

Arden Primary School

Osborne Street, Bredbury, Stockport SK6 2EX

Inspection dates	3–4 February 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The high expectations that the headteacher has of staff and pupils feature strongly in all aspects of school life. Aably supported by senior leaders and governors, she has stabilised and united the staff in their ambition to do their best for the pupils.
- The school has improved since its last inspection. Standards are rising and pupils make good progress because teaching, learning and assessment are good.
- Staff who lead and manage different subjects (middle leaders) do so effectively. They have a positive influence on teaching and learning.
- Pupils benefit from a well-planned curriculum that contains a wide range of rich and exciting learning experiences in and beyond the normal school day.
- Nursery and Reception children make good progress. They are being prepared well for Year 1.
- Pupils behave well. They have a strong sense of right and wrong. The 'Always' approach helps them understand the importance of managing their own behaviour and making the right choices.
- Pupils feel safe in school. The school keeps them safe and continues to do so as the new building is completed and the old one demolished. Pupils also know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare feature highly in everything the school does. Staff do much to ensure that pupils learn how to be good citizens who care for and respect others and contribute positively to society.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning and they want to do well. They are proud of their achievements and of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In Key Stage 2, pupils do not always fully understand what they read. Guided reading sessions do not consistently promote these skills.
- When pupils make written corrections, they do not give the same good attention to presentation, or to grammar, punctuation and spelling, as they do to these features in their other writing.
- In the early years, adults do not always help the children understand how they learn as they play so that children can begin to develop the skills to learn by themselves.
- A small number of parents voiced concerns about how well the school communicates with them on a range of matters.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase pupils' comprehension skills and promote their enjoyment of reading by:
 - tightening up guided reading sessions so that all activities have a clear learning purpose focused on promoting deeper understanding of texts
 - encouraging pupils to read widely and more often so that they gain a greater understanding of different sorts of texts and of authors' different styles.
- Ensure that, when they make written corrections, pupils give the same good attention to presentation, grammar, punctuation and spelling as they do in the rest of their writing.
- In early years, make sure that adults always help the children understand what they are learning as they play, therefore enabling them to become better able to think for themselves and continue learning when on their own.
- Improve communication with parents so that they feel better informed about how effectively the school supports their children's learning and personal development.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Senior leaders and governors speak with clear determination about raising standards and enabling every pupil to do as well as they can. That determination is shared by all staff, making the school a cohesive community working towards the same end.
- Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel valued and supported, and they all speak enthusiastically about how the school has improved since the previous inspection. They have risen well to the high expectations the school's leaders have of them and to increased accountability for how well their pupils learn.
- Leaders and teachers work together closely to check the progress of every pupil and to provide timely support for those whose learning might be falling behind. They implement support programmes, monitor them rigorously to make sure they are working, and readily adjust them if needed.
- It is to the credit of all staff that the new building is already a positive learning environment for the pupils, with vibrant classroom displays that support learning and personal development. Leaders ensured a safe and smooth transition to the new building and they continue to keep pupils safe as the grounds are completed and the old building is demolished.
- The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate. Areas identified for improvement form the priorities in the school's development plan and subsequently the objectives set for staff as the school manages their performance. Training for staff is matched to the needs of the school while also allowing staff, where appropriate, to develop expertise in areas of their choice.
- Middle leaders fulfil their roles well. The checks they make on teaching and learning, and the advice, guidance and support they and senior leaders give staff, have brought about a greater understanding of what good progress over time means for all groups of pupils. The changes are secure because teams work together across year groups and everyone is focused on improving even more.
- Input from the local authority, together with the mutual support network with local schools, have strengthened the school's capacity for further improvement. Staff have acted well on advice received, thus improving their teaching and pupils' learning. The school is well able to continue the improvement itself now.
- Leaders, including governors, keep a close check on the impact pupil premium funding (additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils) has on the progress of the pupils who are eligible for it. The money is used effectively, for example, to employ additional teaching and support staff, to purchase additional resources and to subsidise visits and visitors to support pupils so that all have an equal chance to succeed.
- The primary school sports funding is also used well. Pupils experience a wide range of sporting activities and enjoy taking part in competitive sport. Staff learn from working with the coaches and therefore improve their own ability to teach physical education. Large numbers of pupils participate in extra-curricular sporting activities. For those who do not, the school has set up a lunchtime club so that all pupils take part in some activity that shows them how to keep fit and healthy.
- The school has embraced the new curriculum well. English and mathematics continue to be high priority, but all subjects are given due attention, and literacy skills, especially writing, are promoted well in each of them. Work is well under way to include mathematical skills where appropriate.
- The school is systematically building up portfolios of exemplar materials in each subject to guide staff in assessing pupils' progress. Systems for assessing progress without levels are fully in place and are being constantly refined to ensure assessments are accurate and the outcomes used to plan further learning.
- As part of the curriculum, careers guidance starts in this school with the bi-annual careers convention for pupils in Years 5 and 6, to raise their aspirations by opening up their minds to possibilities for the future.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including their understanding of British values, permeates all of the school's work. Staff teach pupils the importance of being responsible citizens who respect others regardless of background, colour, religion or belief.
- The school's culture is open and welcoming. Links with a school that has a different cultural mix opens pupils' minds to the range of cultures in modern Britain and the importance of living and working together. Staff ensure that pupils gain a solid understanding of the dangers of extremism and the importance of not being tempted by others into doing something they know to be wrong.

