

# Astbury St Mary's CofE Primary School

School Lane, Astbury, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 4RG

## Inspection dates

25–26 January 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Since the last inspection there has been a considerable decline in the progress and attainment of pupils. By the end of key stage 2, pupils underachieve significantly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The governing body has not challenged leaders or held them to account for the decline in pupils' standards. Governors have not fulfilled their legal responsibility to ensure that the new national curriculum is taught.
- Assessments of pupils' attainment do not provide reliable information about the performance of pupils. This also affects leaders' ability to track pupils' progress effectively. Teachers are not able to accurately plan pupils' next steps in their learning. Consequently, pupils' progress from Year 1 to Year 6 is inadequate.
- Teaching fails to challenge pupils, especially the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Published data shows that three quarters of pupils failed to meet the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. At the end of key stage 1 the same proportion of pupils failed to meet the expected standard in writing.
- Attendance for pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average.
- In some lessons, poor behaviour prevents pupils from making the progress of which they are capable, because their learning is disrupted.
- The school's self-evaluation and development plan do not adequately identify areas for improvement. Therefore, plans for improvement are not fit for purpose.
- The new leadership team has started to improve teaching, but this is making too little difference to pupils' progress because of the legacy of underachievement.

### The school has the following strengths

- The effectiveness of the early years provision is good due to the strong leadership in the early years, which has driven this area of the school forward despite the decline elsewhere. Children's attainment has improved and is above the national average.
- The new headteacher has prioritised safeguarding. There are clear and effective procedures in place to ensure that pupils are safe.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics has improved. It is in line with the national average.

## Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

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

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that leaders and governors set high expectations for the achievement of pupils and that they review pupils' performance regularly
  - ensuring that school leaders are focused on making rapid improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in reading and writing
  - planning for future improvements by identifying the main priorities and setting clear and measurable actions to achieve these targets
  - ensuring that governors rigorously question the actions taken by leaders and the impact this work has on improving outcomes for pupils
  - developing the knowledge and skills of middle leaders to support the improvements needed in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - planning training so that all staff understand the expectations of pupils at different stages in their education, as detailed in the new national curriculum
  - ensuring that teachers' assessments of pupils' work are accurate and inform teachers' planning so that all pupils are challenged to achieve the standards of which they are capable
  - ensuring that staff adapt activities within lessons if pupils are finding the work too easy
  - challenging all pupils and especially the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils
  - planning a broad and balanced curriculum that reflects the new national expectations.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - ensuring that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils increases
  - improving pupils' behaviour so that there is no disruption to learning in classes.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- Since the last inspection, there has been a significant decline in the progress and attainment of pupils by the end of key stage 2. Governors did not act swiftly or decisively enough on their concerns to address significant weaknesses in school leadership. This legacy of underperformance continues to hamper the capacity for the school to improve and, despite warning signs detailed in a report produced by the diocese over a year ago, very little has been done to improve outcomes for pupils at the school.
- Governors have not fulfilled their legal responsibility to follow the statutory national curriculum, which is only now being introduced. This has resulted in a large proportion of pupils not achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, pupils have not been equipped with the skills that will be required of them as they move to the next stage of their education.
- The school's self-evaluation is overgenerous. Leaders and governors do not analyse the weaknesses of the school well enough to set clear targets for future improvement. In the school's development plan, actions are not well defined or linked to specific success criteria and the plan fails to identify areas that require urgent improvement. For example, standards and progress in reading are not explicitly mentioned in the plan despite this being a significant area for improvement. Where they have been identified, actions lack precision and do not identify how these will be successful in achieving the plan's overall aims.
- Middle leaders have not been provided with the necessary training to equip them with the skills needed to assist the new headteacher to urgently improve the school.
- Leaders have introduced a new assessment and tracking system. The information provided is not accurately measuring the attainment or the progress of pupils, as evidenced in their writing and mathematics books. As such, teachers cannot adequately plan pupils' next steps in learning. This was seen in lessons where the challenge for the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils was weak.
- There has been a dearth of quality training for staff. Teachers have not been afforded the opportunity to extend their skills by attending quality training and they have been placed in a position to implement the new curriculum with little preparation or development of their subject knowledge. Teaching has not been monitored adequately to enable teachers to improve their practice. Although this is changing, the school is catching up lost ground when compared with other schools.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is undermined by pupils' lack of understating of British values. They have a good awareness of other faiths but do not fully understand the principles of individual liberty and how this relates to the rule of law.
- As the acting special educational needs coordinator, the headteacher has put support in place to address the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This does impact on pupils' individual outcomes, such as ensuring that pupils are fully included in the life of the school, but it has made little difference to

their progress.

