

Whitegate CofE Primary School

Whitegate, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 2AY

Inspection dates

9–10 July 2019

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Strong leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher has driven improvement further since the last inspection.
- Determined actions by leaders, including those with subject leadership responsibilities, mean that almost all pupils are now making good progress across a range of subjects.
- Proportions of pupils attaining the expected standards in English are high. However, achievement in mathematics is not as strong as in reading and writing.
- Leaders have used training opportunities well to further improve the quality of teaching, especially in writing.
- Governors have a wide range of skills and are supportive of the school. They contribute to its continuous improvement by holding leaders to account effectively for its success.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are very skilled at using questions to help pupils to learn more deeply.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported and make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve pupils' attendance through a range of strategies.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and contributes to the good progress that pupils make.
- Pupils' books show that skills and knowledge in other subjects are not as strong as those in pupils' writing books. Leaders have, though, created plans to deepen pupils' wider subject-specific knowledge and understanding.
- Children in the early years make good progress. Most children are ready for Year 1 by the time that they finish their Reception Year.
- The progress of the few disadvantaged pupils continues to improve. Their attainment compares well with that of other pupils nationally.
- A strong culture of safeguarding exists throughout the school. Procedures for keeping pupils safe are secure and clear.
- Pupils behave well around the school and in classrooms. Teachers and leaders deal swiftly with the very few incidents of misbehaviour. Pupils feel safe in the school and know how to keep themselves safe.
- The promotion of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is strong. Pupils' understanding of equality and diversity and fundamental British values is very well developed.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Implement leaders' plans to further develop the curriculum, including the development of new leaders' monitoring and evaluation skills.
- Continue to develop pupils' application of spelling, punctuation and grammar at key stage 1 to ensure that more pupils make even better progress and write with greater flair and accuracy.
- Make sure that pupils in both key stages can use number facts in problem solving, for better progress in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have addressed issues from the previous inspection very effectively. Senior leaders know the school well and are accurate in their judgement of where Whitegate Primary School is on its improvement journey.
- Raising expectations and aspirations has been essential to the continual improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders have high expectations of their pupils. They provide effective pastoral and learning support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEND to overcome barriers to learning. It is clear that leaders know individual pupils and their circumstances well.
- Leadership of subjects is effective, particularly the leadership of English and mathematics. Leaders of these subjects are passionate about the improvements they have made. They have checked the impact of professional development to improve the teaching skills and confidence of staff. As a result, the quality of teaching in most subjects has improved further in recent years, and pupils' attainment and progress have improved further.
- However, leaders have identified the need to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding further across the curriculum. In some subjects, particularly history, the development of subject-related skills has previously been overshadowed by the development of writing skills. The curriculum leader has a clear vision to develop deeper thinking and greater knowledge and skills in the individual subjects. Plans to 'nurture pupils' curiosity and resilience to challenge' and deepen learning are in place for implementation in the new school year.
- Staff feel valued and are very positive about the leadership of the school. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to improve. This is as a result of the contribution of coaching and training, for example in the effective use of appropriate resources to support pupils' learning in mathematics. Training and the support of a specialist leader of education have also developed teaching and leadership skills and the clarity and consistency of the curriculum. Leaders evaluate teachers' performance through robust and supportive procedures.
- Leaders ensure that they spend the pupil premium funding effectively. They are adept at identifying the barriers to pupils' learning and respond with appropriate pastoral and academic support to overcome them. For example, during the inspection a group of pupils worked collaboratively to construct a flag in an area of the playground, which encouraged them to play outside and enjoy the activities rather than wanting to remain inside on their own. Teachers and leaders monitor pupils' progress and attainment effectively each term. This clear focus on the needs of disadvantaged pupils through the support provided is continuing to enable them to make good progress.
- The funding for pupils who have SEND is also used effectively. The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is determined in her role to improve the progress and attainment of these pupils. The SENCo values the support provided by external agencies. She has developed clear procedures to support and monitor

teaching and learning. Through this effective support, most current pupils who have SEND are making good progress from their starting points.

- The physical education and sports funding for primary schools is used very well. Significant investment in sport has encouraged greater participation rates. Professional development for staff means that they are now more confident about their teaching in this area. There is a wide range of sports and after-school clubs for pupils to participate in. Pupils who spoke with the inspector value these opportunities.
- A broad range of opportunities for enrichment contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to support charities and to develop their musical talents. They have a very clear understanding of fundamental British values, especially through their knowledge and understanding of other faiths.

