

The Brow Community Primary School

The Clough, Halton Brow, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2HB

Inspection dates 23–24 June 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.

- This good school is exceptionally well led and managed by a highly organised headteacher who is well supported by a new and ambitious governing body.
- Together with an effective middle leadership team, and well-trained teachers and teaching assistants, they have transformed the school. They have also ensured that the quality of teaching and pupils' learning has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- Pupils progress well throughout the school. In 2014 at the end of Year 6, all groups of pupils made excellent progress in reading and mathematics, and good progress in writing. Their attainment in grammar, punctuation and spelling was well above average.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 improved rapidly in 2014, and has improved each year for the last four years.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. They behave well at all times and say that they enjoy coming to school, and always feel safe.
- Teaching is good. Teachers plan activities in lessons which pupils find both interesting and engaging. Teachers work well with teaching assistants to support pupils with a wide range of abilities.
- Phonics is well taught. The proportion of pupils secure in the national phonics screening check (knowledge of letters and the sounds they represent) in 2014 was well above average.
- Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils, including children in the early years, work exceptionally well together, and enjoy finding out about people from other cultures and religions.
- Pupils benefit from a good and fully implemented new curriculum, which broadens their experience, and 'fires' their imagination.
- Parents are of the view that their children are safe and well looked after. They are increasingly participating in school activities.
- Early years provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is good. As a result, children enjoy school, make good progress and achieve well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, opportunities are missed for pupils, including children in the early years, to refine and practise their writing skills across all subjects.
- Pupils, including the most able, are not always challenged to achieve their very best.
- Provision for outdoor learning in the early years is not as good as indoors. Activities are not always stimulating.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons in all year groups, as well as the teaching of small groups of pupils 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 with senior leaders.
- Inspectors considered 14 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as the school's own surveys of parents' and teachers' views.
- Responses to the inspection questionnaire, completed by 29 members of staff, were considered.
- Two meetings were held with a total of eight governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors met with school leaders and staff responsible for various subjects and phases, including English, mathematics, early years, and the leader responsible for provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- A meeting took place with two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents. These included checks on the quality of teaching, development plans, 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