- The sports funding is used appropriately to raise staff expertise in delivering physical education (PE) as well as providing extra-curricular activities. The use of the pupil premium grant has had a positive impact on the outcomes for the small number of pupils who are eligible for this funding. The new headteacher's responsiveness to pupils' needs, particularly for new arrivals to the school, has ensured that these pupils make sufficient progress from their starting points. This sentiment is echoed by parents who believe that staff 'go above and beyond' to support pupils' individual needs.
- Parents are aware that the school has experienced difficulties but they have faith in the new headteacher's ability to lead the school forward. As one parent put it, 'miracles don't happen overnight', but they have commented favourably on the change in atmosphere within the school and on the recent changes in the way in which expectations of pupils' behaviour have been raised.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors are committed to the school but they have not sufficiently challenged school leaders. Their failure to question the decline in standards, despite long standing concerns about the performance of the school, has led to the new national curriculum and assessment arrangements being largely ignored until the arrival of the headteacher in January 2016.
- Governors have shown poor judgement, for example in their commissioning of external companies who have provided inaccurate assessments of school performance, only for governors to recommission them to provide further services to the school.
- Governors have a clear understanding of performance management procedures but have not been rigorous in their implementation, rewarding staff for targets that are only partially met. This approach has been ineffective in raising the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governors have sought support from the diocese, which has been aware of issues within the school but has only just put support measures in place. The local authority has a clear picture of the school and is providing support for governors and leaders.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Upon taking up her post, the new headteacher prioritised improvements in the safeguarding systems and procedures. Safeguarding is effective. She has been successful in ensuring that all staff have been trained and have a good understanding of recent changes to legislation.
- Staff are aware of the procedures for referrals and they praise the communication within school regarding safeguarding issues. They have regular updates in staff meetings and all staff receive training annually.
- Pupils say they feel safe and that they know they can approach a member of staff if they feel worried or insecure. They have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, including measures that they should take to keep themselves safe when they are online.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Inadequate

- Leaders have not improved the quality of teaching and learning. The school's new assessment arrangements are not providing accurate information about pupils' attainment and do not enable teachers to measure how much progress pupils make. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are making very slow progress because the next steps in their learning have not been adequately identified. For example, in mathematics, pupils are not challenged to try out different ways of solving problems and are not offered opportunities to deepen their understanding of mathematical ideas.
- The most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils sit through lessons which fail to challenge their thinking. The progress in their books and lesson observations confirm this lack of challenge. Teachers' questions do not demand enough from pupils and pupils have few opportunities to expand on their thoughts and ideas. Consequently, teachers do not have enough knowledge of pupils' understanding or when to accelerate the learning. When asked, many pupils stated that they found the work easy.
- Pupils make good use of phonics strategies in their reading but all readers heard by inspectors, both formally and within lessons, found it difficult to read with fluency and expression, indicating their poor understanding of the text.
- There is sparse evidence in pupils' topic books of a broad and balanced curriculum.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils are confident and open and are starting to understand what it means to be a successful learner through the school's recent work on adopting positive attitudes towards their work.
- Pupils' awareness of British values is limited. Despite having an elected school council and taking part in debates, pupils found it difficult to define democracy and how this affected them in their everyday lives. They found it difficult to relate how individual liberty can coexist with the rule of law.
- In contrast to this, pupils discussed their learning about other cultures and faiths with enthusiasm and showed a mature attitude towards equality issues.
- Pupils state that bullying is rare in school and that the new headteacher acts upon pupils' and parents' concerns swiftly. They are confident that staff would address this if there was an issue.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- In some lessons, too much learning time is lost while staff attend to pupils' poor behaviour. The headteacher has established a clear behaviour system that is starting to reduce some of the disruption in lessons. Pupils and parents are pleased with the new behaviour expectations, although pupils reported that some 'fiddling' still persists in class which distracts them from their work. This is due to pupils switching off because lessons are not planned precisely enough to meet their needs.
- In other lessons, adults spend too long minimising potentially disruptive behaviour. School leaders agree that this is fairly typical when pupils are left to work on tasks that do not challenge their thinking. Pupils generally conduct themselves well around school. They are polite and well mannered.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average. The headteacher has a very good knowledge of these families and is slowly building up trust to ensure that their attendance rates improve.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Inadequate