- The vast majority of parents showed a high degree of satisfaction with the school when they completed the school's questionnaire last November. However, some of the smaller number of parents who completed the Ofsted online questionnaire for this inspection expressed a number of concerns.
- While inspectors judged parents' concerns to be unfounded, the school acknowledged that its communication with parents had slipped during the building programme. It recognises that good parental communication is important if it is to continue to serve its pupils well.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors know the school well. They bring a wide range of expertise to their roles, which they refine through training at local and national level. They evaluate their own work and try to expand their skills base when there are vacancies to fill, as at present.
 - Governors know how well the school is doing in relation to other schools and they have a realistic view of what it needs to do to be even better. They hold the school's leaders to account for how well pupils are doing and speak with passion about the need to ensure that every child has the same opportunity to succeed.
 - Governors visit school regularly and talk to staff and pupils to gain their views. They realise that they do not liaise as well with parents and see improvement in this area as the next step they need to take in order to involve the whole school community better in the life of the school.
 - Systems for managing the performance of staff, including the headteacher, are rigorous. Governors support the headteacher in making decisions about pay. They check that targets have been met and that self-evaluation, school development planning and objectives for staff are linked to ensure they result in further improvement.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The culture of vigilance that senior leaders and governors have established is evident in timely and appropriate safeguarding actions when needed. Leaders ensure that all staff are rigorous in their safeguarding duties and that they receive the training that enables them to remain so.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- In a very short space of time, staff have successfully made their classrooms attractive places that celebrate pupils' work and provide them with examples of how to make it better.
- Teachers display good subject knowledge, which they use well, for example to show pupils how to calculate efficiently, how to write well or how to use what they learn in one subject to help them in another. This is particularly the case for writing, which is often linked well to topic work.
- Mathematics is taught well. It is made exciting for the pupils because it is related to everyday life and pupils can see the value of solving mathematical problems. The astute use of practical equipment in different year groups adds to pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts. For example, in Year 6, it enabled pupils to understand better the difference between squared and cubed numbers and, subsequently, area and volume.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to model learning for the pupils and to ask probing questions that cause pupils to think carefully. They also give pupils time to talk together to gather their thoughts before requiring them to explain their answers and deepen their understanding.
- Good classroom organisation and effective planning result in all pupils receiving the level of support they need to be able to participate in lessons and maximise their learning. Teachers are skilled at assessing pupils' learning during a lesson and adjusting it according to how well pupils are doing. They also encourage pupils successfully to work together and share their learning.
- Pupils receive good written and oral feedback on their learning and staff expect pupils to correct any errors. Pupils do correct their work but the quality of their writing at this time does not reflect the good presentation seen in their books. Their handwriting is less clear and careless errors are evident in spelling, grammar and punctuation that are not evident in the rest of their writing.

