

Eaton Primary School

Lower Lane, Eaton, Tarporley, Cheshire CW6 9AN

Inspection dates

26–27 February 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The leadership of the school is weak. Leaders have not tackled the significant decline in pupils' progress and attainment. Current pupils, especially in key stage 2, continue to underachieve considerably across a range of subjects.
- The management of safeguarding is ineffective. Leaders and governors have not given due regard to statutory guidance for safeguarding across the early years and in Years 1 to 6.
- Governors have not fulfilled their statutory duties. They have not questioned senior leaders effectively.
- Weak assessment practice means that teachers do not match work to the pupils' abilities.
- The poorly organised curriculum does not deliver the requirements of the national curriculum. This has led to low expectations and superficial learning in a range of subjects.
- Leaders have wasted the pupil premium funding without proper thought of how to support disadvantaged pupils' learning.
- Subject leaders have not had opportunities to develop their skills. Teachers were left demoralised by a lack of direction from leaders prior to the arrival of the acting headteacher.
- Pupils' comprehension skills in reading are weak. The quality of pupils' writing is poor. Basic errors persist in their work.
- Mathematics teaching does not provide pupils with opportunities to solve problems or to use their reasoning skills.
- The targets for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not specific enough. These pupils do not make the progress that they should.

The school has the following strengths

- The new acting headteacher has set high expectations for behaviour to ensure that this is now good. He has initiated a number of positive changes, in many areas of school life, in a short space of time.
- The science leader has put in place a framework for learning in science to ensure that teaching develops pupils' skills well.
- Teaching in the early years is good and children's achievement is strong.
- Teachers promote pupils' personal development effectively through a well-thought-out scheme of work.
- Pupils' attainment in key stage 1 is typically at least in line with other schools nationally.

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?

- As a matter of urgency, rectify the failings in leaders' and governors' oversight of safeguarding.
- Rapidly improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders set higher expectations of pupils and staff to improve pupils' progress and attainment in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics
 - there are more robust and accurate arrangements for the assessment of pupils' learning, so that teachers can use this to plan tasks that match pupils' different needs
 - subject leaders are provided with opportunities to develop their leadership skills, so that they can help pupils to make the progress of which they are capable in key stage 2
 - the pupil premium funding is used to support the learning needs of disadvantaged pupils, so that they progress well in their learning
 - leaders review the curriculum to ensure that it is well structured and enables pupils to build on their knowledge, understanding and skills as they move through the school
 - leaders introduce better support for teachers so that they can plan, teach and assess effectively the broad range of subjects as prescribed in the national curriculum.
- Improve the quality of governance by ensuring that governors:
 - understand and fulfil their statutory duties
 - hold leaders to account for school improvement and the quality of teaching and learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, so that all groups of pupils, especially in key stage 2, make strong progress across a range of subjects, by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils can and should achieve
 - teachers receive appropriate professional development to equip them with the skills and subject knowledge to teach reading, writing and mathematics more effectively
 - teachers deepen pupils' knowledge and skills in subjects other than English and mathematics, so that pupils achieve well across the breadth of the primary curriculum
 - tasks are matched to the abilities of pupils, including those with SEND, to challenge and support them appropriately in their learning

