

Carr Mill Primary School

Kentmere Avenue, St Helens, Merseyside WA11 7PQ

Inspection dates

8–9 March 2017

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	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher leads with passion and commitment. He is highly ambitious for the school and determined to provide the best education for all pupils who attend the school.
- The highly effective senior leadership team ensures that the school is a caring community where the needs of pupils are at the heart of everything the school does.
- The headteacher's determined pursuit of his clear long-term vision has resulted in pupils' outstanding personal development and behaviour. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary.
- The roles of some subject leaders such as history, geography and computing are not as well developed as those of English and mathematics.
- Governors are highly committed and fully involved in the life of the school. They do not always provide strong enough challenge to the leadership team. Their knowledge in relation to the performance of different groups of pupils is still developing. They do not ask enough searching questions of leaders.
- The school provides a stimulating and varied range of opportunities for pupils to extend their learning in music, sport and the creative arts.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work.
- Children get an exceptional start to their school career in Nursery and Reception classes. They make huge gains in their learning early on and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils make good progress overall. By the end of Year 6, more pupils than nationally reach the expected standards. More pupils reach the higher standards than nationally. However, they could do even better in key stage 1.
- Teaching across the school is good. At times, though, teaching does not provide sufficient challenge to some middle-ability and higher-ability pupils, or develop their skills well enough to tackle problem-solving tasks in mathematics.
- The most able pupils in key stage 1 are not provided with enough opportunities to excel. In 2016, in key stage 1, the proportion of pupils who reached the higher standard in mathematics, reading and writing was well below the national average.
- The teaching of early reading in nursery and reception is highly effective. The proportion of pupils that achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is above the national average.
- Pupils are safe and well cared for. Leaders make sure that there are highly effective safeguarding arrangements in place.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - making sure that all governors have a precise understanding of how pupils' performance compares with that of other pupils nationally at each key stage
 - ensuring that governors have better information about pupils' performance to help them provide higher levels of support and challenge to senior leaders
 - ensuring that governors fully understand the impact of additional funding on pupils' achievement
 - strengthening the role of subject leaders so that they can play a full part in helping senior leaders to secure outstanding teaching and outcomes across a wide range of subjects.
- Ensure that teaching in key stage 1 provides the opportunities for the most-able pupils to tackle work at greater depth so that they can progress to the highest levels in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is ambitious for the pupils in his care and has built a team that is committed to achieving the best for them.
- The headteacher, his deputy headteacher and his two assistant headteachers form a highly capable leadership team. They have high aspirations for all pupils. There is a strong sense of teamwork across the school with a clear focus on improvement. Consequently, standards in English and mathematics have improved in recent years. Leaders know the school's many strengths and are not complacent about what still needs further improving. As a result, the school continues to improve.
- Parents are highly positive about the school and the work leaders do to keep their children happy, safe and well cared for. In their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, parents praised the leaders and staff of the school for their open, welcoming and inclusive approach and were universally positive about the education the school provides. One parent commented, 'The school knows my child as a person.'
- The curriculum is well planned across the school. This includes careful planning for the mixed-age classes. The curriculum includes a wide range of enrichment activities which deepen pupils' understanding. The role of middle leaders, though, is not as well developed, for example, work in history and geography is not as strong as in other subjects. The work of middle leaders is not as rigorous and does not have the same impact as in other areas. Although they know their subjects well, they have not had the time to ensure that they are making a difference to pupils' learning in their areas of responsibility. This limits their effectiveness in improving teaching and pupils' outcomes in these areas
- The curriculum is enhanced through a range of visits to places around and beyond the school's local community. The school makes good use of visitors to introduce pupils to a wide range of different faiths and cultures. As such, children are tolerant and speak of other faiths and cultures with respect.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well and tackles discrimination of all kinds effectively. This ensures that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have useful opportunities to discuss their views. They understand the importance of tolerance and respect for those with characteristics that differ from their own. Leaders develop the spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences of all pupils well.
- Since the last inspection, school leaders have made improving attendance a priority. The overall attendance of pupils is better now, although a very few pupils are regularly absent due to serious medical issues. The systems used to promote good attendance have been improved. They include rewards for good attendance, regular reminders to parents about the importance of attendance and its effect on learning, as well as the use of warning notices for persistent poor attendance.
- The use of additional sports funding to enhance the school's promotion of health and physical education is very effective. Spending has contributed to specialist coaching, additional equipment and further professional development for all staff. As such,

children participate in a wide variety of sporting activities and have a good understanding of how to stay healthy.

- Careful consideration is given to ensure that the pupil premium funding is spent wisely to break down barriers to learning. Leaders have a clear rationale for the allocation of the funds. This is used to pay for a wide variety of support. This includes some highly capable teaching assistants who work inside the classroom and on some very focused catch-up programmes. Leaders identify barriers that may hinder learning and they help pupils to overcome these effectively. As a consequence of this disadvantaged children do at least as well as other children nationally by the end of key stage 2.
- Parents are universally positive about the school. One parent comment, typical of many was that 'The school is beyond supportive of me and my family.'
- The local authority is correct in its belief that school leaders are on top of any issues and are moving the school forward and therefore rightly provides only light-touch support for the school.
- Funding for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well used to ensure that they make good progress in their learning.

