

Newton-le-Willows Primary School

Sanderling Road, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside WA12 9UF

Inspection dates	24–25 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has high expectations of the pupils, staff and school. Her determination for all to succeed and excel has led to improvements in all aspects of the school's work.
- A core group of highly skilled governors make informed and sometimes difficult decisions in the best interests of the pupils.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are becoming highly adept at assessing pupils' progress and providing work at just the right level of difficulty.
- The effectiveness of the early years is good. Pupils in the early years and Year 1 make good progress in their reading, especially their understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters represent).
- Most pupils make good progress from their starting points in writing and mathematics. Pupils' attainment in reading is significantly above average.
- The staff 'go the extra mile' for the pupils and their families. Pastoral support is effective.
- Pupils are proud to attend Newton-le-Willows Primary School. They behave well in and around school. They are friendly, courteous and eager to please.
- Pupils and parents agree that the school is a safe learning environment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Middle leaders are still developing their expertise in judging the impact of their improvement work.
- Teaching assistants provide a variable quality of support in lessons.
- Pupils' attainment in writing lags behind their attainment in reading and mathematics.
- The most-able pupils are not given challenging enough work, especially in mathematics, in all classes.
- The practice in the Nursery year is not as effective as that in the Reception year.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on pupils' outcomes by:
 - increasing the level of challenge for the most-able pupils, particularly in mathematics, so they reach the very highest standards
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations of pupils in writing are as high as they are in reading
 - providing further training and development opportunities for teaching assistants so that all are as good as the very best
 - sharing the strong practice in the Reception year more widely to benefit provision in the Nursery year so that both are equally effective.

- Improve the impact of leaders on pupils' outcomes by developing the skills and expertise of the school's middle leaders.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher is ambitious for the pupils, staff and school. She has high expectations of herself and the staff together with high aspirations for the pupils. Governors describe her appointment as a 'sea change' in the school's fortune. The headteacher is ably supported by a very proactive deputy headteacher.
- Leaders evaluate the school's effectiveness honestly and accurately. They know the school's strengths and areas for further development. Subsequent improvement plans are detailed and focus clearly on the actions required to ensure improved outcomes for pupils.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is particularly effective. Senior leaders have worked hard to implement a new procedure for teachers' day-to-day planning. Teachers now plan a lesson, deliver the lesson, assess the progress made by individual pupils and then plan the next lesson. As a result, most pupils make good or better progress.
- Thorough and reliable assessment systems are in place. Senior leaders know which groups of pupils throughout the school are making good and sometimes better progress. They know which pupils need additional support to prevent them falling behind their classmates.
- Additional government funding, the pupil premium, is used wisely to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Although they do not reach the standards of non-disadvantaged pupils at the end of the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2, they do reach higher standards than disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- The provision of physical education and sport is a strength of the school. A specialist coach, partly financed by the additional primary school physical education and sports funding, provides high-quality coaching for the staff and has increased the range of sporting opportunities available to the pupils. As a result, participation rates in extra-curricular activities at lunchtimes and after school (particularly for girls) have increased significantly, pupils' skills are developing and attainment is rising.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Although leaders rightly prioritised improving standards in reading, writing and mathematics when the school was judged to require improvement, other subjects were not sidelined. For example, the provision for music throughout the school is strong. Leaders employ a specialist music teacher to provide coaching and mentoring for non-subject specialist teachers on the staff.
- Leaders value the opinions of the pupils and act on the information gathered in surveys of pupils' views. For example, there was a significant increase in the proportion of pupils who reported enjoying practical investigations in science between surveys because the leader had provided training and support for staff in this aspect of the subject.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and disability is very effective. All statutory responsibilities are met. Robust systems and procedures are in place to ensure good outcomes for pupils. There are clear plans for improvement which are based on rigorous monitoring, thorough analysis of assessment information and honest evaluation of actions carried out.
- There is effective provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong, get along well together and have an awareness of different cultures. While pupils do not talk confidently about British values, inspectors noted posters and pupils' work on display about democracy, the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance between those of different faiths. The school's values of respect, friendship, hope, caring, trust and co-operation are displayed effectively in the main school hall and shine through all activities undertaken by pupils and staff.
- Middle leadership is developing. Middle leaders are given time to monitor and evaluate the progress made by pupils in the subjects they lead. The impact of their activities is limited because they do not always check that their recommendations for improvement have been carried out by teachers and teaching assistants.
- The local authority has provided very effective support since the school was judged to require improvement. This includes reviews of teaching and learning, a review of behaviour and safety and the moderation of teachers' assessments of the standards pupils reach at the end of the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is strong and effective. The governors' improvement plan, the GIP, is detailed and tightly

focused on improvement. It is a very strategic document. A core group of highly skilled governors shows significant 'backbone' to make difficult decisions in the interests of the pupils.

