

Firs Primary School

Firs Road, Sale, Cheshire M33 5EL

Inspection dates

12–13 July 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders and governors have ensured that all staff share an unwavering commitment to setting high expectations for all pupils.
- Leaders are determined and uncompromising in their pursuit of a first-class education for all pupils.
- As a cohesive and motivated team, the staff have driven far-reaching improvements since the previous inspection. They are passionate about the care, welfare and education of every pupil who attends the school.
- All staff share a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the school's effectiveness. Leaders, including subject coordinators, use their meticulous monitoring to formulate precise and ambitious plans for improvement.
- The curriculum is expertly planned and effectively develops learning across a wide range of subjects. It makes a strong contribution to pupils developing a broad and deep understanding of the world.
- Teaching ensures that pupils of all abilities complete work that is challenging and stimulating.
- Teachers and other adults question pupils expertly to assess their understanding and develop the depth of their thinking. They also explain new and challenging concepts with precision and clarity.
- Inspirational leadership, in tandem with highly effective teaching, ensures that children make rapid progress in the early years.
- Pupils make outstanding progress from their different starting points across the curriculum and throughout the school. This is equally true of the great many pupils who join the school at different points during the school year.
- Pupils make fast progress in all subjects. Despite this, the proportion of pupils working at greater depth in writing is not as high as it is in other subjects.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are enthusiastic, considerate and resilient.
- The personal development of pupils ensures that they are exceptionally well prepared for life after 'the Firs'. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy and they understand the characteristics of effective learning.
- Arrangements for keeping pupils safe are highly effective. The school works in partnership with a range of other agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support needed to thrive.
- Parents and members of the local community are overwhelmingly positive about the school and its staff.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build upon the impressive work already undertaken to develop the teaching of writing, so the proportion of pupils attaining the highest levels is close to those seen in other subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher is unwavering in her determination for all pupils to succeed at 'the Firs'. Members of staff endorse the school's ethos enthusiastically. This ensures that potential barriers to achievement are never seen as insurmountable. Collectively, staff ensure that the school motto, 'inspire, believe, achieve', is a lived reality.
- Leaders have managed the expansion of the school skilfully. Leaders have nurtured the development of both new and existing members of staff. Staff are proud to work at the school. They greatly appreciate the many opportunities that they are provided with to discuss teaching and develop professionally. For example, staff value the opportunity to accompany leaders on 'Wonka walks', where they observe effective teaching alongside leaders, in a range of year groups and subjects.
- Leaders have ensured that staff morale is exceptionally high and that all staff are fully committed to providing pupils with the best care and education possible. One teacher summed up the views of many when she told the inspector, 'I am proud to work in this school and I wish that my child could go to a school like this one.'
- Leaders' systems for managing the performance of staff are highly effective. Members of staff agree ambitious personal targets that align with whole-school priorities and their own interests and developmental needs. The development of non-teaching staff is seen as equally important. Members of staff were keen to tell inspectors that they feel 'really invested in' by leaders.
- The senior leadership team has been enlarged since the previous inspection. It is apparent that the new deputy headteachers have added further impetus for improvement. In turn, a great deal of work has been undertaken to develop the impact of middle leaders and subject coordinators. As a result of meticulous monitoring, all leaders have a detailed understanding of the school's effectiveness. Leaders ensure that the entire school community is mobilised to tackle areas of relative weakness. As a result, consistent improvements are secured across the school.
- Leaders make good use of their links with other local schools to check the accuracy of their assessments to help everyone understand and agree on high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- The school employs a number of innovative strategies to engage with parents. For example, the school's 'teapot talks' provide parents with an informal opportunity to discuss the school's work with members of staff. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and feel it is welcoming, caring and well led. A typical comment to inspectors was from one parent who described how their child 'runs into school happy and loves learning'.
- The school's broad and balanced curriculum is well planned and delivered. The effectiveness of the curriculum is regularly reviewed and modified. Teachers go to great lengths to ensure that learning is exciting and memorable. For example, teachers recently staged a mock 'alien invasion' to inspire pupils to develop the quality of their creative writing.
- Pupils in all classes benefit from extensive opportunities for trips and enrichment. From

trips to places such as Dunham Massey and Blackpool Zoo, to workshops on Samuel Pepys and samba music, regular opportunities are exploited to enrich the curriculum and bring learning to life. Pupils also value the many extra-curricular opportunities on offer, such as 'ultimate Frisbee', chess club, taekwondo and cookery club.

- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is excellent. Pupils' different backgrounds are routinely celebrated. A display that illustrates the different countries where pupils come from takes pride of place close to the school's main entrance. Leaders have ensured that the promotion of British values weaves throughout the curriculum. Pupils are accepting of others and knowledgeable about different cultures and religions, as a result of extensive work in this area. For example, a recent talk from a representative of the local Muslim community helped pupils to understand what it is like to be a Muslim in modern Britain.
- Leaders' spending of the additional pupil premium funding is highly effective and ensures that disadvantaged pupils make outstanding progress. Leaders have a sophisticated understanding of the school's context and the potential barriers to achievement faced by disadvantaged pupils. Their spending of the pupil premium is broad, creative and carefully evaluated. The work of the school's intervention teacher has a pronounced impact on helping pupils to catch up with their peers in English and mathematics. The school's pastoral manager is also funded by the pupil premium and the school community is united in endorsing the impact of her work.
- Primary physical education and sport funding is used well. The provision of a broad range of free extra-curricular clubs has significantly increased participation in a range of sporting activities. Leaders have also ensured that identified pupils are targeted to 'kick start' their enjoyment of physical activity and sport.
- The special educational needs coordinator, who is also the deputy headteacher, has an exceptionally good knowledge of the pupils' needs. This includes those pupils who attend the resource base. Leaders make well-considered decisions about the expenditure of funding. Leaders rigorously monitor the effect of additional funding to make sure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make rapid progress from their different starting points. Parents of pupils in the school's resource base spoke in glowing terms about the effectiveness of the school's work to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They were also pleased with the progress that their children are making.

Governance of the school

- Governors are passionate about the school and provide excellent support and guidance to leaders. Governors work in tandem with the leadership team to maintain the school's inclusive, empowering and 'no excuses' culture.
- The governing body contains members with a good range of skills and experiences. Governors use the learning from their regular training effectively, are regular visitors to the school and have worked hard to raise their profile with members of the school community.
- Governors ask probing questions of leaders and help to ensure that priorities for development remain at the fore of the school's work until evidence of sustained impact has been secured.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective because the governors and headteacher have established a culture in which all staff take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously.
- The school has ensured that pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, Year 6 pupils have attended 'crucial crew' workshops. These workshops aim to inform pupils about a number of risks related to road safety and anti-social behaviour through the exploration of real-life scenarios.
- Pupils are also taught how to manage risks themselves, particularly when learning outdoors and in subjects where specialist equipment is used, such as design and technology and science.
- The school's work to inform pupils about the potential dangers associated with the internet are effective, thorough and innovative. For example, the school has designed an 'e-safety trail' around the school site. This teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe when online in a fun and interactive manner.
- Leaders have ensured that there are effective systems in place for working in partnership with parents to keep pupils safe. For example, parents have attended workshops on how to keep their children safe on the internet.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching captures pupils' interest and fires their curiosity. Teachers and support staff possess excellent subject knowledge and have a detailed understanding of pupils' abilities. They work very effectively together to plan learning that consistently challenges all pupils from their different starting points. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress across a broad range of subjects.
- Teachers and other adults have established excellent relationships with pupils that set the foundation for a positive learning environment. Teachers' explanations of new and challenging concepts are clear. They pre-empt potential misconceptions skilfully and, where necessary, teaching assistants provide the appropriate additional support to lower-ability pupils. This enables them to make rapid gains in their learning.
- Adults question pupils expertly. They use questioning skilfully to ascertain what pupils already know and to deepen their understanding.
- Teachers plan learning so it is fun and inspiring. For example, a Year 3 lesson was observed where pupils consolidated their understanding of punctuation by reciting the 'punctuation rap'. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic about learning and very keen to contribute to class discussions and work hard. They are highly motivated and keen to do well.
- Teachers ensure that reading and writing are taught effectively throughout the school. The teaching of reading is a real strength of the school. Teachers and support staff have high expectations of how quickly pupils can make progress with their reading. Their assessment of pupils' attainment is meticulous and this enables them to set work that is precisely matched to the next steps in their learning.