- The careful and systematic teaching of phonics in early years and Key Stage 1 leads to good progress in reading in these two age groups. While reading continues to be taught well overall in Key Stage 2, staff do not always pay enough attention to developing pupils' comprehension skills. In guided reading sessions, for example, activities are not always directed at encouraging pupils to put new words into context, or using the text to read around the word to understand its meaning better.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils described the school as good and, when asked why, responded, 'we are about each other' and, 'there are a lot of very kind children here'.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school. They report that the school keeps them safe and has done so through all of the building work. While parents mostly agree, some voiced concerns over the present access to the school from the main road. The inspection team found that the school, in collaboration with the contractors, has successfully ensured pupils' safety at the times it is responsible for it.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using computers, tablets or mobile phones. Speakers brought into school and visits out of school serve as reminders to the pupils to be vigilant in these matters at all times.
- Specially trained staff help pupils who find learning difficult, for whatever reason. Timely contact with, and assistance from, a range of external agencies contribute to their work and to the pupils' good progress. Case studies demonstrate the school's determination to ensure that pupils are supported well so that they, too, can be successful.
- Pupils communicated very forcefully that bullying is rare but that, if it does occur and is reported, whatever form it might take, it is thoroughly and positively addressed. They very much appreciate the 'Time to Talk' box where they can post any concerns they might have. They are consistent in saying that these concerns are always picked up and addressed, and that any member of staff would help them with anything.
- Relationships are excellent throughout the school. Pupils are successfully encouraged to take on a range of responsibilities, for example, as school councillors, that further develop their personal skills and show them how they can contribute to wider society.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons and at other times of the day, pupils conduct themselves well. They are polite and respectful, engaging easily with other pupils and with adults. The school has a well-deserved reputation for being able to change the behaviour of pupils who find it difficult to behave well at all times.
- The school prepares pupils very well to be thoughtful, active citizens of the 21st century. Exciting, practical activities, such as using the Ancient Greek voting system, were seen to engage pupils fully in a topic that challenged them and allowed them to reflect on democracy. Pupils talk knowledgeably about British values, what they mean, and what it means to live in a free society.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic learners who want to do well. They take pride in their work and they mostly present it well. They do not always use their good writing skills when they make their corrections. Here, unlike in their normal classwork, handwriting is sometimes untidy and careless mistakes occur. For example, words spelt accurately in original work are sometimes spelt inaccurately when corrections are made.
- Pupils very much like the system that the school uses to encourage good behaviour. They are very proud of their 'Always' badges, which they earn for always behaving well. They understand the circumstances that might lead to their losing their badges, and are equally proud to earn them back.
- Pupils say that the system instils in them good levels of self-discipline and good ability to manage their own behaviour. For example, they reported that it is their own fault if they lose their badge; they made the wrong choice and would need to control themselves better. The skills they learn through all of this serve them well for later life.

