

# Woodlands Primary School

Eddisbury Road, Whitby, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH66 2JT

## Inspection dates

24 to 25 April 2019

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Although improving, progress being made by pupils, especially the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, is not good.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills are too variable across the school.
- Gaps in pupils' writing skills, brought about by previously weak teaching, have not yet been fully addressed. Consequently, not enough pupils reach the expected standard in writing.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently strong and, at times, does not match the learning needs of the pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving following a review of their barriers to learning. Revised approaches to teaching are having a positive impact on the standards of work. However, the achievement of this group of pupils still lags behind other pupils nationally.
- Many pupils carry a legacy of underachievement in subjects other than English and mathematics. Weaker teaching in the past has left many gaps in their skills and knowledge and, although improving, several gaps remain.

### The school has the following strengths

- Recent changes, driven by strong leaders and governors, are turning the school around quickly. Leaders have the confidence and trust of the vast majority of staff, pupils, parents and carers. Leaders have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve further.
- Pupils are a delight to meet. They are polite, behave well and feel safe. They enjoy coming to school and their attendance is now good.
- The teaching of phonics is effective and is leading to improvements in the acquisition of early reading skills.
- The revised curriculum is good and is inspiring pupils' learning in a wide range of subjects. It is enhanced by an impressive range of extra-curricular clubs and visits.
- Woodlands has suffered from a turbulent past. It has had many changes in leadership and staff which led to poor outcomes for pupils. This is a rapidly improving picture.
- Provision in the early years is good. Outcomes at the end of Reception are improving.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are making good progress due to improved teaching.

## Full report

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

- Improve outcomes so that:
  - pupils, especially the most able pupils, consolidate the improving progress seen in their work to make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2
  - greater numbers of pupils attain in greater depth in writing and at the higher standards in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 6
  - pupils develop appropriate skills and attain well in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Reduce the unevenness in teaching so that different groups of pupils make stronger gains in their learning by:
  - tackling the gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge due to poor teaching in the past
  - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations of the quality of pupils' work and that there is always a suitable level of challenge in lessons, especially for the most able pupils
  - ensuring that pupils develop their skills in grammar and punctuation and use them correctly in their writing
  - providing greater opportunities for pupils to apply their deepening mathematical knowledge to problem-solving
  - improving leadership of subjects, other than English and mathematics, so that the curriculum builds on pupils' prior learning
  - ensuring that disadvantaged pupils continue to make good progress so that they reach the standards they should for their age and starting points.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Many changes in leadership and staffing go a long way to explaining the issues faced by the school in the past. The current improvement journey got off to a swift start, despite leaders unearthing and then having to address historical weaknesses. Since the beginning of this academic year, the effectiveness of the school has improved rapidly as a result of strong leadership.
- Working together, the headteacher, ably supported by other senior leaders, have renewed the thirst for learning in staff and pupils. Much has been accomplished in a short space of time. Teaching is improving, pupils are enjoying their learning and their progress is rising rapidly across most of the school. Leaders, staff and governors have, over the last year, overseen huge improvements in the teaching of phonics, with a growing interest in learning generally, as improvements in all areas of teaching start to gain momentum.
- Leaders and governors know that progress across key stage 2 is still not good, particularly for the most able pupils, and they continue to drive improvements in the quality of teaching to rectify this. Pivotal to these improvements is leaders' insistence on the application of key strategies. For example, all teachers now have an accurate understanding of age-related expectations and use their improving assessment skills to plan series of activities to develop particular knowledge, skills and understanding. Early success can be seen in pupils' books, with stronger progress for many pupils, especially in mathematics and reading.
- Raising expectations and aspirations have been essential to the improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders have united the staff team so that everyone is determined to achieve the best for their pupils. Leaders provide support for pupils to overcome any barriers to learning through an effective pastoral support system.
- Leaders use accurate plans to bring about changes in practice. These plans provide staff with a clear focus for monitoring activities linked to the school's priorities. Such activities support staff rather than overwhelm them. The precision of leaders' monitoring and assessment helps teachers to understand what they need to do better and celebrate what they do well. These procedures, supplemented by effective in-class support and training, have led to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in most classes. As a result, pupils are making better progress, particularly in reading, mathematics and in their understanding and application of phonics.
- Effective systems to manage teachers' performance are raising expectations and ensuring that staff have the skills to teach effectively. A whole host of different training opportunities are improving teachers' performance and helping them to learn from each other and from good practice beyond the school.
- The headteacher, as pupil premium leader, has a good understanding of the barriers to learning for each of the disadvantaged pupils in school. She manages the pupil premium funding carefully to provide appropriate additional support. Teaching assistants are used to provide targeted support in class. Careful use of funding ensures that disadvantaged pupils benefit from participation in educational visits and after-school activities. While these pupils are benefiting from more appropriate support,