Governance of the school

- Governors share senior leaders' vision and commitment to improvement. They know their school well, because many now speak regularly with leaders and staff. Governors gain a deeper insight into what is happening in the school by asking probing questions about the impact of leaders' action on pupils' progress and outcomes. They receive detailed information from a variety of sources, including external quality assurance and feedback from professionals and pupils. Governors use this wealth of information to hold leaders stringently to account for their decisions.
- Governors have developed strong relationships with the teaching staff and appreciate the family feel in the school. They are committed to the school and undertake relevant training to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. The governing body ensures that the school gives value for money and that decisions about spending are taken in consideration of the main priorities for school improvement. Governors meet their statutory responsibilities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Policies and procedures to ensure pupils' safety, including employment checks, are up to date and meticulously maintained.
- Leaders have an effective understanding of the procedures to keep pupils safe. Despite the small caseload, there are effective systems in place and good liaison with outside agencies to support children and families. Leaders and governors ensure that staff are well trained in keeping pupils safe. For example, staff have had training to spot the signs of radicalisation. Leaders ensure that staff know how to spot early signs that pupils may be at risk and know how to act on any concerns.
- Pupils feel safe and know the systems school leaders have put in place to ensure their safety. They recognise the importance of the secure site and the sign-in procedures for visitors to keep pupils safe. The school site is well maintained. It provides a safe and stimulating place where pupils can play and learn together.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have taken successful action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection. Most pupils now benefit from effective teaching that allows them to make good progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils are improving their fluency and speed of recall of important mathematical facts. They are gaining a better understanding of calculation strategies, through the opportunities provided to reason and explain their thinking. Despite these improvements, pupils are not sufficiently confident and secure in their fluency and their application of number facts to problem solving. This results in mistakes in their calculations and explanations of their mathematical thinking. The proportion of pupils attaining the nationally expected standards at key stages 1 and 2, while increasing, nevertheless remains lower than in reading and writing.
- In English, teachers have raised their expectations of the standards that pupils can reach in their writing. Teaching has been adapted to focus even more on vocabulary and the content of pupils' writing. Pupils are also encouraged to improve their own writing. These actions, alongside teachers' effective modelling of the writing process, have helped to ensure that current pupils across the school are making good progress and producing better pieces of writing. However, spelling, punctuation and grammar are not secure enough for more pupils at the end of key stage 1 to attain the higher standard.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Year 2 pupils read well and have an accurate understanding of what they have read. They understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction books. Older pupils enjoy a wide range of books by a variety of authors. They read with intonation and expression and have a well-developed understanding of what they have read.
- Leaders have employed several teaching assistants across the school, who work effectively to support pupils with SEND. Teachers make accurate assessments of pupils' learning needs. Teaching and learning are well matched to these identified needs, so that pupils are beginning to make good progress from their starting points.
- A strength of teaching across the school is the use of questioning to encourage pupils to think for themselves or to clarify misconceptions. Pupils of all abilities recognise the importance of this strategy in helping them to become independent and confident learners. Effective questioning allows pupils to understand how well they are acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of subjects. In Years 2 and 3, the teacher used a range of questions and practical resources to develop pupils' understanding of how to calculate fractions of quantities.
- Teachers use assessment with increasing effectiveness to ensure that pupils are learning and making progress. When teachers observe any misconceptions, they use a range of strategies to work with individuals or groups to address them. Consequently, pupils are confident that they will get the support that they need to learn successfully. Occasionally, in mathematics, teachers do not provide enough challenge to develop pupils' fluency and their application of number facts to problem solving.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use it well to plan learning that engages pupils' interest and provides sufficiently challenging work for most pupils. In some

subjects, such as science and dance, this results in high-quality pieces of detailed work. Leaders have developed plans to further improve the quality of teaching and learning in subjects other than English and mathematics, which they will implement from the beginning of the new school year.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils feel safe in the school and understand how to keep themselves safe. They recognise the many different strategies that leaders use to keep them safe, including, for example, lessons on road safety and cyber-bullying.
- In conversation with the inspector, pupils stated that bullying is rare, and leaders deal with it swiftly and effectively when necessary. On these rare occasions, pupils said that name-calling is usually the catalyst.
- Pupils' understanding of equality and diversity and fundamental British values is very well developed. They can articulate why this matters both in the school and in the wider community. For example, they were very clear that pupils from different backgrounds would be made very welcome in their school.
- Pupils value the support and encouragement that they receive from their teachers. They are developing the self-confidence and independence to be successful learners. Pupils are particularly appreciative of the clarifications and reminders from staff about past learning and described lessons as 'fun'. Presentation in their books shows a growing sense of pride in their work.
- Pupils benefit from several clubs and visits that the staff provide. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to play sports against other local schools. These activities, along with regular opportunities to support various charities and to learn about other faiths, enhance and enrich pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are attentive in class and lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils generally conduct themselves well around the school. They are welcoming to visitors and are polite and friendly to adults and each other.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection stated that bullying in the school is rare. They are clear about the school's systems for promoting good behaviour and many are proud to wear a range of reward badges.
- Pupils' attendance last year remained below the national average. Leaders have taken effective action, and the attendance of all groups of pupils is now improving. Discussions take place with parents and carers to support them to understand the importance of regular attendance. Staff celebrate good attendance in assemblies.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders and governors took decisive action in 2018 to improve outcomes, because attainment at key stage 2, particularly in writing, was below national averages. Leaders were not satisfied with the progress that pupils had made. Attainment at key stage 1 had also been below national averages for writing and mathematics. Their actions included the appointment of leaders to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning. These measures have resulted in improvements in current pupils' books and the unvalidated national assessments in 2019 in key stages 1 and 2.
- Work in books and the school's own assessment information indicate that most current pupils now make good progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. This is because of improvements in the quality of teaching, resulting from appropriate training and coaching and the appointment of new staff. While many current pupils achieve well, some of the most able pupils in key stage 1 do not achieve the higher standards in writing that they are capable of.
- Work in pupils' mathematics books and school records show that most pupils are making good progress. Pupils' knowledge and skills are improving and they are developing an improving understanding of calculation processes. However, opportunities to say how they came to their answers and develop their reasoning skills are less well developed. Pupils across the school are beginning to draw on their increasing mathematical knowledge and understanding to explain their thought processes, but their recall of number facts is not secure enough.
- Pupils' writing includes a variety of sentence structures and phrases to add interest. Older pupils include similes and other description effectively to create mood. Teachers have high expectations and include examples from quality literature to enthuse the pupils. This approach ensures that most pupils are making good progress and older pupils are producing emotive and cohesive pieces of writing.
- Pupils read with appropriate fluency and comprehension, considering their ages and abilities. They use their knowledge of phonics effectively to read unfamiliar words. They read widely and for pleasure and enjoy reading. Following improvements to the teaching of phonics, pupils in Year 1 now achieve well in the national phonics check.
- The few disadvantaged pupils are now making good progress. Teachers devise appropriate support for these pupils through their teaching plans. Leaders use reviews of progress and attainment each half term to determine the impact of this support on pupils' achievements.
- Pupils with SEND are making good progress from their starting points. The SENCo manages provision efficiently and identifies pupils' needs effectively. Pupils benefit from carefully planned interventions with well-sequenced lessons and support that help them to make good progress. Increasing numbers of pupils with SEND are working at age-related expectations.
- Pupils acquire appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills in a range of subjects other than English and mathematics. Work in their books shows that most pupils are making good progress. For example, in Years 5 and 6, a strong focus on the analysis of a range of maps enabled pupils to draw conclusions about the development of different