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' writing. Pupils are expected to write at length for a variety of audiences and purposes. Teachers are creative when planning writing activities to ensure that pupils are motivated to do well. They also use stimuli from other subjects, particularly history and geography, to further develop pupils' enjoyment of writing. Great attention is also paid to the development of pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar, and this is leading to pupils writing with increasing sophistication and technical accuracy.
- The teaching of mathematics secures outstanding rates of progress across the school. Teachers and other adults share exceptionally high standards of what pupils are capable of achieving. Pupils capitalise on feedback from teachers by using this information to consolidate their understanding and deepen their mathematical reasoning skills.
- As a result of excellent training for teachers and other adults, exceptionally high standards of teaching are maintained throughout the school and across all subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school's ethos emphasises the importance of pupils' personal development. The school's empowering and inclusive values are relentlessly promoted. Pupils sing the school song with gusto and recite the school prayer with obvious consideration for what its words mean.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils share a clear understanding of what it means to be a successful learner. Pupils are encouraged to be positive when they approach challenges and are resilient when they find things difficult. As a result, pupils are confident, articulate and independent learners.
- Pupils throughout the school debate issues in a sensitive and age-appropriate manner. They are respectful of others' ideas, tolerant of difference and demonstrate an impressive level of empathy for others.
- The school has ensured that the virtues of healthy living are actively promoted. The importance of physical activity is routinely championed. Leaders ensure that those pupils who are less willing to participate in extra-curricular sports are sensitively encouraged to get involved. Pupils benefit from personal, social, health and citizenship education that helps them to understand how to look after themselves and keep themselves healthy. Staff are recognised by the local authority for the effectiveness of their work in this area.
- The school's work to promote emotional well-being makes a strong contribution to pupils' overall health. Pupils who experience emotional difficulties work closely with the school's learning mentor, who provides pupils with regular opportunities to discuss their feelings. Over time, this work has a significant effect on raising the self-esteem of targeted pupils. The work of the school's social worker and pastoral manager are also pivotal in ensuring that pupils and their families receive the support needed to maintain their emotional health.

- Pupils are provided with a plethora of opportunities to develop important leadership skills. Pupils relish the opportunity to help others and take responsibility. For example, pupils enjoy becoming house captains or vice-captains, lunchtime monitors, buddy readers, school councillors and running the school's healthy tuck shop.
- Pupils are very clear about how to stay safe both in and out of school because of the very clear guidance they receive. For example, pupils told the inspection team how they reduce risk when on the internet.
- Pupils are adamant that bullying is very rare at the school. Leaders' records confirm this to be the case. Pupils universally feel they have an adult they can talk to in school and they are confident that any issues to do with bullying would be quickly and effectively resolved.
- Leaders have ensured that prejudicial and discriminatory language is almost never heard. This is partly because of the school's effective work to promote equalities. For example, inspectors observed an assembly for key stage 1 pupils which shared recent learning on disabilities. A key stage 2 assembly was also seen, which helped pupils to link different aspects of their learning on racism and the harmful effects of discrimination.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils enjoy respectful and positive relationships with adults and each other. Pupils are keen to live up to adults' high expectations. As a result, their conduct is almost always impeccable, even when not closely supervised by staff.
- Leaders have ensured that the classroom environment is happy, welcoming and purposeful.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is very positive. Systems for managing behaviour in a proactive and positive manner are embedded across the school and pupils are very positive about the school's procedures for rewarding good behaviour. Leaders' records are detailed and indicate that incidents of low-level disruption are very rare.
- Pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtimes is also excellent. Pupils interact well with staff and are very responsive to established routines. They also play with each other in an inclusive and friendly manner.
- The school has an exceptionally strong record of improving the behaviour of pupils with a history of challenging behaviour, particularly those who join the school at different times during the school year. Leaders go to great lengths to support these pupils. Leaders work extensively with a range of external agencies to ensure that these pupils make great strides in their learning and rapidly improve their behaviour.
- Leaders' actions have secured significant improvements to attendance since the previous inspection. Leaders employ a broad and creative range of strategies to improve attendance. They relentlessly promote the virtues of regular attendance and their monitoring of attendance leaves no stone unturned. As a result, the school's attendance figures are in line with national averages and there are very few pupils who regularly have time off school.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- From starting points that are below average, pupils at 'the Firs' make rapid and sustained progress in all subjects.
- For a number of years, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics has compared favourably to national averages. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher standards is also very high, particularly in reading and mathematics. This indicates that the most able pupils make fast progress throughout the school.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the higher standards in writing is only in line with national averages. Leaders are acutely aware of this issue and have implemented broad and ambitious plans to challenge the most able pupils more systematically with their writing. There is clear evidence to indicate that the most able pupils are further developing the fluency and technical accuracy of their writing, as a result of improved teaching.
- A high proportion of pupils join the school at different points in the school year. For example, almost one-fifth of pupils have joined the school during the current academic year. Many of these pupils are in the early stages of speaking English or speak English as an additional language. These pupils make excellent progress from their different starting points. This is because teachers formulate plans for each new pupil to address their barriers to learning and enable pupils to thrive.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve better than other pupils nationally. They make faster progress than other pupils nationally. This culminates in levels of attainment that are above others by the end of key stage 2. This is because leaders' use of the pupil premium funding is excellent.
- Pupils make excellent progress in a range of subjects beyond English and mathematics. This is a direct result of improvements that have been made to the role of the subject coordinator. In many subjects, a very high proportion of pupils are working at levels above those typically seen for their age. Indeed, the most able pupils make particularly rapid progress in science, geography, history and personal, social, health and citizenship education.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported and make fast progress. Pupils in the resource base make excellent progress from their different starting points, both academically and pastorally.
- Leaders have been successful in creating a positive reading culture within the school. Pupils enjoy reading and are challenged to read widely and often. Leaders are creative in their choice of texts to ensure that pupils read different genres, including a mixture of fiction and non-fiction. Leaders have also employed a range of strategies to ensure that boys develop a love of reading. For example, they have organised for male authors to visit the school. This is to supplement the positive male role models that already work in the school. As a result of this work, pupils are confident readers who talk with interest and enthusiasm about what they read.
- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education as a result of their outstanding achievements at 'the Firs'.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children join the early years with a range of different skills and knowledge. Most children enter the school with skills below those typically expected for their age and an increasing number of children have additional needs.
- Leadership of the early years is well informed and passionate about providing children with the best possible environment for learning. Every aspect of the early years provision is carefully designed. This is so that children benefit from an extensive range of varied and stimulating activities that enhance their development in different areas.
- Leaders set high expectations that are shared by all adults. All of the early years staff understand the strengths and development priorities for the provision. They are committed to driving continuous improvements.
- Children make rapid and sustained progress through the Nursery and the Reception classes. By the end of the Reception Year, the majority of children achieve a good level of development.
- The proportion of children leaving the early years with skills above those typically expected for their age has increased in recent years, particularly in reading. This is because the teaching of phonics is particularly effective, as are regular small-group reading sessions.
- Children also benefit from skilled and well-targeted additional support that helps them to make rapid progress. These interventions are helping to diminish the small differences in attainment between disadvantaged children and others and between boys and girls. Leaders use the pupil premium funding shrewdly to remove barriers to achievement. For example, speech and language therapists have been employed to particularly good effect.
- Teachers and other adults are skilled and knowledgeable. Teaching is highly effective. This is because all staff have a very good understanding of how children learn. Staff take every opportunity to extend and develop children's knowledge and understanding in different areas. Staff ensure that learning is purposeful and fun. For example, inspectors observed the 'bucket challenge'. This developed the children's understanding of volume and capacity through a fun-filled activity which involved the carrying of water in a team race.
- Teachers ensure that children are provided with creative, rich and varied opportunities to develop their writing. For example, children practise their writing when playing in the mud kitchen.
- Leaders have ensured that high regard is given to children's welfare. Children feel very safe and secure. They enjoy excellent relationships with adults. As a result, children tackle different tasks with great enthusiasm and they are highly motivated. Statutory welfare requirements are all met.
- Staff ensure that children develop a strong sense of responsibility and behave extremely well. For example, children in the Nursery class relish the opportunity to check the tidiness of the cloakrooms. Staff also involve children in a range of team games that promote sharing and teamwork. Consequently, children grow rapidly in