there has been insufficient time to measure the impact on pupils' progress and attainment. Work in books shows that these pupils are beginning to make good progress from their starting points, and gaps in knowledge, for example when attempting to produce accurate sentence structures, are improving.

- The funding for pupils with SEND is used effectively. The recently appointed special educational needs coordinator has overhauled the systems and procedures to identify pupils with SEND. She has already developed clear systems to support and monitor teaching and learning. As a result of these effective procedures, most current pupils with SEND are benefiting from support which is better matched to their identified needs. Their books show that they are making good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders' good use of the additional physical education and sport funding promotes pupils' greater involvement in sport. Additional specialist coaches and the school's membership of the local sports partnership encourage pupils' wider experience of competitive and recreational sports, including football, netball, judo, archery and cross-country running. This leads to high rates of participation, including in local competitions. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, are leading healthier lifestyles as a result of these experiences.
- Leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics are either inexperienced or new to their roles. Consequently, they have yet to make a positive difference to pupils' progress in their subject areas. Subject leaders ensure that there is appropriate coverage of the full range of national curriculum subjects across the school. However, they do not ensure that the curriculum and teachers' assessment systematically build on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. This is why teaching and learning and, consequently, progress and attainment are uneven across the school.
- The wider curriculum is now good. Leaders have developed a curriculum which now gives full attention to all subjects. Pupils are now showing much more interest in subjects such as history and science. However, there remain historic gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge, and teaching does not always build on pupils' prior attainment.
- A wide range of enrichment activities add stimulation to the curriculum. Visits outside school, coupled with visitors to the school, are strengthening pupils' enjoyment and knowledge. British values are threaded through all aspects of the school's work and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governance has strengthened since the last inspection. An external review has helped governors to see where they went wrong in the past. The new chair of governors provides an excellent role model for her colleagues. She liaises well with senior leaders and provides an effective balance between support and challenge.
- Governors share senior leaders' vision and commitment to improvement. They know their school well because many now visit regularly. Governors gain a deeper insight into what is happening in 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 professionals and pupils'

feedback. Governors use this wealth of information to hold leaders stringently to account for their decisions.

- Members of the governing body have provided resolute support to senior leaders over staffing issues. Difficult decisions have not been avoided. Their much-improved understanding of performance information means that they have a better understanding of the progress that different groups of pupils are making. They check that the pupil premium funding is being used to best effect.
- Governors are keen to ensure that there is a good balance of expertise on the governing body and they proactively seek to appoint new governors to fill any identified gaps. 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 well maintained.
- Leaders and governors ensure that staff are well trained. They ensure that staff know how to spot early signs that pupils may be at risk and know how to act on any concerns. School records show that any issues are followed up thoroughly. Good liaison with external agencies helps support vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Pupils feel safe and know the systems school leaders have put in place to ensure their safety. 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

## Requires improvement

- In most classes, pupils are showing encouraging signs of improved attainment and progress. However, there are others where they do not make good progress. This is linked to changes in staffing and historic instability in leadership, which has delayed embedding leaders' focus on a consistent approach to teaching and progress. As a result, the overall quality of teaching requires improvement across years and subjects, particularly writing.
- Many teachers have a strong subject knowledge and plan interesting activities that capture pupils' enthusiasm. Some teachers provide activities which do not build on what pupils know, so they become confused and lose interest.
- The teaching of writing is not fully effective. It has improved but some pupils are not writing at the appropriate standard. Improved teaching has increased pupils' ability to write at length and in a variety of styles. Teachers give attention to teaching grammar and punctuation, but these skills are not transferred securely to pupils' writing.
- In mathematics, the quality of teaching is improving and is beginning to address the gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Effective training has ensured a

consistent approach to teaching different methods of calculations. Opportunities are increasingly provided for pupils to deepen their understanding through reasoning and problem-solving. Although pupils, particularly the most able pupils, tackle these effectively, teachers fail to draw out from pupils their methods or insist on appropriate mathematical vocabulary.

