

# Woodchurch Road Primary School

Woodchurch Road, Oxtun, Birkenhead, Merseyside CH42 9LJ

## Inspection dates

10–11 October 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Over time, standards have declined. Considerable turbulence in leadership since the last inspection has hampered the school's capacity to maintain a good standard of education.
- Despite recent improvements secured in teaching, particularly in upper key stage 2, the quality of teaching varies. Pupils' progress is uneven and too few pupils reach the standards expected for their age.
- Teachers do not consistently take account of what pupils already know and can do. Where pupils are unclear in their learning, teachers sometimes fail to recognise and respond to this.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils, including the most able, can achieve.
- Attendance remains stubbornly low.
- At times, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, do not receive the support that they need to catch up.
- Pupils do not always behave well in lessons. Pupils become less focused on their work when it is too easy or too hard. Not all staff apply the behaviour policy consistently.
- Governors have been slow to address weaknesses in the school's performance.
- Some leaders are new to their roles. Their work has not had time to make a difference to improving the quality of teaching.
- Adults in early years do not consistently challenge children, including the most able and disadvantaged, to make rapid progress.
- The curriculum does not help pupils understand enough about different cultures.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's clear vision and ambition for the school are shared by staff and governors. Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are rigorous.
- Teaching in some classes, particularly in Year 6, is ensuring pupils make strong progress.
- Pupils feel safe. They behave well around school and get on well together. Staff nurture pupils well. The social and emotional needs of vulnerable pupils are met well.
- A wide range of visits and visitors enrich the curriculum well.

## Full report

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

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that leaders, staff and governors raise their aspirations for the progress that pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are capable of making
  - continuing to develop the roles of middle and subject leaders in leading improvements in the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility
  - making sure that the additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils is deployed effectively to improve outcomes for these groups across all key phases
  - further developing the curriculum to improve pupils' understanding of the cultures of different people and communities
  - ensuring that all staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy
  - ensuring that governors become more adept at checking the impact of leaders' actions in a timely manner.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
  - all teachers have the high expectations that some teachers have of how pupils should behave and what they can achieve
  - teachers use information about pupils' prior learning to provide tasks that meet pupils' needs
  - teachers take greater account of the learning needs of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
  - gaps in pupils' learning caused by earlier weaknesses in teaching are identified and eradicated.
- Ensure that adults use every opportunity to challenge and extend children's learning in early years and build on what they already know and can do.
- Ensure that leaders continue their focus on bringing about improvements in attendance and reducing the persistent absenteeism of those pupils who find it difficult to attend school regularly.

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

### Requires improvement

- Since her appointment, the headteacher has faced the challenge of dealing with a significant number of disruptions to the school leadership team. As a result, too much has rested on her shoulders for too long. This has had a negative effect on the quality of education the school provides.
- Decisive action taken by the headteacher to establish a new leadership and management structure which holds leaders firmly to account for pupils' progress has begun to strengthen this aspect of the school. Senior leaders, very ably supported by the progress leaders, have tackled some of the weakest teaching in the school. They demonstrate the capacity to continue to improve the school. However, their actions have not had enough time to eradicate the inconsistencies in teaching and learning and the variable progress made by pupils across the school.
- The headteacher is passionate and committed to the school. She is open and honest about what needs to improve. Leaders, staff and governors are determined that only the best quality of education will do for the pupils.
- Although leaders hold an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, they have not acted on some issues swiftly enough. Gaps in pupils' learning due to weaknesses in teaching are not yet precisely identified and addressed.
- Thorough checks on the quality of teaching now take place. Leaders know where teaching is effective and where it needs improving. Well-planned professional development for teachers and support staff is proving successful. For example, subject knowledge has improved in mathematics, and teachers, particularly in key stage 2, have improved pupils' ability to use reasoning skills to solve problems.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding to support pupils academically and socially and to overcome barriers to learning. The use of this funding has been effective for some pupils but not for all, because, even though progress is improving by Year 6, across other year groups, progress is not as strong.
- Arrangements to develop the curriculum are under way. Teaching is focusing more closely on the needs and interests of pupils at Woodchurch Road Primary and pupils were keen to tell inspectors about the topics that they have enjoyed.
- Aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are promoted well. However, opportunities to learn about the diverse cultures of people and communities need further development to ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum is enriched by an extensive range of additional activities, such as residential experiences and visits linked to topic work. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils, for instance, visited the local secondary school for a cookery lesson to make trench stew as part of their study of the First World War.
- The school works with a large range of external agencies to help overcome the persistent poor attendance of some pupils in the school. The school promotes a range of carefully devised initiatives and rewards for good attendance, but the hard core of absenteeism remains despite leaders' best efforts.

