

Wrenbury Primary School

Nantwich Road, Wrenbury, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 8EN

Inspection dates

15–16 December 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes have declined since the last inspection. Progress for pupils currently at the school is uneven across classes and some subjects.
- Some pupils have large gaps in their skills and knowledge which are stopping them from reaching the levels expected for their age.
- Pupils' gains in writing lag behind their success in reading. Not all pupils have the skills, desire or stamina to write for sustained periods of time.
- Pupils with special educational needs make inconsistent progress from their different starting points, particularly in mathematics.
- Some teachers do not plan lessons which build on what pupils already know and can do. This is holding some pupils back, particularly the older pupils in mixed-age classes.
- Not all teachers deploy teaching assistants well enough to ensure that these additional adults make a real difference to pupils' learning.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letter make) is not always effective; it is too dependent on which adult leads the teaching sessions.
- Middle leaders are not having enough influence in driving improvements to teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- The checks on teaching lack rigour. They do not happen often enough to iron out the flaws in teaching. Teachers do not benefit from precise feedback to help them become the best.
- The quality of teaching in the early years is too variable to help young children make greater gains in their learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils enjoy school, feel safe and behave well.
- Pupils make good progress in reading from the time they start school to the end of Year 6.
- Creative and enthusiastic teachers are highly successful in planning exciting topics which set pupils' curiosity alight and harness their desire to learn.
- Subjects other than English and mathematics are taught well. The beautiful 'learning journeys' showcase pupils' joy and pride in their work.
- The leadership of the headteacher, supported by a rejuvenated governing body, is setting the school on a successful road to recovery. The work to lift the quality of teaching is effective and bearing fruit.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, across the school and the early years, so that all matches the best by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan activities that build on pupils' prior learning, particularly in the mixed-age classrooms, so that gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge are tackled successfully
 - ensuring that teachers make better use of teaching assistants so these professionals have a greater influence on pupils' learning, particularly in the early years
 - helping all adults to teach phonics effectively.
- Improve pupils' outcomes by:
 - building pupils' understanding of the writing process and ensuring that they have the skills and stamina to write at length and produce work that appeals to different readers
 - ensuring that pupils with special educational needs make stronger progress in mathematics.
- Enhance the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - rigorously checking on the quality of teaching and learning, and providing teachers with precise feedback on their practice so they know what to do to lift their game
 - developing the role of other leaders so responsibilities are distributed evenly and everyone has a hand in driving improvement to teaching and pupils' outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

