

Cronton CofE Primary School

Smithy Lane, Cronton, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 5DF

Inspection dates 26–27 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Achievement is outstanding and has improved since the last inspection. Senior leaders and governors carefully consider what each individual pupil needs in order for them to be happy and successful. Because of this, standards reached by pupils have been well above average over the last five years.
- The majority of teaching is outstanding, and teachers have very high expectations of pupils. Teachers use their detailed knowledge of each pupil's ability to set challenges and make lessons interesting.
- Pupils are not always given sufficient opportunities in lessons to take the lead in their learning, and in-doing-so find things out for themselves.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are very proud of their school and relish the opportunity of taking on responsibilities. Their exemplary behaviour makes an exceptional contribution to a safe and productive learning environment.
- School governance is very strong. Governors' knowledge and understanding of the school and how it can improve even further is exemplary.
- Outstanding leadership, management and governance have ensured that pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching have continually improved since the last inspection. Although teachers are increasingly sharing their outstanding practice across the school, this is still not a consistent practice.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons including small group activities, parts of lessons and the teaching of phonics (the links between letters and sounds). One lesson was jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read from Years 1, 2, 5, and 6 and held discussions with three groups of pupils from across the school.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised during lessons and separately with the headteacher.
- Inspectors took account of 28 responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire Parent View, the school's own independent surveys of parents' views, and letters from two parents. Questionnaires completed by 22 members of staff were also taken into account.
- Meetings were held with six governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, the Vice-Chair and four foundation governors.
- Various school documents were examined. These included the school's self-evaluation, monitoring records of the quality of teaching, school data on pupils' progress, development plans, governing body minutes, records of attendance, consultants' reports, behaviour records and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Lenford White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila Mawer

Additional Inspector

Kevin Boyle

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs is well-below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium is well-below average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after.)
- A small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection, a new deputy headteacher and senior leaders have been appointed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently outstanding by:
 - sharing outstanding teaching practice across the school
 - ensuring that all pupils are given every opportunity to take the lead in their learning, and find things out for themselves.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Most children start school with skills which are broadly typical for their age. They thrive in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the supportive and well-resourced learning environment and with exceptionally strong links between school and home. Children make rapid progress and move into Year 1 with skills that are above the national average.
- Progress made by pupils from their individual starting points through Key Stages 1 and 2 is outstanding, especially in reading. By the time they leave Year 6, pupils reach standards in mathematics, reading and writing which are significantly above those found nationally and their achievement is outstanding.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also achieve outstandingly well. They spend as much time as possible working alongside their peers because experienced and well-qualified staff plan and provide outstanding support for these pupils. One pupil commented, 'I like working with just me and a teacher, but I like working in class too.'
- The 2012 test results and observations during the inspection show that the achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is at least equal to that of their peers in school, and they attain better than similar pupils nationally.
- The school ensures equality of opportunity for all pupils. Any gaps in attainment between groups of pupils are quickly identified and closed because the progress and attainment of all pupils are constantly tracked with support provided where it is needed.
- Pupils respond very well to the challenges from teachers and teaching assistants involved in one-to-one or small-group teaching. They enjoy using puzzles, games and information and communication technology to support and accelerate their learning.
- The vast majority of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and particular gifts and talents make at least good and frequently outstanding progress.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals say that they enjoy school. Average point scores show that they make rapid progress and do at least as well in mathematics, reading and writing as their peers in school. This is because the school uses its pupil premium funding extremely well to ensure that any pupils falling behind quickly catch up.
- Reading is a very strong feature of the school. Many of the pupils who read for inspectors were fluent readers and said that they enjoyed reading. Younger readers used their phonic skills to read unfamiliar words. One rapidly improving reader said that her teachers had helped her to read.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Lessons are planned very carefully, skilled teaching assistants are well deployed, learning objectives are clear, and a range of activities are offered which aim to meet the needs of each pupil. Teachers plan lessons that are extremely interesting and challenging, ensuring that, in the vast majority of lessons, pupils make rapid and sustained progress.
- The majority of teachers start lessons by either reminding pupils of what they have been learning, or by asking a pupil to summarise what the class has been working on. Teachers are not afraid to revise their planned lesson if they find some pupils are not completely clear about a particular area of learning.
- In an inspirational Year 3 mathematics lesson, on realising that not all pupils were fully confident in their use of fractions, the teacher engaged them in a series of rapid-fire fraction activities focusing on halves, quarters and eighths. After a 'magpie-sharing' activity where pupils compared methods, the teacher asked for a show of 'shaking hands' from those who were now confident with their fractions. All pupils' hands were shaking.
- Teachers' feedback on pupils' work is exemplary. Marking is of a consistently high quality.

Teachers' comments are very helpful and many take the time to provide a good level of detail, indicating what pupils have done well and how they can improve further. Pupils say that they enjoy reading the comments and taking on board any challenges that are set for them.