- Governors have a deep knowledge and understanding of staff appraisal outcomes and do not ratify staff progression through the school's pay scale as a matter of course. Governors have an effective knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors' understanding of the impact of the government's additional funding for disadvantaged children in the early years is not as strong as their understanding of the impact in key stages 1 and 2.
- Published details about governance on the school's website were not compliant with statutory guidance for governing bodies before the inspection. This was rectified by the end of the first day of the inspection.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The staff at Newton-le-Willows know their pupils and their families very well. Leaders are very proactive in seeking support from outside agencies. They take assertive action when they believe their pupils are not being served well. For example, the designated officer for safeguarding uses the Local Safeguarding Children Board's escalation policy to ensure vulnerable pupils and their families access children's services.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching and learning in the school, despite some inconsistencies, is good overall.
- Teachers are becoming increasingly adept at planning activities which address pupils' needs. As introduced by senior leaders, teachers do not adhere slavishly to a week's worth of planning in a particular subject. They reflect on the work completed by pupils after every lesson and adapt their plans for the next lesson accordingly. This ensures that most pupils complete work at exactly the right level and are thoroughly engaged and challenged in their learning.
- Teachers who are new or are returning to the profession are a strength in the school because of the high-quality support and mentoring that they receive from more experienced colleagues.
- Assessment is a strength of the school. Teachers ensure that assessment information is accurate through moderation activities within the school, with staff from other schools and with officers of the local authority.
- Senior leaders are fully aware that the standards that pupils reach in writing are not as high as the standards that pupils reach in reading and mathematics. Teachers are taking action to address this issue but need to raise their expectations of pupils even further. The school is alive with writing. There is writing in English workbooks, together with writing across the curriculum and writing on display throughout the school. Teachers have risen to the increased demands of the new national curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 3 could confidently talk about rhetorical questions, subordinate clauses and embedded clauses.
- The teaching of phonics is a strength of the school and leads to outstanding outcomes in reading at the end of Year 6. Inspectors found that pupils read books at just the right level of difficulty. Pupils can read most of the words and use a variety of other strategies, such as reading around an unknown 'tricky' word, to understand the underlying meanings in a text.
- The majority of pupils make strong progress in mathematics. However, sometimes there is insufficient challenge for the most-able pupils and they do not make the progress of which they are capable. A check of pupils' workbooks showed that the most-able pupils often complete the same work as other pupils.
- The quality of support from teaching assistants is inconsistent throughout the school. In the best classes, teaching assistants are fully involved in all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. However, this is not the case in all classes. Some teaching assistants are unaware of the disadvantaged pupils entitled to the pupil premium in the groups they lead. Therefore, they do not focus their attention on those who need it most.
- Homework is provided consistently across the school. Pupils' learning is embedded and developed in the work they complete at home. Parents are divided in their views about homework. Some really appreciate the menu of activities to be completed by their children during a half term period. Others report that their children find the choice overwhelming.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The pastoral leader and other staff work proactively with many external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils, together with their families, are supported well. A parent told inspectors that the school goes 'above and beyond' to support their child with additional learning needs.
- Leaders ensure that the pupils are cared for exceptionally well. The nurture group, breakfast club, book café and after school clubs are but a few examples of the extra provision for the pupils and their families. As one parent said, 'The teachers and teaching assistants are all very welcoming and have the children's interests at heart.'
- Pupils are happy to attend Newton-le-Willows Primary School. They told inspectors that they particularly like learning in English, mathematics, science and physical education.
- Pupils appreciate the way in which their teachers mark their workbooks. They report that teachers' 'helpful' marking tells them how to improve their work and sets them new targets for which to aim. Pupils look forward to reading their teachers' comments. Pupils' responses to marking show that they are learning how to be successful, self-reliant learners.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. They understand what actions constitute cyber-bullying and have been taught how to report any concerns or worries that they may have.
- Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take and say that bullying is rare in school. They told inspectors that senior leaders respond very strongly and appropriately to very rare incidents of racist name-calling.
- Older pupils told the inspectors that the word 'gay' is very occasionally used pejoratively in the playground. Senior leaders are taking immediate action to address this issue.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well during the less-structured times of the school day. Break times are supervised well. Pupils have access to a range of play equipment which promotes their physical development.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exemplary when their work is interesting and they are challenged to do their very best. Occasionally, pupils do not understand their tasks and do not get down to work fast enough. In these lessons, valuable learning time is lost.
- Pupils' attendance has improved over time and is now above average. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent has reduced significantly and is now well below the national average.
- The number of exclusions from Newton-le-Willows is very low. The school utilises the local authority's primary short stay school, PACE, for a very small number of pupils. Senior leaders are fully informed about all aspects of pupils' work at PACE because they are accompanied at PACE by their one-to-one support workers.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 have improved over time and were above average in 2015.
- Similarly, standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 were above average and considerably higher in 2015 than they were the year before.
- The school's assessment information and pupils' current work confirms that pupils in key stages 1 and 2, from their different starting points, make good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils entitled to support through additional government funding make good progress from their individual starting points. At the end of key stage 2 in 2015, this group of pupils were less than half a term behind their classmates in school and other pupils nationally. Currently, most disadvantaged pupils throughout the school are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's assessment information indicates that progress in mathematics is slower for pupils currently in upper key stage 2. Leaders are working hard to address this issue through tightly focused interventions.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability make good progress because their individual needs are