Hilary Ward

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils that are disadvantaged and supported by pupil premium funding is 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.
- Nursery provision was extended to full time in January 2015. Since this time most children have been attending the Nursery class on a full-time basis. Children attend Reception on a full-time basis.
- A breakfast club is available to pupils. This is managed by the governing body.
- 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.
- The school has two resource bases for children with special educational needs. One is an assessment unit for seven Key Stage 1 pupils and children in the early years, the other provides for 10 children in Key Stage 2 with speech and language difficulties.
- Since the time of the previous inspection, the staffing structure has been reorganised. There have been a number of teacher appointments, including two newly qualified teachers and a new teacher in the Key Stage 1 assessment unit. The senior leadership team has been reorganised, with a new headteacher and deputy headteacher. The governing body has been reconstituted. All but two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and the vice chair, are new to their roles.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding, and in so doing, raise levels of achievement across the school by:
 - making sure that all pupils, including children in the early years, have every opportunity to refine and practise their writing skills across all subjects
 - consistently challenging all pupils, including children in the early years and especially the most able, to achieve to the very best of their ability.
- Enhance the quality of outdoor learning areas for children in the Nursery and Reception classes to accelerate their progress so that a greater proportion enter Year 1 with the skills and abilities necessary for the next stage of their learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- This school is much improved since the previous inspection. It is exceptionally well led and managed by a headteacher who is well organised and leaves nothing to chance. In a short time, the headteacher, senior leaders and governors have transformed the school, introducing new systems, creating a cohesive teaching force, and rapidly improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Middle leaders are effective in their role. The focused training that they have benefited from is linked to developing their leadership skills and the school's priorities, as set out in various development plans. Middle leaders play a central role in improving the quality of teaching, through regular observations of teachers' practice, assessing the quality of marking and establishing pupils' views on their learning.
- New systems have been introduced to monitor and support the performance of all members of staff, including teaching assistants. Teachers are set challenging targets all of which are linked to raising standards and improving the quality of teaching. Teachers' performance is closely checked by senior leaders and shared with the governors.
- Senior leaders ensure that the pupil premium funding is used highly effectively to support disadvantaged pupils' learning, and enhance their experience of school. At the end of Year 6 in 2014, disadvantaged pupils made rapid and substantial progress in all subjects. Their attainment in grammar, punctuation and spelling was much higher than average.
- The school's fully implemented new curriculum is effective in developing pupils' reading, spelling, grammar, punctuation and mathematical skills. However, opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to practise and refine their writing skills across the curriculum. None-the-less, pupils enjoy writing about their many trips and visits, such as the recent upper Key Stage 2 residential trip to London, which included a visit to the theatre to see *The Lion King*.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils learn about the major world faiths and have raised money for various charities. Assemblies have weekly themes, including tolerance, respectfulness, kindness and loyalty. Pupils learn about relationships and are expert at working collaboratively on activities in class.
- Pupils have a good understanding of British values. They know their rights and enjoyed their recent involvement in the recruitment and selection of the headteacher. Pupils understand that 'Britishness' has a broad meaning that goes beyond their school and community and learn to appreciate similarities and differences of cultures and faiths around the world. They enjoy celebrating various festivals, including Chinese New Year and Christingle, learning Spanish and playing various percussion and woodwind instruments.
- The school promotes a strong relationship with parents and the community. The school's recently established community group, Friends of The Brow, is proving to be a hit with parents, and forms a part of senior leaders' plans to engage parents fully in the life of the school.
- Senior leaders and governors ensure that the primary school sports funding is spent very effectively. It has helped to improve pupils' health and well-being and develop the skills of staff in teaching various physical education activities, including multi-skills. Pupils participate in a wide range of sporting activities and clubs, including gymnastics, basketball, football and highland games.
- The school's work to challenge discrimination and promote equality of opportunity is outstanding. Inspection evidence shows that the school's provision enables all groups of pupils make at least good, and often rapid, progress. For example, the achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs was outstanding in all subjects by the time they left school at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014.
- The local authority has closely supported the school, and helped it to secure improvements in teaching and learning. Most recently, support has been provided to the governing body and early years staff. Advice and guidance have also been provided to the headteacher during the initial months of her appointment.
- The school takes care to ensure that all statutory requirements for safeguarding are met, and has in place effective arrangements for safeguarding pupils, including children in the early years.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Almost all governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, are new to their roles. However, they are enthusiastic and ambitious, and are determined to work closely with senior leaders to continually improve the school, and move it from good to outstanding.
 - Governors challenge and support the school in equal measure. They are fully aware that standards have rapidly improved over the last year, but they are not complacent, and know that there is more work to

do to raise standards.

- Governors recognise the excellent work the school does to ensure that no pupil misses out on any aspect of school life. They know that 'booster' classes, homework clubs and training for teachers are making a difference, and that they are continuing to ensure disadvantaged pupils' outstanding achievement this year.
- Governors have an accurate view of the quality of teaching because they receive regular reports from senior leaders. They have made it a priority to have a more regular presence in school and are currently putting plans into place to make this happen.
- Governors are prepared to reward teachers for their good work, but only when there is sufficient evidence of pupils' good achievement. They have taken steps to ensure that all teaching is good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school to learn and play with their friends. Evidence of this is in their attendance, which is continually improving. Pupils are very sensible, polite and courteous. They are familiar with their new rewards and sanctions policy, which is displayed throughout the school, and they adhere to it.
- Pupils enjoy inviting visitors into their calm, peaceful and orderly school and they are proud of their achievements. Pupils behave well at all times; this includes when they are moving around the school, during lunch and break times and when in class. They are respectful, and form exceptionally good relationships with all adults.
- Pupils are always smartly dressed. They wear their school uniform with pride, respect the school premises and are highly appreciative of their generous playing areas and green spaces.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils, including children in the early years and those in the resource bases, are of the view that behaviour is good most of the time.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who completed Parent View, as well as those who completed the school's own surveys of parents' views, indicate that behaviour is good. A scrutiny of the school's own records of pupils' behaviour confirms that behaviour is typically good.
- Pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2, are mature, and enjoy having responsibilities as members of the school council, sports captains, librarians, and junior safety officers. Year 6 take on their buddy roles, pairing up with Reception children, in earnest.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say that they always feel safe. They indicate that they know that they can go to any member of staff if they have a concern or worry, and that these will be addressed immediately.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils are of the view that bullying never happens in school. They are well aware of most forms of discrimination. For example, older pupils say that racism is, 'when you judge someone because of their skin colour, and won't play with them'. They are adamant that this never happens in school, and say that if it did, 'the person would go straight to sanction five', (meaning that parents would have to come into the school).
- All pupils have a good understanding of cyber-bullying. Older pupils say that this happens when 'you spread something about someone, or use slander on the internet'. They are fully aware that bullying can take place on hand-held games, mobile phones, or anything connected to the internet wirelessly.
- Pupils have a good understanding of dangers and risks because of their good personal, social, health and citizenship education programme. In addition to this, various people come to the school to talk to pupils about safety matters, including firefighters, and community police officers. Pupils learn about road safety, and how to cycle safely.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching across the school, including in the early years and the resource bases, is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers and teaching assistants work exceptionally well together to plan activities that pupils find interesting and engaging, and which support their good, and often rapid and sustained, progress.