- pupils are supported to improve the quality of their written work and their comprehension skills in reading
- pupils have opportunities to solve problems and use their reasoning skills in mathematics
- targets for pupils with SEND are more precise to enable them to have more focused support.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Senior leaders' lack of direction has left Eaton Primary School in disarray. There has been a considerable decline in the quality of education at the school. Until recently, leaders' actions to improve the school have been insufficient in tackling deep-rooted weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Previously leaders have failed to set high expectations of staff and pupils at the school. Teachers have been hindered by an excessive workload, which has undermined their ability to teach a broad and balanced curriculum well. Teachers have raised their concerns with leaders and governors, but this has had little impact. Prior to the arrival of the acting headteacher, this left staff feeling demoralised and deskilled.
- The large majority of the school's pupil premium funding has been used to provide music tuition for classes of pupils, the vast majority of whom are not disadvantaged. There has been a fundamental lack of understanding by leaders and governors about the purpose of this funding. As a result, there is no clear understanding of the barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils may face and no discernible strategy to help these pupils thrive and achieve well.
- Teachers have not been provided with direction from senior leaders. There has been a lack of development for staff, many of whom are in the early stages of their career. This has left teachers feeling unsupported.
- There have also been too few opportunities for subject leaders to develop their leadership skills. These leaders are making little difference to the quality of the taught curriculum. They have done too little to improve teaching and promote pupils' achievement across different subjects.
- Weak curriculum leadership has led to a poorly taught curriculum. There is confusion among teachers about what should be taught to each year group. This has led to a lack of progression and superficial learning for most pupils.
- Leaders' weak grasp of the curriculum has also led to poor assessment practice. The systems to assess pupils' progress are unhelpful. They have contributed to the increased demand on teachers' time and have failed to produce accurate or useful information.
- Pupils with SEND make weak progress. Prior to the arrival of the acting headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has not been given the time or support to improve provision for these pupils. Furthermore, the SENCo has not had the opportunity to study for the mandatory SENCo qualification. This has frustrated her efforts to improve provision for these pupils
- In stark contrast to this background of inadequate leadership, the actions of the acting headteacher have inspired staff to bring some positive change to the school in a very short space of time. He has reinvigorated staff and improved the standard of pupils' behaviour. However, many endemic weaknesses remain. Despite these small signs of improvement, senior leaders, including governors, have not demonstrated a sustained track record of improvement. As a result, the capacity of the substantive leadership team to tackle the many and varied weaknesses at the school is poor.
- External funding has provided the science leader with opportunities to develop the

skills of teaching staff. This investment has provided much-needed direction and has resulted in a better quality of teaching and learning in this subject.

- The leadership of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is helping to prepare pupils positively for life in modern Britain. The leader has introduced a framework for staff to work from, so that they know how to develop pupils' understanding and skills. This has also ensured that pupils progress well in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school should not appoint any newly qualified teachers before its next inspection.

Governance of the school

- The significant building work that has been undertaken in recent years has distracted governors from the core business of education. Governors have been shocked to learn about the extent of the decline in the school's provision. The information that they have received has not accurately reflected the extent of the school's inadequacies. This has hindered governors' ability to question leaders in enough detail.
- Governors have accepted information from leaders too readily. They have done too little to arrest the decline in pupils' progress and attainment, especially at the end of key stage 2, in recent years.
- Governors have not fulfilled their statutory duties. They have not conducted an annual review of an appropriate safeguarding policy. The present policy refers to guidance that is over a decade old, indicating that this has been neglected for some time. They have not ensured that additional funding is spent appropriately, nor have they ensured that the school website contains the correct, up-to-date, statutory information.
- Assurances from the local authority support partner in May 2018 did not flag up any concerns to governors about the quality of education and leadership at the school. There has been much more effective support from an experienced professional since November 2018 to raise governors' awareness of the issues facing the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- There have been significant flaws in the leadership of safeguarding. A previous lack of oversight by senior leaders and governors increased the potential risk to pupils' safety.
- Leaders and governors have not given due regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State and have not ensured that safeguarding checks have been undertaken to determine if any teachers are prohibited from teaching. This issue was rectified during the inspection.
- For a short period of time when both the headteacher and deputy headteacher were absent, there was no appropriately trained safeguarding leader within school. At this time, there was a continual presence from the chair of governors and the safeguarding governor to ensure that children were safe and to reassure staff.
- Safeguarding records show a clear engagement with other services to meet pupils' needs. However, the absence of the headteacher meant that a day-to-day log of

concerns was not available to inspectors. The acting headteacher has quickly ensured that any concerns about pupils' welfare are recorded and acted upon appropriately.