requires improvement

- Significant changes in staffing since the last inspection go a long way in explaining why Wrenbury's overall effectiveness is no longer good. Almost every teacher in this small school took up post at the start of term. This means the headteacher has had to start all over again in building a shared approach to teaching techniques across the school. Despite this considerable barrier, no-one is lamenting the past or making excuses. Everyone is excited about the potential of shaping a new staff team. Teachers and teaching assistants are completely on board. Everyone is keen to do their bit and staff morale is high.
- The headteacher is steering the school towards a quick recovery. She has the future in her sights and pupils' success in her heart. The inspection did not unearth any surprises. Her honest appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses means that work is already underway to tackle shortcomings. Early signs of success are evident across many aspects of school life. Attendance is improving and more children leave Reception ready for the challenges in Year 1. Furthermore, pupils' success in reading, a weakness at the last inspection, is now a strength of the school. There is a strong platform from which to launch the school to future success. Capacity for bringing about the necessary improvements is strong.
- Flaws in teaching are not a result of weak skills or reluctant attitudes to change. In fact, teachers are brimming over with enthusiasm in their desire to become the best. They are keen to put new learning from a good range of training opportunities into practice. Teachers willingly share their expertise. They are not afraid to ask for support when the going gets tough because they know help is at hand. Teachers are poised for flight. However, they have not quite managed to spread their wings fully because the checks on teaching lack rigour. They do not happen with sufficient frequency to iron out variation in teaching across classes and subjects. Teachers are not benefiting from precise feedback on the quality of their teaching. This is preventing some teachers from lifting their game more swiftly.
- In contrast, the long-term targets set for teachers are more effective. These goals are woven into the whole-school priorities for improvement and point to leaders' high expectations of teaching over time. Teachers' targets are shaped well to ensure that everyone has a role in championing the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- Inevitably, in a small school, staff carry a greater load of responsibilities. However, at Wrenbury this is compounded further because almost all the teachers have only been in school for one term. Consequently, many are only just getting started in their leadership role, which means that their impact in driving change to teaching and lifting pupils' outcomes is limited. This situation also means that the headteacher and deputy headteacher are shouldering more than their fair share of the responsibility to improve the school.
- Extra funding from the government to support disadvantaged pupils is used well. It is making a difference in closing achievement gaps over time. Pupils have access to small-group teaching sessions to lift their academic achievement. Leaders keep a keen eye on any barriers that may get in the way of pupils' progress. As a result, the additional money is also used to fund activities which support pupils' emotional and personal development.
- Physical education and sports premium funding is being used creatively to extend pupils' opportunities for physical activity while enhancing the expertise of staff in teaching physical education. The use of expert coaches, a range of extra-curricular activities and additional resources mean that pupils enjoy being active. They are confident to participate in (and win!) competitive tournaments with local schools.
- The imaginative way in which leaders have organised subjects other than English and mathematics stands out like a shining beacon at this school. The curriculum is carefully crafted to ensure that pupils gain key skills and knowledge through creative topics. Teachers follow this approach faultlessly so all pupils are able to immerse themselves fully in enticing learning opportunities. The success of this work speaks for itself in the remarkable 'learning journey' topic books which all pupils complete with unwavering pride and care. Learning experiences beyond the school gates are used well to bring topics to life. For example, a visit to Chester has strengthened pupils' understanding of Ancient Romans. Younger pupils have been able to let their imaginations go wild and build their investigative skills during a visit to a local exploratory centre.

- Opportunities to foster pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are rarely missed. Displays across the school show pupils' ability to understand and celebrate differences between faiths, cultures and families. Pupils think deeply about values and what being British means to them. As a result, these well-rounded youngsters are ready for the next stage of their education. They are also well prepared to take their place in a diverse British society.
- The morning 'Meet and greet' sessions and the monthly 'Coffee stop' are helping to strengthen parental partnerships. The majority of parents are positive about the school. Most would recommend the school to others.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Proactive governors have already come a long way in recognising that their role in supporting and challenging the school left room for improvement in the past. Governors have used the opportunity to re-form as a lever to review their skills and expertise so they are better placed to drive improvement. This is already reaping rewards. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because they review data, receive information on teaching and visit the school frequently.
 - An honest and transparent relationship between governors and the headteacher means that good news is shared but flaws are also out in the open. Governors meet all of their statutory duties, including those around safeguarding.
 - Governors use the external support available to set ambitious targets for the headteacher. They are involved fully in making decisions on pay awards for teachers. They know the difference extra government funding is making to disadvantaged pupils because they check this aspect of the school's work thoroughly.
- The local authority traditionally offers this school light-touch support. Nonetheless, local authority officers are responding to requests for additional help. In partnership with the governors, officers are in the process of organising, and funding, an external review of governance.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Equipping new teachers with the skills and confidence to recognise any sign that pupils may be at harm has been a key priority. Staff across the board know their duties and are not afraid to make referrals when they are concerned about individual pupils. All staff are gaining the skills and knowledge to spot any pupil at risk of radicalisation or extremism. Leaders take appropriate action, in partnership with external agencies and parents, to protect pupils and ensure that all have an equal chance to be happy and safe. Leaders are forging ahead in their work to tackle any prejudice-based views before they can take hold. They respond well to local and national issues to ensure that pupils gain a balanced view of the world. The focus on different families, including same-sex relationships, plus meaningful studies of different religions and cultures means that there are few instances of bullying and racist name calling.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, weaknesses in teaching mean that some pupils have had a bumpy ride as they move throughout the school. Good or better teaching in all classes has not always been the order of the day. This accounts for the gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge and is the reason some are on constant catch-up.
- The tide is turning and more pupils are benefiting from stronger teaching each and every day. However, there is still too much variability, particularly in the teaching of writing and mathematics. Although improving rapidly, teaching in every class does not always match the best.
- Not all teachers hit the right chord when they plan their lessons. They do not take enough notice of pupils' prior gains in learning to pick up gaps in pupils' skills or to extend those pupils who are ready to surge forward. Some teachers are not keeping a sharp enough eye on what pupils should be achieving for their age. This is particularly true in the mixed-age classes where teachers often default to the needs of the younger pupils. This means that the level of challenge for some pupils is too low because teachers' expectations are not high enough. This is getting in the way of older pupils, and those who are most able, forging ahead more quickly.
- Teachers give pupils plenty of time to try out new ways of working and to talk about their ideas with their friends before they begin to tackle a fresh piece of work. This is helping pupils to gain confidence as well as promoting their ability to speak and listen to others. However, teachers miss a trick in using this valuable opportunity to pick up and close down any muddled thinking before it takes hold.