- The school's approach to promoting good attendance is working well. There has been a marked improvement in pupils' attendance this year and it is now average. This is despite a small number of parents still not cooperating well enough with the school to ensure their children's regular attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and standards are rising throughout the school. In 2015, from a below-average start, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels of attainment in Year 6 was average. This means that pupils catch up and are made ready for their work in secondary school.
- Pupils learn well in all subjects because they understand how what they learn in one helps them in another. This is particularly the case in writing, which is given purpose by linking it to activities and topics in different subjects that fire their imagination, for example, as pupils in Year 3 learn about volcanoes, or pupils in Year 6 learn about explorers in the Arctic, and phenomena such as the aurora borealis.
- As they develop their mathematical skills, pupils learn the importance of mathematics in everyday life. They enjoy investigating different mathematical concepts and solving problems. Pupils in Year 6 used their increasingly sharp recall of multiplication facts to help them as, for example, they calculated area and volume. Pupils are also beginning to use their mathematical learning well in other subjects, for example as they interpret information they gather in their investigative work in science.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 demonstrate good phonics skills, which they use well to help them read new words across a range of books. While progress is good overall in reading in Years 3 to 6, there are gaps in pupils' comprehension skills.
- Discussions with pupils show that they like reading, that they read fluently and with expression, and know how to use dictionaries to find the meanings of new words. However, they struggle to use the text they are reading to put those words into context.
- Pupils are excited about the new library and about being able to take books home to read. Discussions with them reveal that, currently, they do not read widely enough for them to have a good understanding of different kinds of texts or authors, or of different authors' styles. Pupils do not always have the language to explain texts clearly and staff miss opportunities in guided reading sessions to explore texts in a way that would help pupils to do so.
- The most-able pupils also make good progress. Except in guided reading sessions, they almost always have the harder work to do that helps them to take their learning further, faster.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the same good progress as all other pupils. They benefit from well-targeted support programmes that are kept under constant review to ensure they remain suitably challenging at all times.
- The good progress that disadvantaged pupils make stems from the effective use of the pupil premium grant that enables the pupils to receive additional support and guidance to assist their learning. They sometimes make more progress than their peers so that they catch up with and sometimes overtake them. The gap between the attainment of these pupils and other pupils nationally narrowed last year.

Early years provision

is good

- Good leadership and management have ensured that Nursery and Reception children are cared for well and make good progress. When they start school, the proportion of children who have literacy and numeracy skills at the levels expected for their age is below that found nationally.
- Children behave well. They enjoy coming to school, feel safe and are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Staff are vigilant in relation to the children's health, safety and welfare. They are making increasingly good use of the new outdoor area to teach children how to take risks safely and sensibly as they use different sorts of equipment.
- Children enjoy reading. They quickly learn to link letters and sounds, and to read and enjoy books. Early writing skills are also developing well. Children learn to count, add and subtract, measure, and recognise simple shapes, although their mathematical skills are weaker than their literacy skills.

- Resources are carefully chosen and made easily accessible to the children. Children's progress is carefully assessed, tracked and recorded. High expectations are evident in the way assessment information is used to plan further learning, including for disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- There are many exciting activities planned, indoors and out, that continue to develop early reading and writing skills alongside other aspects of learning. However, adults do not always interact with the children well enough in those activities that are not fully adult-directed. Therefore, children are not always clear about what they are learning, and their ability to think for themselves and continue learning on their own is less developed than it might be.
- Parents can join their children each week to work with them and see how they learn and play. These good links help parents to support their children's learning more effectively.
- What children are learning now, and the good progress they are making, is setting them up well for their work in Year 1. This has not always been the case in the past, when learning was more limited due to disruptions in staffing.

School details

Unique reference number	106100
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10002199

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	392
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Gordon
Headteacher	Nicola Haddock
Telephone number	0161 430 2675
Website	www.ardenprimary.co.uk
Email address	admin@arden.stockport.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	November 2013

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils) is above average.
- Nursery children attend school part time and Reception children attend full time. Not all Nursery children transfer to the school's Reception classes.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 6.
- The school moved into a new building four weeks before the inspection. Building works are ongoing as the work is completed and the old building is demolished.
- There have been a number of staff changes since the previous inspection, including an expansion of the senior leadership team.
- Privately run before- and after-school clubs operate from the school's premises. They are inspected separately.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in parts of 28 lessons, five of which were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. They also analysed work in the books of pupils currently in the school, alongside analysing the school's most recent information about pupils' progress.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 1 and 2 and they sampled sessions where staff were teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make). They also heard some older pupils read and talked to them about their reading habits.
- Discussions were held with key leaders, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to gain their views of the school. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils both formally and informally, and took account of the 49 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire for pupils.
- A range of documents relating to school improvement were examined, along with policies and procedures relating to teaching, safeguarding pupils, and provision for disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs, and disadvantaged pupils.
- The views of the 47 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account. Inspectors also gained the views of a number of parents at first hand as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors spoke to staff and took account of the views of the 34 members of staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Doris Bell, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Howard	Ofsted Inspector
Saeeda Ishaq	Ofsted Inspector

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