- Despite the failings of senior leaders and governors, the strong vigilance and care of staff has meant that, in practice, pupils have been kept safe from harm. This has been aided by the awareness of staff who are new to the school sharing their safeguarding understanding from other schools with other staff.
- Pupils say that they feel safe because of the adults who look after them in class. The pupils with whom inspectors spoke felt that they can approach staff with their worries. There is also a confidential worry box in case they find it difficult to share their concerns. Of the 47 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View, almost all parents and carers say that they believe their children are safe when at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. The assessment of pupils' learning is ineffective. Consequently, when planning lessons, staff do not match tasks to pupils' abilities or their prior learning. This results in work being too easy for many pupils. As a result, pupils do not develop their knowledge, understanding or skills as well as they should.
- There is variability in the quality of teaching and learning of reading. In Year 1, phonics is taught well, building on the same phonics scheme that is in place in the early years. However, many pupils in key stage 1 read from word to word without fully understanding what has been read. As pupils progress through the school, they read with greater fluency and expression, but only the most able pupils develop the good comprehension skills needed to ensure that they understand what they read.
- The quality of pupils' writing in their books varies considerably. The most able pupils are not challenged to achieve the standards that they would otherwise be capable of. The support for lower ability pupils is not effective in enabling them to make good progress. Inaccuracies in pupils' writing persist, such as in spelling and punctuation. This holds pupils back from becoming competent writers in a broad range of subjects.
- The teaching of mathematics is weak, particularly across key stage 2. Pupils' work shows that teachers give them few opportunities to solve problems or apply their reasoning skills. There is a very narrow range of work evident in pupils' books and aspects of the mathematics curriculum are poorly covered.
- The targets set for pupils with SEND do not relate well enough to their learning needs. The work that teachers provide does not set high enough expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English, mathematics and in subjects across the curriculum.
- Inspectors found notable strengths in the English and mathematics work of older pupils in key stage 1 and in pupils' topic work in one of the key stage 2 classes. Where there is a framework to develop pupils' skills and understanding, such as in pupils' science and PSHE work, teachers support pupils to make better progress. However, senior leaders have not made use of these pockets of good practice and much of pupils' learning in other subjects is superficial.
- The acting headteacher has quickly ensured that teachers are now planning for topics other than calculations in mathematics. The work in pupils' books shows that there has

been a greater emphasis on geometry in recent weeks. Pupils' writing is now more frequently providing opportunities to write at length and pupils are now expected to read more frequently. These positive changes have been brought about rapidly, however they have not yet had a sufficient impact on improving pupils' progress and attainment.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff have ensured that, despite the flaws in the leadership of safeguarding, pupils are kept safe from harm. This is because staff are both vigilant and caring. It is also to their credit that the turmoil within the school has not affected the positive relationships that staff have with pupils. Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- In their PSHE work, pupils have opportunities to study different faiths. Pupils are articulate and mature. Their work displays a good awareness of others' beliefs and they are respectful of others' opinions.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including when online, because of the effective way in which this has been taught. They talk confidently about ways in which their teachers keep them safe. They have complete confidence that staff would help them if they have a problem and feel that they could approach any member of staff if they were worried.
- Pupils understand the consequences of bullying. They say that this is rare and that staff tackle any early signs of bullying so that it does not escalate further.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct in lessons and around the school is good. There is an orderly environment at break and lunchtimes. Pupils respond quickly and politely to staff instructions.
- In class, the great majority of pupils focus on their learning well. Although a small number of pupils lose focus when the work is not challenging enough, they do not disrupt the learning of others.
- Upon joining the school, the acting headteacher set about revising the way in which staff tackle any incidents of inappropriate behaviour. There is now a more consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils themselves appreciate this consistency and told inspectors that this was one reason why behaviour is now consistently good.
- A small number of fixed term exclusions have been used appropriately to ensure that staff are setting higher expectations of pupils' behaviour.
- The acting headteacher has been active in using assemblies to promote moral messages to pupils. Pupils say that these are helping to build a respectful culture at the school. This has encouraged positive relationships between staff and pupils and

between pupils themselves, which has enabled them to be calmer in class and focus on their learning. This has been successful in ensuring that pupils remain positive about their learning.