- Some teaching assistants are proving to be great allies in helping pupils to access learning. This is particularly true for those pupils who receive close adult support due to their learning difficulties. However, not all teachers are equally skilled in using the extra adults in lessons to support pupils' learning. Teaching assistants are on hand to help pupils when they struggle. However, they fail to intervene and challenge when the quality of pupils' work is not quite right.
- Classrooms are jam-packed with vibrant displays that showcase pupils' achievements across a range of subjects. Without exception, teachers are highly skilled in linking subjects together to make learning fun and purposeful. The willingness of teachers to go the extra mile to ensure that pupils enjoy their learning is a key reason why pupils enter school filled with joy and enthusiasm. The excitement on pupils' faces as they arrived in class dressed as Ancient Romans is clear proof of teachers' success in making pupils' primary school experience memorable.
- Pupils rate their teachers highly. They know teachers have pupils' best interests at heart which means relationships are warm and caring. Treating pupils with respect and dignity is a hallmark of Wrenbury staff. Teachers' excellent modelling of respect and tolerance is giving pupils a clear steer in how they should treat others.
- Pupils enjoy reading because teachers take every opportunity to foster pupils' interest in books and different authors. Quality texts are available in all classrooms; teachers read to pupils and give them the chance to read for themselves. The focus on key books as the backbone of all topic work is successfully helping pupils to not only read the words on the page but also to understand all the aspects of the story. Nonetheless, not all adults who teach phonics are equally skilled in helping pupils to try out different sounds, to read words or to make the leap to spelling and writing new words accurately.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Opportunities for pupils to reflect on being a good friend and to explore different characters through their book studies are helping them to become empathetic youngsters. They can put themselves into someone else's shoes and think about the impact of their actions and words on others. Pupils know the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. They are keen to be involved in physical activity and make the right choices in their diet. The work they have completed on sugar content in different soft drinks is a prominent reminder to everyone to 'think before you drink' in school and at home.
- Pupils are proud of their school and keen to make a contribution to its development. Their views are sought, valued and acted on so they feel part of the school community. Their involvement on different school committees means they are having a say in how their school operates. For example, pupils undertook their own risk assessment of the playground. This led to increased levels of adult supervision and 'no go' areas. Pupils stick to the rules because they have played a part in designing them.
- Pupils are adamant that bullying is the exception rather than the rule. They admit that name calling sometimes happens but this is usually related to over-zealous football or team games. Pupils' confidence in adults to listen to concerns and tackle any nastiness is unwavering.
- Pupils have no worries about being teased if they need extra help with their learning. Most-able pupils confidently share their ideas because they know their success will be celebrated and not lead to any taunting in the playground. There are no differences in the views expressed by disabled pupils, pupils with special educational needs or pupils from Traveller families. All feel cared for and included fully in school life. Pupils know they are treated fairly and equally.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They know what to do to avoid danger when using the internet or mobile phones.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are happy to enter school and keen to make the most of all it has to offer. Their positive attitudes, good conduct and impeccable manners make a strong contribution to the welcome visitors receive and their progress during lessons.
- Pupils care about each other. It was a delight to listen to older pupils patiently answering questions from their younger schoolmates about Father Christmas. They certainly played their part in keeping the magic of the upcoming festivities alive.

