

Inspection of Halsnead Primary School

Pennywood Drive, Whiston, Prescot, Merseyside L35 3TX

Inspection dates: 15–16 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

Halsnead is a friendly school where pupils feel safe and cared for. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as shown by their good attendance. They try their best to be the independent, cooperative and confident learners that teachers want them to be.

Pupils enjoy talking about their learning. They talked enthusiastically to us throughout the inspection and told us that they like science, mathematics and physical education (PE). However, they do not make the strong progress of which they are capable in many subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils told us that there have been many changes recently, all of which have made the school a better place. They said that behaviour is good because everybody follows the new 'behaviour rules'. Pupils said that bullying is rare and that when it happens, it is always dealt with quickly by staff.

Pupils enjoy the increasing range of sports and extra-curricular activities available to them. They like to dance and play football and dodgeball. Pupils enjoy playing various percussion instruments, including drums and steel pans.

Pupils like to have their voices heard. They vote for junior leadership team members and class ambassadors and regularly do good deeds. These include raising money for the local hospice and for cancer charities. Pupils have visited various places of worship and learn about different religions.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils do not learn as well as they should. In recent years, pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics have been poor. Since the headteacher's arrival in September 2018, expectations across the school have increased. Staff and pupils are eager to meet the headteacher's expectations. Over time, pupils' behaviour has improved. Pupils are eager to learn and are developing the skills they need to be successful learners.

Until recently, teachers have not been clear about what pupils need to know and understand as they move through the school from early years to Year 6. At present, there is too much variability in how well subjects are planned and taught. For example, the teaching of history does not help pupils to remember important facts. During a discussion about science, some of the pupils we met in Years 5 and 6 could not remember the characteristics of different types of animals, including mammals, and were unsure how plants convert sunlight into energy. These weaknesses exist in some subjects because leaders have only recently begun to consider what pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn it. Leaders recognise that teachers need to take part in training that develops their ability to plan and teach all subjects well.

Leaders put a high priority on teaching pupils to read. Pupils start Year 1 with strong phonics skills, but few become fluent readers in key stages 1 and 2. Current teaching is helping to develop pupils' appreciation of the written word. However, few pupils have a love of books because they find reading difficult. In particular, they lack the comprehension skills needed to fully enjoy stories and poetry. A few older pupils are avid readers and are familiar with the work of a range of writers. These include JK Rowling, Roald Dahl, David Walliams and William Shakespeare.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not make the progress that they should in all subjects. Some teachers and teaching assistants do not have the skills to support the learning of pupils with SEND effectively. Leaders are beginning to address these shortfalls by providing relevant training for staff, enlisting specialist support and improving the curriculum.

At the end of Reception Year, too few children are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful learners in Year 1. This is because the early years curriculum lacks ambition and does not provide children with the opportunity to learn well in different areas. As a result, too few children reach a good level of development by the end of Reception.

Children enjoy visiting the school allotment, where they search for different shapes and develop their appreciation of the natural world. They are well looked after and behave well. Nursery children love storytime. An inspector saw them listening attentively to 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears', predicting the story line and counting bowls, chairs and beds.

The school's work to promote pupils' personal and social development is improving. Members of the junior leadership team are proud to demonstrate that they are responsible citizens. All pupils take part in physical activities with enthusiasm. They enjoy running or walking the 'daily mile'. However, activities to broaden pupils' horizons, such as visits to museums, are rare. In addition, few opportunities are available for pupils to take part in competitive sports. Not enough opportunities are provided to develop pupils' understanding of cultural diversity.

In her first year, the headteacher has made many positive changes. For example, she has tackled poor behaviour. In addition, with the support of the trust and governors, the headteacher is strengthening the senior leadership team and has enlisted the support of specialists to help to improve standards in early years and for pupils with SEND. These changes have been made while considering the well-being of staff and maintaining high staff morale.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's safeguarding leaders are trained to a high standard. Leaders work closely with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that pupils at risk of harm are promptly given the support that they need.