Governance of the school

- Governors are highly supportive of the school. They visit the school regularly and know the children, parents and staff well. They are very committed to the school and its future development. They are rightly proud of their school and of its achievements.
- Governors do not monitor the school with enough rigour. They do not ask enough incisive questions, in particular around the quality of teaching and the performance of different groups and key stages in school. As such they are not yet providing enough challenge to the school's senior leaders.
- Governors have a positive relationship with staff and parents. They are clear on the strengths of the school but are not as clear on how they might support leaders in moving the school forward. They have a good understanding of how additional funding is used but they are not as clear about how the use of this funding is having an impact on outcomes for pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The caring culture established among staff and pupils creates a climate where concerns are identified and reported. Staff know possible signs of abuse to look out for and use school systems for passing on concerns. Leaders act on information in a timely and effective way.
- Leaders have created a culture where safeguarding, safety and support for pupils' well-being are of the highest priority. They check that policies are kept up to date and that systems are fit for purpose. They check that staff are well trained and fully informed about the latest guidance for keeping pupils safe in areas such as child protection. Training, procedures and protocols are regularly reviewed.

- Important records are kept in an organised manner. All checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are carried out and recorded systematically.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teaching is particularly effective in upper key stage 2 and in the early years. This is because teachers have high expectations and provide pupils with precise, detailed guidance so that pupils know how to be successful.
- Across the school, well-defined learning routines underpin the productive and focused learning atmosphere. Teachers' expectations are generally high.
- Teachers know their pupils well. As a result they plan experiences for their pupils that match their abilities well on the whole.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. There is a consistent approach used across the school. This aspect of teaching has been developed well. Staff have a good level of confidence and skills. This has led to improved outcomes for pupils over the last three years.
- The expectations for behaviour are consistent and clear across different classrooms. Pupils try hard, even if they find something difficult, because they have a strong sense of pride in their work and a determination to succeed.
- Occasionally time is not used productively and pupils are not moved on to more-challenging tasks when they are ready. This slows pupils' progress and restricts them from achieving higher standards in key stage 1.
- The teaching of the most-able pupils, in particular in Years 5 and 6, is characterised by high levels of challenge across the curriculum. These pupils respond enthusiastically to this and make good progress. For example, during the inspection one group of the most-able pupils were working on what motivated Macbeth to kill his King. Their discussion and their work around this was of the highest quality.
- Teaching assistants and teachers work well together. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. They help children understand well how to improve their work and support children who find it difficult to work in a classroom setting. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively.
- Pupils are highly focused and enthused by their learning. Teaching makes effective use of systems and information technology to challenge and support learning in a range of lessons.
- Leaders have put in place clear expectations around reading and this is reaping rewards by the end of key stage 2. While phonics in key stage 1 is a strength, pupils in key stage 1 are not yet consistently reaching the very highest levels of reading. Inspectors listened to pupils from Year 2, Year 4 and Year 6 read with enthusiasm and expression. They spoke positively about how school supports them with their reading and they showed a good understanding of different types of books and authors.
- Teachers are reflective and seek different ways to challenge the most able pupils to ensure that they reach their full potential. These children are increasingly stretched as they move through key stage 2. Leaders and teachers have correctly identified that

there is more work to do to ensure that pupils in key stage 1 also work more consistently and at the greater depth of which they are capable.

- Pupils' handwriting and presentation, at times, does not reflect the good quality of the content of their writing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The atmosphere throughout the school is calm, friendly and engaging. Pupils are proud of their school, they care for each other and are courteous, polite, confident and welcoming. This is evident from the moment you walk into school.
- Securing the best possible personal development, attitudes and behaviour has been central to the headteacher's ambitious vision for pupils at Carr Mill.
- Leaders and staff encourage pupils to be independent and take on responsibilities. This contributes well to their strongly developing social skills and resilience.
- Lunchtime and breaktimes are very positive and well supervised. Pupils mix and play extremely well together. There is a strong sense of trust between pupils and staff.
- Pupils of all ages are keen participants in many creative, artistic and sporting activities across the school. Children working in the woodland area of school showed support and advanced social skills as they worked together to explore and play.
- Pupils are well prepared for life at secondary school. This means that pupils take an optimistic and positive view about secondary school.
- School is a safe environment where all pupils are known and respected. Staff provide strong levels of support to the pupils. Pupils feel free to talk to any member of staff.
- Pupils have a strong understanding of e-safety. They learn how to stay safe online when using computers or mobile phones and social media.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well cared for and given every opportunity to participate in lessons. The inclusive nature of the school is a strength.
- Leaders and staff are successful in teaching pupils about discrimination and extremism in an age-appropriate way. Pupils can describe opportunities they have had to debate issues and show how important it is to listen to and respect the views of others.
- Pupils understand that bullying can take many forms. They are confident that school would deal with any incidents of bullying and that adults in school would help deal with any issues or worries that they have.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The pupils' enthusiasm for learning, together with their positive relationships with each

other, ensures that lessons proceed without interruption or distraction. Additional adults support pupils who require extra support for their behaviour very well. This results in a calm environment in which pupils can learn.