- Pupils say behaviour is typically good but not always perfect. They know that a small number of pupils do find it difficult to behave well all the time. They are extremely considerate towards these youngsters, recognising that some pupils need extra help to manage their own behaviour. They do not allow the rare disturbances to distract them from their learning.
- Incidents of weaker behaviour are recorded and used carefully to identify pupils who need extra help to manage their behaviour or their temper. This is paying dividends. The unsettled behaviour that plagued one class at the start of term is no longer in evidence. The calm and consistent approach of the class teacher, plus extra support from school staff, has ensured that learning takes place without interruption.
- Pupils behave well around school. Playtimes are organised well to give pupils the space to play games or just chat to their friends. Pupils of all ages and ethnic backgrounds play together well. Despite having Christmas lunch followed by class parties in the afternoon, pupils' behaviour during lunchtime did not falter. This was also the case during the fun party games. Everyone took part, no-one objected to losing, and everyone clapped and cheered the winners.
- More children were absent from school last year than has been the case in the past. Attendance is usually above the national average. This dip is being tackled well and attendance rates this term are much stronger for all groups.
- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View believe that behaviour is good, pupils are safe and the school deals with bullying effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Standards at the end of Year 6 fluctuate over time. In 2015, standards were broadly average overall. However, they were below par in writing because pupils did not make enough progress in this area of their learning. This is not a one-off. Pupils' outcomes in writing have lagged behind other subjects for a while. In many classes, pupils' gains in writing are not matching their better progress in other subjects.
- In some classes, pupils have got the writing bug. For example, the poems produced by Year 5 pupils, which echo the style of a famous author, are full of colour and flair because pupils understand the writing process. In other classes, pupils struggle to produce quality writing that reflects the skills they should have for their age. Too often, their writing fails to appeal to different audiences because they have not got the technical ability to write with verve and confidence. Many lack the basic skills to write, or have limited vocabulary. Some pupils do not have the stamina to write for extended periods of time, which stops them from exploring language and practising their use of punctuation, grammar and spelling.
- A new whole-school approach to writing is beginning to tackle these deficiencies. Pupils are gaining a better understanding of how to produce writing that appeals to a reader through their close study of authors. Pupils are much keener to put pen to paper because teachers make sure that writing activities are linked to pupils' interests and different subjects.
- Pupils do better in reading. From the time they start school, pupils make good progress in this subject. Standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' gains in the Year 1 phonics check are better than at the time of the last inspection. Nonetheless, the phonics results are slowly slipping away from the national average year on year.
- The proportion of pupils making expected and better than expected progress in mathematics matched the national picture in 2015. Some pupils are doing well in mathematics because they can use their logic and reasoning skills and work systematically to solve problems. This is making them think hard and deepening their mathematical understanding. Not all pupils benefit from such rich opportunities. As a result, pupils' progress in this subject is not consistently strong across the school.
- School information and the work in pupils' books signal an improving picture in pupils' outcomes. Progress is beginning to speed up and more pupils are working at the levels expected for their age. Nonetheless, pupils in Year 2 still have a lot of ground to cover, particularly in mathematics, to make up for their very low starting points. Similarly, the current Year 6 has a tough journey ahead to make sure they can succeed in their chosen secondary schools.
- Pupils with special educational needs make inconsistent progress across different classes and subjects. Sometimes, they make better progress than their peers because the level of support they receive is just right. At other times, particularly in mathematics, they flounder. Their books show that the work they are asked to complete is often too difficult. These pupils cannot make headway because their grasp of number and patterns is insecure.