- Leaders use the primary physical education (PE) and sport funding effectively to provide specialist coaching for pupils and develop teachers' skills. Healthy lifestyle choices are promoted well. Coaches lead active playtime sessions. Regular morning fitness sessions are popular and get the day off to a good start.
- The breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs provided for pupils at the school are well attended. Pupils of all ages play together happily and are well cared for.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors are dedicated to the school and are keen to be fully effective in their roles. They are supportive of the school's leaders, visit the school frequently and know the staff well. In the past, however, governors have not offered sufficient levels of challenge to leaders about the standards that pupils achieve. This has limited the impact of their work.
- Governors are developing a more realistic understanding of the school's effectiveness because the headteacher provides good-quality information on pupils' achievement. Nonetheless, they did not step in quickly enough when the first signs of the decline in achievement became evident.
- Governors are aware that the deployment of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is not having enough impact in overcoming barriers to learning for these groups.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding at Woodchurch Road Primary. The school provides a safe and caring environment for its pupils. School leaders recognise the challenges faced by pupils, including those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable, and take steps to ensure that pupils stay safe.
- Leaders ensure that staff have received up-to-date safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. Staff are vigilant and understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Governors fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities effectively.
- All statutory checks are in place to ensure the suitability of adults working in the school. The site is secure. All visitors are made aware of the safeguarding arrangements on arrival.
- The curriculum is adapted well to help pupils know how to manage risks that they may face in school and within the local community.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment remains too variable and is not as strong as that seen at the time of the last inspection. However, the quality of teaching is starting to improve again, as a result of leaders' efforts.
- Teachers sometimes do not take account of pupils' starting points when deciding what

is to be taught. Consequently, sometimes the work set is too easy or too difficult. When this happens, pupils finish tasks too quickly and become easily distracted or become frustrated and do not participate. Learning time is lost as a result and pupils, including the most able, do not make as much progress as they should.

- Some teachers recognise and respond quickly to pupils' misconceptions. For example, in mathematics, they regularly check pupils' understanding and provide clear explanations to move learning on. In some other subjects, however, teachers do not recognise when pupils are getting confused and this means that misunderstandings go unnoticed and learning stalls.
- Over time, weaknesses in teaching have led to gaps in some pupils' understanding of basic reading and writing skills. Teachers do not consistently pinpoint these gaps in learning so that they can be eradicated. This hampers the progress of pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, when they learn new concepts.
- At times, the teaching of reading is not consistently strong enough to ensure that pupils reach the standards that are expected for their age. Teachers do not move learning on quickly enough or extend pupils' vocabulary consistently once pupils, including the most able, have grasped the phonic sounds that they have been learning about.
- The most successful teaching builds on teachers' high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Questioning challenges pupils' thinking, and pupils work hard and take a pride in their work. However, on occasion, some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low, particularly in some key stage 1 classes, and learning therefore slows.
- Leaders have put into place a new scheme for mathematics. Teachers now develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills more precisely. For example, during the inspection, Year 5 pupils showed great levels of concentration as they made good use of their basic number skills to solve complex problems using rounding.
- The teaching of writing is improving due to the systematic teaching of spelling, grammar and punctuation skills. However, learning sometimes slows when teachers do not encourage pupils to write accurately or at length when the task set requires this.
- Teaching assistants support pupils well, particularly when they have been well briefed by teachers about the aims of the lesson.
- Good relationships between pupils and staff are a strength of the school. The strong sense of nurture, where pupils (including those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable) are kept safe and secure, permeates all that the school does.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Some pupils do not take a pride in their work due to the inconsistent level of expectation for presentation. Some display less than positive attitudes to learning

activities because work is sometimes not matched well enough to their needs. On these occasions, pupils lack the motivation to do the best that they can.

- Pupils' physical needs are well developed through the use of the outdoor space for play and through a wide range of sporting activities on offer both during and outside the school day. Pupils receive regular information about how to make healthy choices when they eat.
- Pupils are helped to understand how important it is to take care of their mental health. During the inspection, pupils attended an assembly as part of World Mental Health Day. They were helped to explore their feelings and understand how important it is to talk to someone if they have any worries or concerns.
- Pupils know about the different types of bullying. A small number of pupils who completed the Ofsted questionnaire expressed concerns about bullying. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that, while bullying sometimes happens, adults encourage them to report any incidents. Pupils said that they could put a note in a worry box or approach a member of staff for help.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They are generally polite, courteous and respectful of each other and adults. Pupils eat their lunch sensibly in the dining hall and play well together at breaktimes. Most move around school in an orderly way.
- Attendance and lateness are now tackled more robustly, but too many pupils do not attend school regularly or on time.
- Some parents have concerns over the way behaviour is managed in lessons. They say that they do not feel behaviour is consistently well managed. Inspectors agree that a small minority of pupils do not behave well, and noted during the inspection that inappropriate behaviour was not challenged consistently by some teachers.
- Pupils understand the behaviour system and the majority respond well to it. They like the reward systems that are in place. Pupils say that behaviour has improved because teachers generally deal with it more strictly. However, they feel that the behaviour system is not consistently applied by all teachers, which leads to some pupils not behaving as well as they should in lessons.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not acted quickly enough to stem the decline in pupils' outcomes since the previous inspection.
- In 2016 and 2017, pupils at Woodchurch Road Primary School did not achieve as well as they should. Progress in Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics was weak and standards at the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2 were well below those expected in all subjects.
- This tide of underachievement began to turn in the last academic year. Pupils in Year 6 made strong in-year progress to reach standards similar to the national average, and

Year 2 pupils also made stronger gains in their learning than they had previously. However, pupils' standards by the end of key stage 1 remain lower than those expected for their age.