- Pupils behave consistently well in lessons and are highly attentive. It is extremely rare to see pupils disrupting lessons or interrupting the work of other pupils. Pupils are keen to answer questions, share ideas and contribute effectively to discussions.
- During lessons, pupils try hard and maintain their concentration well, even when they find something hard to understand. In some lessons, where they spend a long time on something, they keep their focus and attention going and participate in activities well.
- Attendance has been around or below the national average for the previous three years. Persistent absence was around the national average for the previous two years.
- Attendance in 2016 was below the national average and persistent absence was relatively high. This was due to very particular circumstances and the school has done well to manage and support pupils with significant needs effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress during their time at Carr Mill. Children get off to a strong start in the Nursery. Pupils' progress accelerates through key stage 2 so that it is significantly above that of other pupils nationally by the time they leave at the end of Year 6.
- Attainment and progress at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently above the national average. Good teaching enables the children who leave to achieve at least as well as other children nationally and be well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Disadvantaged pupils make at least the same progress as their peers over their time in school and reach at least the expected standard by the end of Year 6.
- Good-quality phonics teaching has ensured that an above-average proportion of Year 1 pupils meet the required standard in the phonics screening check. This has been the case for the last three years.
- The most-able pupils achieve well overall. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, the proportion reaching the higher standards is above the national figure. The development of highly positive learning behaviours and their accelerating progress across key stage 2 underpin this success. Outcomes for key stage 1 are more variable, with the most-able pupils not consistently achieving the highest standards of which they are capable.
- In 2016 the proportion of pupils who reached the higher standards in mathematics, reading and writing by the end of key stage 1 was well below that found nationally. Under the previous accountability measure, the achievement of all pupils, including the most able, had been at least in line with national expectations. Evidence seen in pupils' books and in lessons demonstrates that the most-able pupils in key stage 1 are not always provided with sufficient opportunity to use and apply their skills so that they can excel from an early age.
- Achievement across curriculum subjects, such as history and geography, is not as

strong as in English and mathematics. Learning across these subjects is not developed quickly enough. Teachers do not provide enough thought-provoking questions and demanding activities to deepen their understanding and skills in these subjects.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Outstanding leadership and management have secured outstanding progress for the vast majority of children in the early years. The early years leader is passionate and relentless about every child achieving their very best and is highly effective in her work.
- Leaders have identified the barriers to learning many children face on entry to Carr Mill. Clear expectations, a relentless drive to ensure the best for all the children and a highly focused and effective team ensure that children thrive in the early years.
- Staff know the children exceptionally well. The teaching and the support children receive is highly responsive to need and as a result the children thrive.
- The early years team work closely with parents and other providers to ensure that all children have the best start they can at Carr Mill.
- The majority of children enter early years with levels of development that are below those typical of children of this age. For some children, speech and language skills are poor. All groups of pupils, including the most able, are making exceptional progress. As a result, children are well prepared for Year 1. However, this progress is not always built on effectively in key stage 1.
- Children settle quickly and play well together and independently. Learning is planned to incorporate children's interests and builds very effectively on what children know.
- Children are able to write independently and their progress in writing skills is clear from their books and assessment. Daily writing and reading develops children's literacy skills very effectively while working with numbers fosters their reasoning skills.
- Adults use every opportunity to check on learning and record meticulously progress and any gaps that are emerging. Learning journals accurately reflect individuals' achievement and demonstrate the range of experience that children are offered.
- The links with parents are especially effective and positive. This helps children to settle quickly. Parents who spoke to inspectors said they feel confident about the provision made for their children. They speak about the warm, welcoming and inclusive environment and of highly positive relationships between school, parents and children.
- Children are well behaved and confident. They listen to instructions and follow them carefully. They persevere with activities and get along very well with each other.
- The outdoor area is well equipped and includes all areas for learning well. It provides opportunities for children to develop their sensory, construction, physical and communication skills well. The well-designed provision and the highly effective support from all adults ensure that children progress well.
- Children's behaviour and attitudes are especially positive. They are highly motivated by their teachers and support staff, who work effectively as a team to ensure that everyone is included and makes progress with their learning. Pupils who have a special educational need and/or disability are well integrated across the early years.

School details

Unique reference number	134661
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10003090

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	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Ferry
Headteacher	Andrew Maley
Telephone number	01744 678223
Website	www.carmillprimary.co.uk
Email address	carmill@sthelens.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 February 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- Around 97% of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well below national percentages.
- Around half of the pupils in school are eligible for the pupil premium.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school is in an area of high social deprivation.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons or parts of lessons. Some observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. They looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and talked with pupils about their lessons and their school life.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, representatives of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documentation relating to pupils' progress and the school management, including arrangements to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and staff and took account of the 35 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors took account of the 154 responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mike Tonge, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Curtis	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Dimeck	Ofsted Inspector
Tina Cleugh	Ofsted Inspector

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