

Millfields Primary School and Nursery

Marsh Lane, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 5HP

Inspection dates

13–14 September 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

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

- The headteacher is a strong, sensitive leader with a clear vision of where he wants to take the school. He is ably supported by his senior leadership team and morale in the school is high.
- The headteacher and governors conduct regular reviews of the school and have not hesitated to take the actions necessary to ensure that the quality of teaching is good.
- The governors know the school well and perform their duties diligently, including ensuring that pupils are kept safe. At present, however, the website does not include all the information that it should.
- Standards have risen rapidly from being very low to being in line with and in some cases well above those found nationally. The school's analysis and work in pupils' books show that these improvements are set to continue.
- At present, outcomes in mathematics and reading are stronger than in writing. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to apply their writing skills in a range of subjects.
- Pupils of all abilities are progressing well. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils and most-able pupils has quickened. Boys have tended not to perform as well as girls, but the difference between them is diminishing.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan their work carefully and make very good use of time during lessons. They collaborate very closely with teaching assistants to ensure that pupils are given the support and encouragement they need to learn.
- All the staff in the school know the pupils well and take great care to ensure that they are safe and happy.
- Pupils' personal development, welfare and behaviour are outstanding. The pupils live out the strong set of values underpinning the school's work. In lessons and around the school, they behave extremely well. They show the greatest respect for each other, for all staff and their environment. As a result, the school is an exciting and pleasant place to be.
- Provision in the early years is good. The staff work closely with parents to check on, and support, the children's development, to ensure that they progress well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Put further emphasis on ensuring that boys' performance is as good as that of the girls in all subjects.
- Provide pupils with more opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum, in order to be able to apply their developing skills in a variety of contexts.
- The governors should ensure that the information on the website is up to date and complies fully with requirements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- On his arrival in January 2015, the headteacher inherited a school where standards were declining and where there was considerable turbulence in staffing. Through his strong, sensitive leadership and clear vision, he has succeeded in creating a cohesive staff whose morale is high and who have the determination to work hard to provide the pupils with the high standards of education they deserve. Together, they have succeeded in arresting the decline in performance. Within a year, results have moved from being in the lowest 10% in the country to being in line with the provisional national average in writing and well above that in reading and mathematics.
- Together with his senior and middle managers, the headteacher conducted a detailed analysis of past results, to identify precisely where pupils were underperforming, and then produced a clear and effective strategy for tackling those problems. The initial focus on mathematics had a very clear impact and led to improvements which are set to continue across the school. The current focus on writing is being approached equally systematically and already the impact of that is expected is being reflected in teachers' approaches. The revised system for tracking pupils' progress is being applied systematically, so that the effectiveness of strategies can be regularly reviewed and amended where necessary. As a result, the leaders know the school well and have an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
- The headteacher has a very clear understanding of what constitutes good teaching and, on the basis of regular observations, has identified areas for improvement to be tackled by individuals and the staff as a whole. He ensures that staff have the resources and training to improve their practice. Where necessary, he has not hesitated to take tough decisions to provide pupils with better teaching. His focus on 'every minute matters' ensures that attendance has improved, pupils move quickly and efficiently from one lesson or task to another and lessons progress at a good pace, with no time being wasted.
- Over the last year, the senior leaders have reviewed and refined the special educational needs register to ensure that the right pupils are included on it. Regular and rigorous assessment of pupils' progress means that staff can plan specific, additional support for them.
- The responses to the online questionnaire and comments made to the lead inspector show that there is very strong support for the headteacher's leadership among parents, pupils and staff.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Staff work together to plan activities that are of interest to the pupils and to ensure that there is continuity and development in their learning as they progress through the school. Care is taken also to ensure progress across phases. For example, French is taught by a teacher from the secondary school to which many of the pupils move. This means that they will be able to build on what they already know when they move to the next stage of learning a modern foreign language. The curriculum is enriched by a range of lunchtime and after-school activities that have been considerably extended since the headteacher's arrival. Opportunities for pupils to write at length in different subjects of the curriculum are underdeveloped.
- The school has made good use of the primary sports funding to extend the range of

activities available to the pupils, who are very enthusiastic about the additional opportunities available to them. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.