All staff are trained to spot the signs of neglect and/or abuse. They know exactly what to do if they are concerned about the welfare of a pupil. Pupils say that they always feel safe in school. They understand how to stay safe when online and know about the dangers of child exploitation.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders recognise that the curriculum has not been well planned in the past and that it has not furnished pupils with strong reading, writing and mathematical skills. The curriculum and teaching in these subjects are improving, as is pupils' achievement. However, the knowledge, understanding and skills of a significant proportion of pupils in key stages 1 and 2 remain weak. Therefore, leaders need to hasten work already started to improve teachers' and teaching assistants' skills so they can effectively support pupils to catch up with their peers in other schools.
- Staff do not have good subject knowledge of some of the subjects that they teach. This is typically the case in subjects such as history, PE, geography and computing. In these subjects, teachers are unable to plan and teach in a way that builds pupils' learning effectively over time. To address these weaknesses, subject leaders need to develop their own subject knowledge so that they can oversee the introduction of appropriate curriculum plans for their subjects. Once this has happened, they need to make sure that teachers are delivering the curriculum in their subject well.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. However, once pupils have learned to read, the reading curriculum does not build on this strong start. Leaders have recently introduced strategies to develop the teaching of reading and increase pupils' love of the written word. However, it is too early to assess the impact of this work. A coordinated approach to teaching reading needs to be developed and embedded. Any gaps in the knowledge and understanding of staff should be addressed so that all staff have the necessary skills to teach reading well. In addition, leaders need to ensure that high-quality support is available for pupils in key stages 1 and 2 who are not fluent readers.
- Children's understanding of phonics is developed well throughout early years. However, too few children reach a good level of development because the early years curriculum lacks breadth and ambition. Leaders should therefore develop the early years curriculum to make sure that it provides children with opportunities to make good progress in the different areas of learning. Leaders should also improve the procedures for assessing how well children are learning. This will enable them to make sure that children needing additional support are identified quickly and provided with appropriate support.
- The wider curriculum does not provide pupils with a broad range of experiences. Pupils, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, take part in different extra-curricular activities. However, activities are limited and mostly confined to football, dodgeball and dance. In addition, few opportunities are

available for pupils to go on school trips. Pupils have a limited knowledge of the cultural diversity that exists beyond their immediate community. Leaders should therefore provide more opportunities for pupils to take part in a wider range of sports and physical activities and provide pupils with more opportunities to learn about different cultures.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	144105
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10124033
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	300
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Anita Lawson
Headteacher	Helen Taylor
Website	www.halsnead.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Halsnead School converted to an academy in September 2017. It is part of the Heath Family (North West) multi-academy trust, which consists of four high schools and five primary schools.
- Since September 2018, there have been several staffing changes. A new headteacher has been appointed and the senior leadership team has been reorganised to include a new assistant headteacher. A new deputy headteacher is due to take up post.
- Senior leaders and governors work closely with external partners to improve the quality of the early years provision and support for pupils with SEND. The chief executive officer of Warrington Primary Academy Trust is supporting the head and delivering training to improve the quality of the curriculum.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. A meeting was also held with the trust’s chief executive officer. A telephone discussion was held with the school’s improvement partner.
- We met with the headteacher, as well as the teachers who lead reading, writing, mathematics, science, history and computing. In addition, we held meetings with the teachers who oversee provision in early years and that for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- We took account of 14 text messages submitted by parents during the inspection. We considered 15 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey, the school’s own surveys of parents’ views, and responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by 15 members of staff. We also took account of the views of 42 pupils who completed the inspection questionnaire.
- We focused deeply on reading, mathematics, history, computing and science. In each subject, we met with the subject leader and teachers. We visited lessons, looked at pupils’ work and talked with pupils about their learning.
- We met with pupils, teachers and other staff. We talked about safety, personal development and behaviour. We checked the school’s records of the suitability of staff to work with children. We also talked with parents about matters relating to safety. We scrutinised the school’s safeguarding policy and related documentation, including records relating to staff and governors’ training.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Timothy Gartside	Ofsted Inspector
Barbara Dutton	Ofsted Inspector

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