- Teachers' consistent approach to ensuring that pupils know what to do to improve their learning is paying off. Almost all pupils who spoke with inspectors could state precisely what they needed to do to get better in their reading, writing and mathematics. Those who were unsure knew exactly where to find their learning targets.
- Teachers ensure that pupils take pride in their work; as a result of this pupils produce homework which is of an exceptionally high quality. Pupils' interest in learning is exemplified in their willingness to 'go the extra mile'. Pupils, including children in the early years, are offered a menu of homework and are free to decide on the order in which they take the menu items. This approach encourages parents to work with pupils on various projects, and enables pupils to develop their skills in researching areas such as ancient Greece and the Tudors.
- Teachers are always clear about what pupils are intended to learn; they summarise previous learning and quickly set pupils about their tasks. This was the case in a fast moving mathematics class where pupils made good progress while mastering their problem-solving skills and learning about the importance of mathematics in real-life situations. While one group worked out whether discount offers such as 'buy one get one free' were really good value for money, others compared the prices of various items in shopping baskets of food and household goods from up to three different supermarkets.
- Pupils enjoy reading, writing, researching, and finding out new things. This was exemplified in an upper Key Stage 2 English class. Pupils were set the task of finding out about the First World War. Pupils engaged in different research and fact-finding activities with a view to presenting their findings to their peers. By the end of the session they had achieved exceptionally well. They developed an excellent knowledge of important dates and places associated with the First World War, as well as the names of generals, the reasons why the war started, and how it ended.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they focus closely on grammar, punctuation and spelling at all times. This was shown in a Key Stage 1 class where the teacher worked with the whole class to write a factual paragraph about the North Sea. The teacher skilfully teased out and identified various aspects of language, including similes and adjectives, while encouraging pupils to contribute their ideas. Pupils were well prepared for writing their factual reports and made good progress in their various activities. However, activities are not always as challenging as this, particularly for the most able; as a result, pupils do not always achieve to the very best of their ability.
- Teachers take a consistent approach to marking. All books are marked and up to date, with good evidence that pupils benefit from a wide and varied curriculum, which supports their good, and sometimes rapid, progress. Teachers provide good advice to pupils on how they can improve their written work and methods of calculations. In the majority of instances, they check to see if pupils have heeded their advice and improved their work as a result of it. However, pupils' books show that, occasionally, teachers miss opportunities for pupils to practise and writing skills when completing work in different subjects.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- In 2014 at the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics was average, and it was above average in reading. Their attainment in grammar, punctuation and spelling was well above average, putting them more than a year ahead of Year 6 pupils in 2013. The progress for most groups of pupils was excellent in reading and mathematics, but not quite as good in writing. Inspection evidence, including school data and work in pupils' books, shows that currently Year 6 pupils are attaining at least expected standards for their age.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2014 was average in writing, and below average in mathematics and reading. However, their attainment has shown year-on-year improvements. Rapid gains were made in 2014, and continue to be made this year.
- 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 above average. Pupils enjoy reading and are familiar with a wide range of authors and writing styles. Pupils' reading records show that they read regularly. Some of those who read for the inspector were avid readers who thoroughly enjoyed learning new facts and discovering new characters.
- Pupils' progress in writing in most year groups in 2014 was good. Pupils are encouraged to write about their regular visits to places of interest and they have opportunities to write in some detail in their homework tasks, although not at length across all subjects.
- Targeted training for staff, a consistent approach to problem solving, and a stronger focus on deepening pupils' mathematical understanding, all help to ensure that almost all pupils make good progress in this subject across the school.