Governance of the school

- The governors are knowledgeable and take an active part in the life of the school. They visit regularly to check on the effectiveness of plans, such as those to improve pupils' use and understanding of numbers and girls' confidence in mathematics. These visits include discussions with the senior leaders, examination of plans, records and books, as well as talking to pupils and teachers.
- Minutes of meetings show that governors challenge leaders rigorously, for example over how they plan to improve writing.
- The governors manage the headteacher's performance diligently and they keep themselves fully informed about the performance management of other staff in the school.
- Discussions show that governors keep a careful check on how the pupil premium and sports funding is used and on its impact. The reviews of the impact of these funds in 2015/16 are published on the school's website. However, the plans for the current year have yet to be uploaded. Similarly, the website does not include the information on governors' declaration of interests.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding policy is up to date and includes appropriate reference to what to do in the case of suspected female genital mutilation or forced marriage and how to prevent pupils becoming involved in terrorism. All the parents who responded to the online questionnaire said that their children were safe at the school. This echoed the views of the staff and pupils, including those who met with the lead inspector. The pupils say that bullying is rare and is dealt with effectively if it does occur. They know whom to contact if they have any worries and are confident that they will receive the help they need.
- The pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and social media because they are taught to do so, through termly lessons from teachers and annual visits from a drama company that focuses on themes such as cyber bullying and online gaming. The school is currently setting up a scheme of 'safety cadets' who will be trained to train others on such topics. The curriculum includes instruction on electrical safety in science lessons and all key stage 2 pupils have swimming lessons to ensure that they are safe near water. The community police also visit the school to talk about road safety.
- The school has robust systems for checking on the suitability of staff to work with children and training is provided and updated regularly. Staff know how to identify possible indicators of safeguarding concerns and know what they should do in such circumstances. The school has a number of nurture groups to provide a range of appropriate support for pupils. It also works closely with relevant external agencies to support families where this is necessary.

- Health and safety checks are effective. Fire drills are held regularly and pupils know what they need to do in the case of fire. Entry to the school site and to the building is carefully controlled.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Like the pupils, the teachers have taken the mantra 'every minute matters' to heart. As a result, they deliver their lessons at a fast pace to ensure that no time is lost. They have established very good routines which ensure that pupils move quickly and without fuss from one activity to the next. This ensures that pupils have to concentrate and work hard. Occasionally, however, the focus on pace means that pupils are not given enough time to reflect or share their thinking.
- The quality of questioning is good, with teachers focusing on pupils who are not volunteering answers as well as on those who are ready to do so. Teachers also use supplementary questions to help pupils clarify their thinking or to identify and correct errors or misconceptions.
- The teachers have good subject knowledge. Their planning is rigorous and ensures that all pupils are involved in lessons and focus well. The pupils have a clear understanding of why they are doing a particular task and what is expected of them. This was very evident, for example, where pupils worked together on applying their knowledge of Roman numerals to deciphering increasingly complicated numbers.
- On occasion, pupils are not stretched enough. For example, in one lesson, pupils were asked to expand a piece of writing by adding clauses, using the semi-colon. Several pupils were able to do this very quickly because the work was not demanding enough for them.
- Teachers and teaching assistants collaborate very closely to plan work for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They use the assessment information that is regularly provided by the special educational needs coordinator to help them with this. The focus is not only on tackling their weaknesses but also on highlighting their strengths. For example, one group of pupils had difficulty with writing but had good speaking skills. They were receiving additional help with letter and sentence formation and therefore found it difficult to write their answers to questions about their topic. However, during a history lesson, the teacher and teaching assistant ensured that they were able to tell the class what they knew. Through questioning, this understanding was extended further. Therefore, their learning was not being unnecessarily restricted by their limited skills.
- The teachers mark books regularly, in accordance with the school's policy, and also provide feedback through discussions with individuals or the whole class. The marking of English and mathematics work is detailed and pupils respond and build on the pointers for improvement provided. Feedback in other areas of the curriculum does not always challenge pupils to think further about the concepts in subjects like geography, for example.
- The school reports regularly to parents, and responses to the online questionnaire show that they feel well informed about their children's progress.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- A visitor to this school cannot fail to be struck by the highly positive and purposeful attitudes of its pupils. The way that they conduct themselves clearly reflects the guiding principles for the school, the 'Millfields Values'. They respect each other, the environment, adults and visitors to the school. Work in books and in lessons shows that they are prepared to persevere and do not give up easily. They collaborate well with each other, both in lessons and around the school, sharing ideas and resources readily. When talking to teachers and other adults, the great majority of the pupils, including those with special educational needs, have the confidence to present their ideas clearly. Older pupils take great care of younger pupils.
- The pupils say that there is no racism in the school and that there is equality in the range of activities offered to the pupils and in which they choose to take part. For example, girls take as much interest as the boys in football and boys are not embarrassed to play a caring role in relation to younger pupils. The pupils show considerable maturity in the way that they deal with each other. They are clearly taking on board the principles of democracy. They know how to conduct themselves in discussions, listening carefully to each other's viewpoints and taking turns to make their contributions. The personal and mental discipline developed through their philosophy for children lessons is clearly evident in their approach. They also contribute to the development of the school through their involvement in selecting curriculum topics and providing regular, formal feedback to the school's leaders on how effective their policies are.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. In addition to taking leadership roles in the life of the school, pupils also contribute to the wider community, through raising money for specific charities that they have chosen after careful research. They have also arranged an ongoing collection for the local foodbank. Through the philosophy for children lessons, they consider a range of moral and social issues. They also learn about world faiths. The art displays around the school are of a high quality and show a growing command of a range of techniques. Pupils regularly contribute art work to the local museum. Their cultural development is further enhanced through regular visits to historical sites, to musical and theatrical performances and through performing in the school band.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- In lessons, pupils behave very well. They arrive promptly and ready to work and no time is wasted before they settle down to their given tasks. They listen attentively to teachers and to each other and are not distracted by visitors. They move quickly and without any fuss from one activity to the next. They have clearly taken on board the school's message that 'every minute matters'.
- Pupils behave very well in the corridors and in the school grounds. Their games are purposeful and they know how to cooperate well with each other. Older pupils take