features. In Years 1 and 2, good teaching in history enabled pupils to compare and contrast a king's fight against authority with the need for school rules.

Early years provision

Good

- Children join the early years with standards which are broadly typical for their age, but, in this small school, standards vary year on year. Typically, children's fine motor control and self-regulation are weaker areas of development. However, staff have effective support mechanisms and interventions available to support individual children and groups when necessary. As a result of effective teaching and learning, most children attain a good level of development and are well prepared for Year 1.
- The new early years leader is growing well into her role. She has ensured that strong relationships between staff draw together the vast knowledge and experience available to support strong teaching and learning. The classroom is bright and stimulating, promoting the development of early reading, writing and mathematics well.
- Reception children listen carefully to instructions. Staff use carefully crafted and probing questioning and a wide range of experiences to assess and broaden children's knowledge. For example, children retell traditional stories in writing with most details included. Staff intervene swiftly to address misconceptions, enabling children to develop their understanding further. Teaching assistants contribute to children's learning activities well and help them to make good progress over time.
- The few children who are disadvantaged make good progress. This is because staff provide additional activities which support their learning effectively. These activities are particularly effective in phonics and early number acquisition.
- Leaders identify and support children with SEND effectively. Children with speech and language difficulties are quickly assessed on entry into the Reception class and receive additional help from specially trained staff. This effective practice helps to ensure that these children make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders involve parents in their children's education in various ways. Parents accept invitations to join their children in school activities and workshops. Staff meet with parents before children start in the Reception class to ascertain the children's needs and establish whether any additional support is needed. This ensures that transition into the early years is well managed.
- Children's behaviour and their attitudes to learning are good. They are confident in exploring activities indoors and outside, demonstrating that they feel safe. There are no breaches of the welfare requirements. Staff follow and know well the safeguarding procedures and policies applicable to the whole school.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers provide well-planned activities that enthuse the children and are carefully matched to their learning needs. Staff promote children's enthusiasm for learning well through displays of high-quality work and effort.

School details

Unique reference number	111338
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10087778

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	133
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Teresa Finney
Headteacher	Caroline Mackenzie
Telephone number	01606 288 080
Website	http://www.whitegate.schoolspider.co.uk
Email address	head@whitegate.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 July 2018

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is much lower than the national average.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school has received support from advisory staff from the local authority.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Church of England primary school in the Diocese of Chester. At its last section 48 inspection in June 2014, it was judged good.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning throughout the school in all classes and in a range of subjects and scrutinised pupils' work. Some of these activities were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector listened to pupils read.
- Observations were made of pupils' behaviour at the beginning of the day, at lunchtime, at breaktime and in the classroom.
- The inspector met with pupils, formally and informally, to listen to their views.
- Meetings were held with the senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information about pupils' attainment and progress and the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. He considered minutes of meetings, and records relating to teaching and learning, pupils' attendance and behaviour and safeguarding of pupils. A scrutiny of the website was also undertaken.
- The inspector considered the views expressed by parents through informal meetings. He analysed 47 responses received through the free-text facility on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. He also analysed 10 responses to the staff survey and 41 responses to the pupil survey.
- During the inspection, almost half of the Year 6 class were not in school as they were attending their future high school. Evidence for the performance of these pupils was collected from their English, mathematics and topic books throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Ian Shackleton, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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