- The teaching of phonics is strong and is beginning to have a positive impact on improving standards of reading by the end of key stage 1. Teachers further support the development of effective reading skills through a focus on literature in class topics and well-planned reading lessons. By the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress is good and they are confident and fluent readers, with good comprehension skills.
- Many teachers do not provide enough challenge for the most able pupils. As a result, pupils sometimes repeat work unnecessarily or spend too long on insufficiently demanding tasks. These pupils do not make the strong progress they are capable of in a range of subjects.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively to support and challenge pupils' learning. This is particularly evident in the main part of lessons when pupils are working in their books. In addition, their work with groups of pupils with SEND and individual pupils is very effective and results in these pupils making good progress from their starting points.
- Teachers use questioning with increasing effectiveness to probe pupils' understanding and to clarify their knowledge across a wide range of subjects. As a result, teachers are becoming more adept at adapting the support or challenge required to promote improved progress and attainment. This was particularly effective in some of the Year 3 science lessons, which drew on pupils' first-hand observations of plants to make predictions. However, in other subjects, such as art in key stage 1, the curriculum does not focus sufficiently on the teaching of subject-specific skills.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school. This is because staff are friendly and always willing to listen and help with any worries or concerns. Leaders ensure that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe from harm, including when using the internet.
- Leaders have developed and implemented an effective programme to promote pupils' personal, social, moral and spiritual development. This includes a wide range of learning, including financial awareness, tolerance and awareness of different faiths and cultures and healthy lifestyles.
- Pupils are well supported to become good citizens and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have a secure understanding of rules and the consequences of not following them. Elections to the pupil parliament help them understand the principles of democracy. They show tolerance and respect for each other and adults in the school.

- Effective use of the PE and sports premium means that pupils have an increased access to a range of sporting activities and events. This promotes their understanding of how they can keep themselves fit and healthy.
- Pupils say bullying is rare. They are confident that adults will listen and intervene to stop any unkind behaviour from continuing.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils behave well in classrooms and around school. As a result, disruption to pupils' learning is minimised. Some pupils show self-discipline well, particularly during lunchtimes.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. They hold doors open for visitors and are keen to engage in conversations about their learning. They display good manners.
- Pupils state that they enjoy coming to school and their attendance is rising to be better than the national average for all pupils. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing in response to the revised procedures recently introduced. Leaders challenge unauthorised absence with vigour and inform the appropriate authorities where necessary.
- Pupils are proud of the opportunities to take on additional responsibilities, such as becoming members of the 'pupil parliament'. They enjoy the opportunity to represent the school at sporting and musical events, receiving glowing comments from members of the community for their positive conduct. Most pupils are eager to learn and are proud of their school.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Historically, progress across key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics was not good enough and standards were well below average in the 2018 national tests. A lower-than-average proportion of the most able pupils in key stage 2 reached the higher standards, and their progress from key stage 1 was not good enough. No pupils attained the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined.
- In key stage 1, in 2018, the proportion of pupils reaching the standards expected for their age was below average. While the proportions of pupils reaching the higher standards in reading were similar to national averages, the proportions reaching the higher standards in writing and mathematics were below national averages.
- In each key stage, attainment and progress of current pupils vary across years and subjects due to variability in teaching. Overall progress, therefore, requires improvement. However, there is an improving picture and teachers are starting to help pupils to overcome a legacy of underachievement. Examples of work in pupils' books show increased numbers of pupils making good progress and working at standards expected for their age.
- Progress for the most able pupils is showing less improvement. The proportion of pupils currently in Years 2 and 6 working at greater depth and reaching the higher

standard in their work is still too low and pupils' progress across key stage 2, particularly in writing, is not consistently good.