- Published national data shows that pupils do not make adequate progress from the end of key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2. As a result, pupils underachieve considerably.
- Due to the slow rate of progress pupils make, a large proportion of pupils did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. No pupil achieved at higher than the expected standard in reading or writing and too few achieved the higher standard in mathematics in comparison with other pupils of the same age nationally. There are few signs in pupils' work to suggest that the rate of progress of pupils within the school has significantly changed.
- Pupils, particularly the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not adequately challenged in their learning. When asked, pupils said that they found the work to be too easy.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make slow progress in their reading, writing and mathematics work. The school's own performance data shows this to be true.
- Pupils who are in receipt of the pupil premium make similarly poor progress to other pupils in the school. The progress evident in their books does not match the assessment information collected by teachers and is inaccurate. The progress made by these pupils is inconsistent between different year groups and classes.
- In key stage 1, while results show that attainment in reading is broadly in line with national averages, attainment in writing is very low, with only one quarter of pupils achieving the expected standard.
- In contrast to this, the Year 1 phonics check results show a clear trend of improvement to meet national expectations.
- Pupils who are looked after have specific targets detailed in their personal education plans and carers speak very highly of the support that these pupils receive. Although

not always measured in their academic achievements, outcomes for these pupils are positive.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Due to the continuity in leadership and stability in the approach to the curriculum, the early years has been shielded from many of the problems experienced in the school in general. The early years leader has a very accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has risen because staff have adapted their teaching and support to meet the children's needs.
- There have been steady improvements in children's achievements since the last inspection. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has improved over the last three years to rise above the national average. Children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Safeguarding is effective. School policies and staff awareness ensure that children are safe and all statutory requirements are met. Flexibility to address the needs of children who start in Reception during the school year, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, mean that they are well supported and progress well from their starting points.
- In lessons, children explore and work together effectively. This was exemplified by boys who adapted the design of their marble run to make the marbles go down faster. Children display effective characteristics of learning by being curious and using play to extend their learning.
- Children work with respect and value each other's opinions. The range of tasks available, such as the 'laser beam challenge', ensures that they are interested and engaged in their learning.
- The teaching of phonics is good and children use their phonics skills when they are reading and writing. Pupils are successful in reading from word to word and predict words that could end sentences.
- The standard of the children's written work is very high and proudly displayed on the classroom walls. Children's independent writing seen during the inspection was of a very high quality and surpassed expectations for children's ages.
- The quality of teaching is good. Adults interact with children with notable impact and children who start the year with skill levels below those expected for their age catch up quickly. The school's assessment and tracking of children is accurate and shows how children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified for additional support.
- Parents are informed of their child's education through online profiles which are updated regularly, as well as a blog and parents' mornings where they are invited to come and learn with the children. Partnerships with external agencies and other early years providers are effective.

## School details

Unique reference number	111333
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10024150

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	126
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kathryn Moore
Headteacher	Mrs Philippa Worswick
Telephone number	01260 272528
Website	<a href="http://astburyschool.org.uk">http://astburyschool.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@astbury.cheshire.sch.uk">head@astbury.cheshire.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	30 April–1 May 2013

## Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is low.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement or an education, health and care plan is higher than the national average.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the use of the school's sports funding or the publication of the most recent key stage 2 results on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector observed teaching in each class. The lead inspector observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and assessed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This included shorter visits made jointly with the headteacher.
- The lead inspector looked through a range of pupils' work in different subjects and heard pupils read.
- The lead inspector spoke to pupils in a group and informally around school and at playtime.
- The lead inspector took into account the views of parents who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- The inspector made observations of pupils' behaviour at lunchtime, when pupils were moving in and around the school and during lessons.
- Meetings were held with staff, governors, senior leaders and representatives from the local authority and diocese.
- Meetings were also held with the school's early years leader and curriculum leaders.
- The inspector considered a range of documentation, including minutes from meetings of the governing body, information on pupils' attainment and progress, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its areas for development.
- The inspector looked at behaviour records, including records of bullying incidents.
- The inspector reviewed safeguarding documentation and how this related to daily practice, as well as speaking with staff and children.

## Inspection team

Steve Bentham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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