- Pupils' attendance has risen this year and is above average. The persistent absent rate is below that seen nationally.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- There has been a marked decline in the progress and attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 2 over the last three years. In 2018, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics was well below average and placed the school in the lowest 10% of all schools nationally. The progress that current pupils are making is poor and shows little sign of improvement, particularly in key stage 2.
- Pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics is generally weak across the school. Pupils' work shows that learning is flimsy and insubstantial. This means that pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education when they start at secondary school.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is weak. Expectations of these pupils are not high enough and the work that they receive is not matched well to their needs.
- Pupils are making stronger progress in science. This is because learning builds well on pupils' prior learning when they are working scientifically.
- Pupils enter Year 1 with strong starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress in pupils' books across key stage 1, however, is patchy because teaching is not consistently strong. In 2018, at the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment was above that seen nationally, as it had been when they had left early years two years before.
- Pupils make good progress in their understanding of phonics because of the coherent system that staff have put in place for this aspect of learning. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1 in 2018 was broadly average.

Early years provision

Inadequate

- Provision in early years is judged to be inadequate because whole-school safeguarding arrangements over time have been ineffective. This includes the arrangements for keeping children safe in the early years.
- The early years leader has been proactive in seeking out the updated statutory guidance for safeguarding and in sharing this with her teaching assistant. She has a good understanding of the potential forms of abuse and ensured that early years is a safe and happy place to come and learn. However, the whole-school safeguarding systems are not effective enough to underpin the early years leader's commitment to ensuring that she is up to date with all relevant guidance.
- In the setting, children demonstrate that they feel safe by the way in which they interact with adults and are focused on their learning. The parents with whom inspectors spoke were positive about the provision for their children.

- The leader of the early years is knowledgeable about her role. She understands the strengths and weaknesses of the provision well. She has attended meetings with other schools to benchmark the quality of work children produce and to see how she can improve the early years further. This has also contributed to ensuring that the early years is an area of relative strength in the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the early years is good. Children enter the provision with skills that are typical for their age and sometimes better. They make good progress in their learning to achieve well at the end of their Reception Year. In 2018, 82% of pupils achieved a good level of development, which was 10% above the national average. Children are prepared well for Year 1.
- Children's books show that activities are planned to meet their learning needs. They receive a broad and balanced curriculum and their progress is evidenced well.
- Phonics teaching enables children to quickly develop their knowledge of sounds. The teacher plans lively activities that bring learning to life. For example, children dance around sound cards on the floor before identifying the sound of the day.
- The children that inspectors saw clearly display a love of learning. They are inquisitive and work well together. They behave well when learning with an adult and in their independent learning.
- The early years staff work well with parents. Parents value the open-door policy and the way in which staff provide workshops, for example in the use of phonics, to help their children at home.

School details

Unique reference number	111047
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10086863

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	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Sean Gardner
Headteacher	Mrs Nicola Duffell
Telephone number	01829 732731
Website	www.eaton.cheshire.sch.uk
Email address	head@eaton.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 March 2013

Information about this school

- Eaton Primary is smaller than the average-sized school.
- Since the school was last inspected, it has undergone building work to extend the school. This has increased the school's capacity to 210 pupils.
- The large majority of pupils attending the school are of a White British heritage.
- There is a lower-than-average proportion of pupils with SEND at the school.
- There is a lower-than-average proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school.
- Since January 2019, an acting headteacher, who is the headteacher of another local school, has been in post overseeing the school on a temporary, part-time basis. This is due to the absence of the headteacher, who was not present during the inspection.
- The deputy headteacher and senior teacher are presently on maternity leave.
- During term time, the governing body runs on-site breakfast provision from 7.45am and after school provision until 6pm.

- The local authority has been providing targeted support for the school through an experienced leader who started supporting the school in November 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in each class. This included joint observations with senior leaders. They examined a range of pupils' work in mathematics, writing and from across the curriculum.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read from across the school, both individually and as part of classroom activities. They spoke with pupils formally in groups and informally around the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during break and lunchtime, and when pupils were moving around the school.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and took account of the parent surveys that the school provided.
- Meetings were held with governors, senior leaders, middle leaders and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including the information available on the school's website. They also looked at the systems in place to manage behaviour.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding documentation, considered how this related to daily practice, and spoke with staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Steve Bentham, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andy Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Maureen Hints	Ofsted 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.

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