- The outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving over time. Disadvantaged pupils typically do as well as, and sometimes better than, their peers in school. In 2015, their standards in mathematics and reading matched those gained by other pupils across the country. However, they were behind their peers in other schools by over a term in writing. Disadvantaged pupils make expected progress in reading and mathematics from Year 3 to Year 6. However, fewer disadvantaged pupils make greater progress over time when compared with their classmates and all pupils nationally.
- The outcomes for most-able pupils mirror those of others in the school. They are more successful in reading and mathematics. The numbers gaining the highest levels match the national average in those subjects. They fare less well in writing. Too few exceed the levels expected for their age.
- Boys and pupils from the Traveller community make the same progress as their peers, so achievement gaps are beginning to close over time.
- All pupils make stronger progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. Pupils shine in their topic work. They thoroughly enjoy the broad range of activities on offer and immerse themselves in every aspect of learning. Pupils are developing the skills to investigate scientific phenomena, to design and create models and to produce creative art work using the techniques of famous artists. They are gaining a sense of history through their exploration of artefacts. The use of external expertise means that all pupils are gaining the skills to speak and listen in French.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- The early years took a turn for the worse following the last inspection. Weaker teaching meant that children were ill-equipped to make a positive start in Key Stage 1. In 2014, almost three quarters of the cohort did not leave Reception with the skills and knowledge to succeed. This is no longer the case. The early years leader has been instrumental in lifting children's outcomes and ensuring that they have a smoother transition to the next stage of their education.
- Children start Reception with various skills and abilities. Over half are able to make a good start in most areas of learning. In contrast, a large majority have a distance to travel in their reading and writing skills. From this point, children of all abilities, including those who are most able or have special educational needs, make the progress they should. Some children make better progress. As a result, the proportion of children gaining a good level of development by the end of Reception is almost in line with the national average. Increasing numbers are exceeding the levels expected for their age, which means that children are far more prepared to make the most of their time in Year 1. Boys typically fare less well than girls in this area of the school. Although boys make the same progress as other children in Reception, half of them have weaker skills and knowledge by the time they exit the early years.
- All children flourish as early readers and make good progress in this subject. This is because a love of reading is fostered well in the classroom. Enticing texts which appeal to children are littered around the classroom. Few can resist the temptation to curl up and enjoy a book. Children's progress in writing is not as marked. This means they are on catch-up from the start.
- Some aspects of teaching in the early years are good. The strong emphasis on securing children's basic skills is a strength. Focused teaching sessions led by the teacher are setting pupils up with the skills to write, count and sequence numbers. This work is nurturing children's positive attitudes and instilling a 'can do' approach so children are happy to have a go at anything that comes across their path. Not all teaching matches this quality. Opportunities to probe and extend children's learning are lost during the activities children select for themselves. Adults do not always intervene in children's play and ask enough searching questions to take children's learning to the next level. The outdoor area is exciting and stimulating, and offers children a good opportunity to learn and explore in different ways.
- Children's behaviour in Reception matches that of older pupils in the school. Children listen to instructions, take turns and willingly share with each other. They do not let the occasional incidents of weaker behaviour stop them in their tracks. Children are safe and kept safe by adults who know individuals very well. All welfare and safeguarding requirements are met.
- The early years leader is forging ahead to bring about change so that children enjoy greater success in their learning. Her work with the local private nursery means that the arrangements for transition into Reception are being strengthened. The early years leader ensures that adults are trained to do the role, including the teaching of phonics. However, she is not checking the impact of this work to make sure that everyone is reaching the same high standard.

- Children's learning is checked carefully to keep an eye on progress. Parents are invited to contribute to children's assessment records. Many do. However, not enough thought has gone into making sure that parents who may not have ready access to the internet have an equal chance to support their children's learning at home and at school.

School details

Unique reference number	111078
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10003347

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jenny Davies
Headteacher	Mrs Bessa Cador
Telephone number	01270 685510
Website	www.wrenburyschool.org.uk
Email address	mailto:head@wrenbury.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	January 2012

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is below average. Around 90% of the pupils at this school are of White British heritage. Approximately one tenth are from Traveller, Irish, Romany or Gypsy heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is broadly average.
- There are fewer pupils known to be eligible for support through pupil premium funding than found nationally. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's floor standards. These are the minimum standards and rate of progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics of pupils in Key Stage 2.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a considerable turnaround of staff. The current headteacher took up post in January 2015. The deputy headteacher started in September 2014. Three of the five teachers began teaching at Wrenbury in September 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited every classroom on several occasions to observe teaching and pupils' learning.
- Inspectors observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at play and lunchtime. They met formally with three groups of pupils and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with staff, senior and subject leaders, and members of the governing body. A telephone discussion took place with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding. They took account of information about pupils' outcomes and scrutinised pupils' books.
- Inspectors spoke informally to a small group of parents and carers at the start of each school day. They also considered the findings from the 47 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire) as part of the inspection.

Inspection team

Joanne Olsson, lead inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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