identified early and appropriate provision is put in place.

- The proportion of pupils that reached the standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2015 was above the national average for the first time. The school's current assessment information indicates a trend of continuous improvement.
- Children in the early years made good progress. A similar proportion to that found nationally reached a good level of development in 2015. Again, the school's current assessment information indicates a trend of continuous improvement. Children in the early years are increasingly ready for the demands of Year 1.
- Pupils are increasingly well-prepared for the next key stage in their education.
- Current assessment information and pupils' workbooks indicate that the most-able pupils do not reach the very highest standards in mathematics because they are not always given work which challenges them to think deeply and apply their knowledge and skills widely.

Early years provision

is good

- Leadership of the early years is strong. The detailed improvement plan is constantly monitored and evaluated by the early years leader.
- There is consistent teaching and equality of experiences across the three Reception classes. Effective teaching is characterised by insightful questioning and high expectations. However, teaching is not yet consistent between the Reception year and the Nursery year. There is a real buzz of excitement about learning in the lessons in which children make accelerated progress. For example, during the inspection, the children discovered a crime scene and evidence of mysterious visitors. This promoted and extended their use of language to describe position.
- Teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively in the early years. During the inspection, children made errors discriminating between letters 'b' and 'd'. These errors were not addressed during a reading activity and this impacted detrimentally on children's ability to spell words correctly using these letters.
- Some children enter the Nursery class with skills and abilities that are below those typical for their age. They make good progress during their time in the early years and are increasingly ready for the demands of the curriculum in Year 1.
- The proportion of children who reached a good level of development increased significantly in 2015 to be broadly average. Current assessment information, including the children's learning journeys (records of achievement), indicates a continuing trend of improvement.
- The proportion of disadvantaged children who reach a good level of development more than doubled in 2015 and is above the national average. The school's case studies show that the provision of closely targeted intervention activities in phonics, writing and number help these children to close the learning gap.
- The requirements of the *Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage* are fully met. A parent of a child in the Nursery class told inspectors that staff are extremely supportive and are 'fantastic at fostering good relations and interaction'.
- Children in the early years are happy in school. They understand the routines and are eager to learn. A parent told the inspection team that his child who attends the Nursery class 'loves school' because 'there is always something happening in school to look forward to'.

School details

Unique reference number	104775
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10012087

This inspection 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	504
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Cleary
Headteacher	Kathryn Wain-Mahoney
Telephone number	01744 678390
Website	www.newton.st-helens.sch.uk
Email address	newtonp@sthelens.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 January 2014

Information about this school

- Newton-le-Willows Primary School is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational and disability is much higher than the national average.
- In 2015, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Most learners are of White British heritage and most speak English as their first language.
- Children in the early years attend the Nursery class on a part-time basis and the Reception classes on a full-time basis.
- When the school was previously inspected in January 2014, it was judged to require improvement. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors subsequently monitored the school on one occasion to check its progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 23 part-lessons, four of which were observed jointly with senior leaders. The inspectors visited a range of lessons for short periods, including groups that support the development of pupils' phonics and reading skills.
- Meetings were held with school leaders and five governors, including the chair and the vice-chair of the governing body. The lead inspector also met with a representative from St Helens local authority.
- The inspectors spoke informally with pupils in lessons and at various times during each day. The inspectors also spoke formally to three groups of pupils during the inspection.
- Questionnaire returns completed by 71 members of staff were taken into consideration.
- The inspectors checked a range of pupils' workbooks and information about pupils' current progress in lessons. Inspectors also reviewed a number of documents, including the school's development plan, attendance records, information relating to the work the school does to keep pupils safe and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Account was taken of the 39 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Belita Scott, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joan Williamson	Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Beard	Ofsted Inspector

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