- Excellent care and support, and good teaching delivered by skilled and nurturing staff all contribute toward the good, and sometimes rapid, progress made by pupils in the resource base in Key Stage 2, and pupils and children in the assessment unit in Key Stage 1. Pupils' and children's confidence and engagement in learning has been further enhanced this year, as they spend more time learning alongside their peers.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those in the resource bases, are looked after exceptionally well by highly trained teachers and teaching assistants. At the end of Year 6 in 2014, the overall attainment of these pupils was almost one year ahead of that of similar groups of pupils nationally, and almost two years ahead in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Almost all disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs made excellent progress in writing, reading and mathematics. They are currently making good progress and attaining highly.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve exceptionally well. In Year 6 in 2014, their attainment was about half a term ahead of their peers in school in mathematics, and equal to them in reading and writing. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment was equal to other pupils nationally in mathematics and just under a term ahead in reading and writing. Their attainment in grammar, punctuation and spelling was outstanding. All disadvantaged pupils made outstanding progress in all subjects by the time they left school at the end of Year 6 in 2014. The school's own data and inspection evidence show that currently disadvantaged pupils are making at least good progress, in all subjects across the school, and are attaining highly.
- A high proportion of pupils are already working at the highest possible Level 6 in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6. Pupils' willingness to do extra homework, and their participation in activities at the local high school, have helped to support their much improved attainment. Even so, sometimes across the school, work still lacks challenge to enable the most able always to achieve their very best.

The early years provision

is good

- The leadership and management of all aspects of the early years provision are good. Children are well looked after, acquire skills quickly and develop very well alongside their peers.
- Most children start the Nursery class with skills and abilities which are below those typical for their age in most areas of learning, including speaking, counting, and knowledge of the world. Children soon settle into the Nursery and Reception classes. Children make good progress in most areas of learning. In 2014, almost half of the children reached a good level of development and entered Year 1 with the breadth of knowledge and level of skills necessary for the next phase of their learning.
- Indoor provision is good in the Nursery and Reception classes. Lively displays celebrate children's work and achievements, and information in the 'learning journey corner' charts their development. Class targets are displayed, in keeping with the rest of the school, as are 'praise points', number tables, and artwork.
- Children benefit from exciting learning opportunities. They enjoy visits to farms and museums, and enjoy participating in Spanish afternoons where they sing, dance and taste various foods.
- Teaching is good. Children enjoy learning, which staff make exciting. This was the case when children and staff dressed as pirates for the day and engaged in a range of pirate activities, including playing the 'pop up pirates' game, and playing percussion instruments in the pirate band.
- Teachers are skilled at teaching phonics. This was evident in the Reception class, where children were sounding out and reading words associated with snails. At the end of the session some children were able to write short sentences such as 'snails can't go fast. They are slimy.' However, senior leaders are keen to further develop children's writing skills, and have made this, as well as providing more challenge for the most able children, a priority area for improvement.
- Children play safely and sensibly, listen carefully to instructions and work together cooperatively. Children are especially excited about their new beach shop and they enjoy playing outside. However, opportunities for learning in the outdoor areas are not as well developed as indoors. Activities are not always as stimulating as they could be. Senior leaders are well aware of this and have plans in place to improve the quality of provision so that children's learning outdoors is as good as it is indoors.
- Staff regularly check on how well children are performing and they document their progress well. Good systems are in place for regularly sharing information with parents. Staff are constantly exploring ways to involve parents in their children's education through, for example, half-termly 'wow moments' and 'bed-time reading' sessions.
- Staff ensure children are kept safe. The same good safeguarding procedures in place in the rest of the school are fully operational and cover all aspects of the early years.
- Parents are very complimentary about all aspects of the early years provision and are happy that their children are kept safe and are cared for 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

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| Unique reference number | 111124 |
| Local authority | Halton |
| Inspection number | 462335 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 195 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Elaine Main |
| Headteacher | Lindey Webb |
| Date of previous school inspection | 25 June 2013 |
| Telephone number | 01928 563089 |
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