- The overwhelming majority of lessons are well paced with teachers taking every opportunity to utilise every minute of every lesson, typically offering mental and oral starters at the beginning of lessons and well-structured summaries and evaluations at the end.
- In many lessons, although not all, teachers give pupils opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and extend their literacy skills. In an outstanding Year 5 lesson, exceptionally well-motivated pupils were asked to record in groups all they knew about Tutankhamen and give their ideas as to what might be found inside his tomb. Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to encourage pupils to become 'self-starters' in their learning.
- Pupils in all year groups are given regular homework. The school is careful to make all parents aware of how they can play their part in making homework an enjoyable and productive experience. The school website provides a list of 'helpful homework habits'.
- High expectations of pupils and clearly focused teaching activities characterise English and mathematics lessons from Nursery Year to Year 6. In an outstanding Year 1 literacy lesson, pupils worked in groups writing on large sheets of paper using adjectives to describe an alien. First-rate support from teaching assistants and clearly communicated expectations from the class teacher meant that pupils enjoyed formulating sentences such as 'the alien has big teeth and four arms', by the end of the lesson.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are very proud of their school, they have a high level of regard and respect for adults, and they are welcoming to visitors.
- Pupils feel very well cared for. This is because the school does all it can to listen to what pupils have to say and provides many opportunities for them to share their views and opinions through the school council, pupil forums, surveys and questionnaires.
- The overwhelming majority of parents say that pupils' behaviour is very good. One parent noted that, 'on occasion, where there has been playground teasing, it has been dealt with calmly and effectively.'
- Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They say that bullying is very rare and that they are confident that if it was to occur, it would be dealt with immediately. The school's behaviour logs show that there have been very few incidents of bad behaviour over the last three years and no exclusions.
- The school has well-planned programmes to educate pupils about safety. Internet safety is given a high priority from Reception Year, where children learn never to give their names while online, to Year 6, where pupils recently created and delivered an on-screen quiz focusing on various ways of staying safe online.
- Pupils confidently take on a range of responsibilities as prefects and school council members. Many pupils in Years 5 and 6 are 'gardeners', helping to nurture the growth of seedlings in nursery and Reception. During the inspection, Year 5 pupils took great delight in reading their 'caterpillar books', which they had illustrated and written in German, to younger pupils.
- In an outstanding assembly, the headteacher skilfully linked the thoughts and feelings of winning and losing teams to the Easter themes of sadness and happiness. Pupils' behaviour was impeccable as they answered questions and demonstrated a deep thoughtfulness and appreciation for others.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, supported by a very able senior leadership team, a highly dedicated team of teachers and teaching assistants, and an extremely well-informed governing body, is fully committed to ensuring that all pupils realise their full potential.
- The school makes sure that pupils develop outstanding skills in mathematics, reading and writing and communicates consistently high expectations of them. Highly effective leaders and managers ensure that teachers are very well trained. Teachers say that they feel very well supported in their professional development and this is also clear from the school's detailed records. Although teachers are increasingly sharing their outstanding practice across the school, this is still not a consistent practice.
- All staff members who completed the inspection questionnaire spoke in the highest possible terms of the school's leadership. Typical responses were, 'the school has such an inclusive feel', and, 'I have been offered a wonderful chance to learn and develop.'
- All staff development opportunities are closely linked to individualised teacher targets. These relate to raising levels of achievement and are precisely linked to the school's development plan. All teachers are required to at least reach their targets before they move up the teachers' pay scale or secure promotion.
- Pupils comment that, 'the school is like a family, everybody helps each other.' The school makes a significant contribution to the very strong development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school holds the International School Award for outstanding development of the international dimensions of its work.
- Pupils benefit from a curriculum that supports them in acquiring good and outstanding skills in mathematics and English while maintaining a sense of curiosity and joy in learning. The school provides a wide range of extracurricular activities, visitors in, visits out and residential opportunities.
- The local authority provides 'light-touch' support. The school's external consultant supports with school improvement work, including target setting and teacher observations.
- Safeguarding procedures are followed closely and meet requirements.
- The overwhelming majority of parents are very satisfied with the education that their children enjoy.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governing body members are highly skilled and very effective. They have a detailed knowledge of the school and are fully aware of what the school needs to do in order to continually improve standards and ensure that all pupils make rapid progress. Governors are closely involved in the management of staff and know that the quality of teaching is outstanding. This is because they receive regular reports from the headteacher and subject leaders and regularly scrutinise school data on pupils' performance. Governors are well trained, taking advantage of a wide range of courses such as the monitoring role of governors and making sense of data. Governors know how pupil premium money is spent and how it helps to raise levels of achievement for those who benefit from the small group activities which it funds. All governors play an active role in school and have both year group and curriculum responsibilities. Governors produce a detailed governors' induction pack and an aide-memoire for existing governors.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104449
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	402946

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	254
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Smith
Headteacher	Sylvia Thomson
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2007
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