confidence and independence. They work and play very well with others and are well prepared for the transition to Year 1.

- Links with parents are a particular strength. Staff acknowledge parents as the child's first educator and create regular opportunities for parents to share and contribute to their child's learning. For example, parents and staff regularly share 'wow moments' when children reach particular milestones in their learning.

School details

Unique reference number	106303
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	10032250

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	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	409
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Kennedy
Headteacher	Nerys Hitchcock
Telephone number	0161 973 7350
Website	www.firsprimary.co.uk
Email address	firs.admin@trafford.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 January 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Firs Primary School is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school has significantly grown in size since the last inspection. The number of staff working at the school has also greatly increased.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly in line with the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. This proportion has increased significantly recently.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is double the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above the national average.
- More pupils enter the school at different times of the year than is seen nationally. Many of these pupils are new to the country and are at the early stages of speaking English when they join the school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook observations of learning in most classes. Some of these observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during playtime and at lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with leaders and governors. Inspectors also held discussions with a representative of the local authority and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's plans for improvement, self-evaluation and information about pupils' achievement and leaders' monitoring records.
- Inspectors looked at safeguarding information and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors met with parents informally at the start of the school day and considered 64 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire. Inspectors also took account of 30 responses from members of staff to the online questionnaire. There were no responses from pupils to the online questionnaire.
- Pupils' work across a range of subjects was scrutinised.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils. They also talked informally to pupils about the school. They heard pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's website.

Inspection team

Will Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Saeeda Ishaq	Ofsted Inspector
Lisa Morgan	Ofsted Inspector
Kathleen McArthur	Ofsted Inspector
Nusret Ellahi	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017