their responsibilities as 'buddies' for younger pupils very seriously and inspectors saw several instances of the younger pupils being given good support by their mentors. The school grounds are very attractive and kept in an immaculate state by the site manager. Last year, the school won a silver award in the Britain in Bloom competition. The pupils are very proud of this and treat their environment with the greatest respect. As a result, the school is a very pleasant place to be.

- The pupils relate very well to the adults in the school and, during lunchtime, for example, the mutual respect between the pupils and staff who prepare and serve food is very evident. The pupils have good table manners and chat happily to each other as they eat. During the inspection, even the youngest children, for whom this was their first week in school, were settling in happily to the lunchtime routines.
- Since the arrival of the present headteacher, attendance has improved very rapidly. It is now in line with the most recent averages for all pupils nationally. The attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. These improvements have been achieved through a range of strategies, including phone calls to the home, discussions with parents, collecting pupils from home and providing them with alarm watches. The administrative staff take care to ensure that they know the precise whereabouts of any pupils who are absent from school, in order to ensure that they are safe.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- There has been a rapid improvement in the outcomes for pupils. According to the school's data, which is based on regular assessments of pupils' work, this is set to continue.
- In the three years following the last inspection, the school's results declined. In 2015, they fell below the government's minimum expected standards. For pupils leaving the school that year, the progress that they had made in writing was in the lowest 10% nationally, as was the progress in reading of disadvantaged boys and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils' progress in mathematics was equally low.
- The results for 2016 are unvalidated, however, the provisional information indicates that the school's results have improved dramatically. This summer, the proportion of 11-year-olds reaching the level expected of their age was above average in reading and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. It was in line with the national average for writing and well above average in mathematics. Boys, however, did not do as well as girls. Overall results for disadvantaged pupils were in line with the results for all pupils nationally. They were above all pupils nationally in mathematics and grammar punctuation and spelling, below them in writing and in line with them in reading. The school's own analysis indicates that the progress made by pupils who left the school in summer 2016 was higher than in previous years in writing and significantly higher in reading and mathematics.
- The school's analysis of the performance of current pupils shows that the improvements in mathematics and reading are set to continue. This was borne out during the inspection. In the work seen in mathematics books, pupils of all abilities were tackling more and more challenging work with increasing confidence and success. The school's most recent data on pupils entitled to the pupil premium shows that those

in Years 3 and 4 are doing particularly well in mathematics. Therefore, the major improvements in this subject are being sustained.

