stage 2 compared to other pupils in school or nationally.
- At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was above that of other pupils in school by about four terms in mathematics and about half a term in reading, but below other pupils by about two and a half terms in writing. Compared to other pupils nationally the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in school was above by two terms in mathematics but below by about a third of a term in reading and by four terms in writing. School data show the gaps in their attainment in writing are now narrowing. In 2014, at the end of Key Stage 1, the proportion of the most able pupils who attained the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics was above average and slightly below average in writing. At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014, the proportion of the most able pupils who attained the higher Level 5 was about average in reading and below average in writing and mathematics. School data show these proportions are higher now.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make strong progress in their learning. Due to their individual starting points, and the severe nature of some of their particularly complex needs, they may not attain standards as high as other pupils. Even so, most are making the same rates of progress as other pupils, or exceeding them. This is because of the well-targeted support they receive in school. During the inspection, a number of parents sought out the inspectors to explain how well they feel they and their children are supported. This is helping pupils' learning well.
- Although all pupils are achieving well in reading, writing and mathematics, pupils' achievement in reading is stronger than their achievement in writing and mathematics.

The early years provision is good

- The provision in the early years is effective and enables children to make rapid gains in their learning and development. Children achieve well because of good teaching.
- From their typical starting points, children progress well and many leave well prepared to make a good start to learning in Year 1. The proportion of children who left the Reception class with a good level of development in 2014 was broadly average. The latest school data currently show around three-quarters of the children are at this point now. A small minority of children start the early years with slightly weaker skills in writing. These children make strong progress and reach high levels by the time they leave the Reception class. Children make strong progress in their understanding and use of the sounds letters make (phonics) in their reading.
- The indoor and outdoor learning areas are colourful, rich in resources, stimulating, and promote development and learning well. Skilled staff support the children effectively. The innovative records, using ICT to record children's learning and development, in partnership with their parents, ensure everyone

knows how well the children are progressing.

- Teaching is good throughout early years.
- Children are well behaved. They are strongly encouraged to socialise and interact well with each other, which both have a positive impact on their learning and development. Increasingly, they begin to direct their own learning, with adults effectively facilitating this.
- All required checks are made to ensure children are safe whilst in the early years setting.
- The leadership of early years is efficient and effective. The joint leaders have a clear understanding of how well children are achieving and what can be done to improve the setting further. Their vision is to ensure that provision in the early years is outstanding, so more children are well prepared to start Year 1.

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	111042
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	461726

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alastair Bennett
Headteacher	Louise Gohr
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2012
Telephone number	01270 874237
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	admin@pikemere.cheshire.sch.uk

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