- School performance information and work in pupils' books show that key stage 2 pupils' mathematics knowledge and understanding are improving, particularly their calculation skills. However, opportunities to deepen their understanding through reasoning and problem-solving are not consistent across year groups and classes.
- Additionally, work in pupils' writing books shows an improving picture. Their work shows that pupils are writing with more confidence, especially when writing at length. However, they are not as secure in applying their grammar and punctuation skills. A specific focus on the most able pupils in Year 6 is raising the proportion of these pupils who demonstrate deeper understanding.
- There is a legacy of underachievement in work in pupils' topic books in subjects other than English and mathematics. Work shows a variability in progress and attainment because not all teachers have high enough expectations or strong enough subject knowledge to systematically plan work which is sufficiently challenging. Not enough attention is given to developing pupils' skills.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points. This is due to clearer identification of learning needs and effective delivery of support to meet these needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving following a review of their barriers to learning. The creation of pupil profile folders has focused teaching and learning on identified needs and appropriate support. These relatively new profiles are having a positive impact on the standards of work produced by disadvantaged pupils, but more time is needed to see the full benefit and wider impact of this new approach.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was below average in 2018. Leaders have taken prompt action and the teaching of phonics has been reviewed and new procedures introduced. This is resulting in more effective teaching and greater numbers of pupils in key stage 1 are now working at standards typical for their age. As a result, more pupils are developing secure early reading skills, enabling them to enjoy reading. Progress in reading is also beginning to improve in other year groups.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children enter the early years with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age. As a result of good teaching, current children are making strong progress and are well prepared for their transition into Year 1.
- Nursery children benefit from improving expectations, especially in the development of speaking and listening. There is a real buzz of conversation around the Nursery class as children learn and play. The most able children enjoy making marks and make good progress in developing their writing skills.
- Reception children listen carefully to instructions. Staff use questioning and a wide range of experiences to assess and broaden children's knowledge, for example when learning about leaves.
- Teaching is consistently good in the early years, and this is the major factor behind this stage being more effective than the rest of the school. Teachers provide well-planned



activities that enthuse the children and are carefully matched to their learning needs. Staff intervene to address misconceptions, enabling children to develop their understanding.

- Leaders identify and support disadvantaged children and those with SEND effectively. Children with speech and language difficulties are quickly assessed on entry into the early years classes and receive additional help from specially trained staff. This effective practice helps to ensure that these children make good progress from their starting points.
- 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 the safeguarding procedures and policies well that are applicable to the whole school.
- Leadership of the early years is effective. The leader understands the strengths and weaknesses of the early years provision and is keen to secure improvements. Past analysis of, and accuracy in recording, children's achievements lacked the necessary clarity to inform improvements. Effective adjustments have rectified this misunderstanding and assessments are now accurate. As a result, teaching and learning are closely matched to children's learning needs.

## School details

Unique reference number	135136
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10087859

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	545
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Jackie Bellfield
Headteacher	Dr Victoria Carr
Telephone number	0151 338 2260
Website	<a href="http://www.woodlands.cheshire.sch.uk">www.woodlands.cheshire.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@woodlands.cheshire.sch.uk">admin@woodlands.cheshire.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	13 to 14 December 2016

## Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is broadly average.
- There have been significant changes in staffing and leadership since the last inspection, including the appointment of a new substantive headteacher.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning throughout the school in all classes and in a range of subjects, and they scrutinised pupils' work. Some of these activities were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors 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 inspectors met with pupils, formally and informally, to listen to their views.
- Meetings were held with the senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information about pupils' attainment and progress and the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. Inspectors 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.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents through informal meetings. They analysed 69 responses received through the free-text facility on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. They also analysed 48 responses to the staff survey and 157 responses to the pupils' survey.
- During both days of the inspection, Year 5 pupils were not in school as they were attending a residential visit. Evidence for the performance of these pupils was collected from their English, mathematics and topic books.

## Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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