- The pupils who were heard reading did so with fluency, although sometimes without enough expression. The less confident readers had clear strategies for breaking down difficult words into separate sounds, although they could not always put the sounds back together again into a complete word. All the pupils spoken to read frequently at home as well as in school and talked enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors.
- The work in English books shows that pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are generally making good progress from their starting points. They show increasing command of the elements of grammar and are able to apply this knowledge effectively in a range of different types of writing, such as diary entries, letter writing, reports and reviews. The most able pupils often use sophisticated vocabulary in their work. The spelling of lower-ability pupils is less secure and they do not always know how to use a dictionary to help improve their work. Beyond English lessons, the opportunities for extended writing are more limited. In science, history and geography, for example, pupils' writing tends to be confined to providing short answers to questions related to a particular topic. In mathematics books, pupils rarely write about how they solved a problem. However, in history the pupils were involved in acting out and discussing their reactions to discovering a fire and making notes in preparation for producing diary entries and newspaper accounts of the Great Fire of London.
- The performance of boys currently in Year 6 is considerably higher than that of their counterparts last year and, in reading and mathematics, is in line with that of girls. The new approach to teaching writing includes a particular focus on boys. The school is also focusing across the curriculum on ensuring that the most able girls are given greater challenge. This results from an analysis which shows that, although high proportions of girls meet the expectations for their ages, too few are exceeding that expectation.
- In 2016, the results of the screening in phonics showed that boys, girls and disadvantaged pupils were all above the national average. The school is predicting a slight increase in these results next year. This is borne out by what was seen and heard in lessons.

Early years provision

Good

- The leader of the early years has a firm command of her subject and a clear understanding of what provision should be made for children of this age and how their progress should be assessed. She ensures that she and her colleagues have good opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding, through training and attendance at regular early years meetings locally.
- The school's assessments, which have been independently checked, show that the children's ability on entry is just below the national average, particularly in terms of communication and language and knowledge and understanding of the world. During their time in the early years, they make rapid progress. The provisional figures for 2016 show that the proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development was in line with the national average. The early years leader conducts detailed, regular checks on each child's progress. From this, she has identified that the children are not always

keen to write. Therefore, she is placing a particular focus on this aspect, which is totally in keeping with the drive across the school to improve writing.

- Relationships with parents are very good. Staff meet parents when they bring their children to school or collect them at the end of the day, and discuss any issues with them. The school welcomes the observations that parents make about their children's progress and makes appropriate adaptations in the light of them.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the early years is good. The teachers plan the work to reflect the children's interests. This is not always balanced sufficiently with the need to extend that range of interests. The children have access to a wide range of activities to extend their understanding. None of these activities is biased to one gender. As result, boys and girls show an equal interest in early writing activities as well as playing with wheeled toys. The children relate well to adults who stimulate their thinking with a range of appropriate questions. The range of resources is good and the pupils are able to move easily between indoor and outdoor activities.
- Safeguarding arrangements within the early years setting are effective. All the staff have received appropriate training and they are very vigilant when working with the children.

School details

Unique reference number	111079
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10001442

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	245
Appropriate authority	Cheshire East
Chair	Jill Taylor
Headteacher	Philip Whelan
Telephone number	01270685750
Website	www.millfieldsprimary.org.uk/
Email address	head@millfields.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 June 2012

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on: the publication on its website of information about pupil premium and sports premium plans for 2016/17; the publication on its website of the governors' declaration of interests.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of key stage 2.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups has doubled over the last three years but is still below average.
- Only a few pupils have a first language other than English.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.

- The proportion of pupils entering or leaving the school at other than the usual times is average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. They observed learning in classes. This included joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about their work.
- The inspectors talked to parents as they brought their children to school and examined their responses to the online questionnaire for parents.
- The lead inspector met members of the governing body, including the chair, and spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with eight pupils chosen at random from Years 3 to 6.
- The inspectors examined the responses of staff and pupils to the online questionnaires.
- The inspectors also spoke to pupils and staff in class and around the school.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, key policies and minutes of governors' meetings.
- The inspectors also scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Aelwyn Pugh, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Fann	Ofsted Inspector
Mary Myatt	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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