- There have also been some improvements for current learners. Pupils' books show that there are more pockets of good progress than in the past, particularly in key stage 2. This is especially evident in mathematics, where more pupils are working at the levels the school expects for their age than in the past, because skills are being taught more systematically.
- Nevertheless, the progress of different groups of current learners is too uneven. The most able pupils make slow progress at times because some of their work does not challenge them well enough. Similarly, work is sometimes too hard for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. In addition, those pupils who do not attend school regularly are also falling behind in their learning and making slower progress than they are capable of.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are patchy. In 2018, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 made rapid in-year progress to reach standards similar to those expected for their age. However, too many disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are not achieving as well as they should. Gaps in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are not being tackled consistently well enough, particularly in early years and key stage 1. Hence, progress is sometimes not rapid enough to help disadvantaged pupils to catch up with other pupils in the school and elsewhere.
- In the Year 1 phonics check in 2016 and 2017, the school's score dipped below average. It had been above average previously. By the end of Year 2, most pupils achieve the expected score in the phonics check.

### Early years provision

### Requires improvement

- Early years provision requires improvement because too few children, particularly the most able and those who are disadvantaged, are well prepared for Year 1.
- Most children start school with skills typically below those expected for their age. Outcomes for children by the end of Reception Year vary over time. The proportion of children who reached a good level of development in 2018 was well below the national figure. Few most-able children exceeded the expected standard.
- Children make steady progress, particularly in reading and writing, rather than the rapid progress needed to prepare them well for Year 1. This is weaker than the outstanding progress seen at the time of the last inspection.
- Additional funding is not supporting disadvantaged children well enough. Children who are disadvantaged do much less well than other children in school and in other schools nationally.
- Aspects of leadership and management, including checks on how well children are doing, are not used consistently well to improve progress. There is more to do to ensure that all groups of children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Relationships between staff and children are positive and children are well cared for. Children settle into school life well because of the nurturing support provided. They

behave well, showing a keen interest in learning, especially when learning challenges them. Parents are extremely positive about the start that their children make at school.

- The early years classrooms and outdoor area are attractive, happy, well-organised spaces. Activities are well resourced, enabling children to use their imagination, explore new things and try out new skills.
- The promotion of early reading, writing and number skills in Reception is underdeveloped at times. Opportunities to extend children's knowledge and skills are missed, and this delays their progress. For example, during the inspection, children were putting candles into cupcakes that they had moulded from glittery clay. Staff posed questions about the number of candles; however, they accepted incorrect answers at times. The task lacked challenge for most children.
- At times, the teaching of phonics does not take enough account of what children already know, understand and can do when they join the school. This means that some children repeat work on letters and sounds that they are familiar with, rather than moving on to new learning.
- Leaders ensure that the provision is safe and secure. Welfare requirements, including risk assessments, are in place.



## School details

Unique reference number	105047
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10042460

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	406
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frank Doyle
Headteacher	Carolyn Knowles
Telephone number	0151 652 3104
Website	<a href="http://www.woodchurchroad.wirral.sch.uk">www.woodchurchroad.wirral.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:schooloffice@woodchurchroad.wirral.sch.uk">schooloffice@woodchurchroad.wirral.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	8–9 April 2014

## Information about this school

- This is a large school. There are more girls than boys on roll.
- Children attend the Reception class full time.
- Since the last inspection, the school has experienced significant turbulence in staffing, including to the school leadership team. A new headteacher joined the staff in September 2015. In addition, the leader of early years was seconded to the local authority for two years, and there have been changes at middle leadership level, including the leadership of the SEN provision.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils speak English as additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is nearly double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of

pupils who have an education, health and care plan is low.

- The school provides breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs for pupils.
- The school is a member of the local cluster of schools. The school receives support brokered by Wirral local authority, including from the headteacher of a neighbouring primary school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. Learning was observed in all classes and when pupils learned in small groups. Inspectors made joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors checked the safety of the school premises at different times of the school day. They observed arrangements for pupils' arrival at school.
- The inspectors talked with pupils informally as they played at breaktimes, visited the dining hall at lunchtime and observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school. They met formally with three groups of pupils, including two pupils who showed an inspector around the school.
- Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about it. They listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of reading skills. Pupils talked to inspectors about the books that they have enjoyed and those that they are currently reading.
- Inspectors held a number of meetings with the headteacher to consider her review of the school and the school's plan for improvement. Inspectors spoke with senior leaders and met with middle and subject leaders and other members of the school's staff.
- An inspector met with the vice-chair of the governing body and three other governors.
- An inspector met with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. They took account of 26 responses to Ofsted's online survey (Parent View) and 18 comments provided for inspectors. Inspectors also took account of 25 responses to the staff questionnaire, 27 responses to the pupil questionnaire and the school's most recent surveys of parents' views.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including information about pupils' progress, the quality of teaching, school improvement plans and external views of the school. They reviewed the contents of the school's website and scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding completed by school staff.

## Inspection team

Lyn Pender, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Beard	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Rigby	Ofsted Inspector

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