

Eccleston Mere Primary School

Saleswood Avenue, Eccleston, St Helens, Merseyside WA10 5NX

Inspection dates

28–29 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- For too long, leaders and governors have failed to take the urgent and effective action required to reverse the decline in standards in key stages 1 and 2.
- Leaders and governors have an over-optimistic view of the school's effectiveness. There is a lack of understanding of the issues facing the school.
- Governors have not ensured that they have the relevant skills and knowledge to hold leaders to account for pupils' performance.
- Leaders and governors have been too slow in responding to the introduction of a new national curriculum, removal of national curriculum levels and changes to assessment levels.
- Middle leaders have not had sufficient opportunity and training to monitor their subjects effectively.
- Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough, particularly for the most able.
- Pupils do not make the progress they are capable of, in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stages 1 and 2.
- Lack of training and support has led to variability in the quality of teaching between cohorts, classes and subjects.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is not used effectively.

The school has the following strengths

- Although it is too early to evaluate impact, the interim headteacher has begun to make improvements across the school.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start. Children settle well and make good progress because teaching is effective.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are pleasant, polite and respectful.
- Pupils are well cared for and safe. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, children looked after and other vulnerable pupils, are well supported.
- Pupils benefit from opportunities to practise their writing and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that it enables pupils to make consistently strong progress across all year groups, by ensuring that teachers:
 - have the highest expectations of what all pupils, including the most able, can achieve from their different starting points
 - improve the accuracy of their assessment of pupils' work and use this knowledge to accelerate progress
 - receive high-quality training and support which helps them do their jobs well.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership, and so raise standards, by:
 - ensuring that governors have necessary training and support so they understand and carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively
 - rigorously and accurately evaluating all aspects of the school's performance, so that leaders and governors have a deep understanding of strengths and areas for improvement
 - sharpening school improvement planning so that it is more effective in driving improvement
 - ensuring that leaders and governors have up-to-date, reliable information about key aspects of the school's performance, including pupils' academic achievement, behaviour and attendance
 - making effective use of performance management to improve the quality of teaching across the school
 - developing the skills, knowledge and roles of middle leaders to enable them to have a greater impact on school improvement
 - ensuring that the teachers responsible for SEN and/or disabilities have relevant training and support to carry out their duties
 - making sure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is making a positive difference to outcomes for eligible pupils
 - making sure that the school's website meets statutory requirements and provides parents with timely and useful information about the school and what their children are doing.

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 pupil premium funding 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

- For too long, leaders and governors have rested on their laurels. They have failed to take effective action to address the weaknesses in the school's performance. Consequently, a legacy of underperformance is holding back progress across the school.
- Leaders and governors have an overly rosy view of the school's effectiveness. They have not identified the reasons for the patterns and trends in pupils' attainment and progress. As a consequence, leaders do not have a credible improvement plan which sets out the most pressing issues, the actions to address them, key milestones and the expected impact on current pupils' performance.
- Over time, the school has become increasingly isolated. Leaders and governors have failed to keep pace with the rapidly changing educational landscape. They have not made sure that leaders, governors and staff have accessed the training and support needed to ensure that they and their pupils continue to excel. Consequently, standards and progress have declined.
- The school has been late in implementing the changes required by the introduction of the national curriculum in 2014, the removal of the national curriculum levels and the changes to assessment arrangements. The interim headteacher has reached out to the local authority, as well as colleagues in local schools, for advice and guidance. With this support, leaders are starting to put in place the changes required. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of these actions.
- The interim headteacher recognises that the school cannot afford to stand still while governors seek to appoint a substantive headteacher. She has rolled her sleeves up and is starting to address some of the issues facing the school. She has secured the support of staff to help her put in place the planned changes during this transition period. Staff applaud the interim headteacher's willingness to listen to and act on their ideas as well as consult them about any proposed changes.
- The interim headteacher has wasted no time in seeking help for the school. The interim headteacher is making good use of the support provided by the local authority as well as local schools to help her make the necessary changes. For example, the introduction of a new mathematics scheme of work and assessment tool is paying dividends. Within a few weeks, the scheme has helped improve the quality of mathematics teaching and started to eliminate the legacy of underperformance as pupils' progress accelerates.
- The interim headteacher has taken urgent action in response to the weaknesses found in the school's moderation processes in the summer term. Staff have attended training to help them understand the requirements so that they are well prepared for the end-of-key-stage assessments this academic year.
- Most subject leaders have not had the training, support or resources to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. This lack of shared leadership is hampering the pace of school improvement. There is no robust and reliable evidence about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum. Despite this, teachers

have made sure that pupils benefit from a suitably broad and balanced curriculum to develop their skills and knowledge.

- Subject leaders are eager to step up to the mark. The science lead made the most of opportunities afforded through the school's application for the Primary Science Quality Mark. She has evaluated, improved and raised the profile of science provision across the school. Equally, the physical education (PE) and sports lead shared the skills and knowledge she acquired on external courses with her colleagues. Other leads have used online communication as well as personal contacts to source professional support.
- Pupils also benefit from the different opportunities offered to enrich the curriculum. The oldest pupils look forward to their summer residential trip. Younger pupils enjoyed their trips to the zoo and country park. Pupils enjoy the range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, such as judo and drama. A number of pupils have instrumental lessons, including piano and guitar, which complement the class music lessons.
- Although leaders have identified some pupils who are gifted and talented, there are no planned opportunities for these pupils to develop their abilities further. Moreover, leaders have not considered how additional funding could be used for gifted and talented disadvantaged pupils.
- The school's approach to identifying and responding to SEN and/or disabilities is not in line with current statutory guidance. A proportion of pupils on the school's register have needs which do not require different or additional provision and so are incorrectly identified. This is creating an unnecessary additional workload and renders any information about this group unreliable. However, those pupils who require provision different from or additional to that normally available are well supported.
- Leaders do not carry out routine checks, including visits to classrooms and talking to pupils, so that they have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Consequently, leaders do not have the information they need to help teachers and support staff improve.
- Performance management arrangements are weak. This process does not support teachers to improve their professional practice.

Governance of the school

- By their own admission, governors have relied too heavily on individual members to analyse and evaluate the school's performance. Governors have not reassured themselves that they have an accurate view of how well pupils are getting on. Consequently, governors have failed to recognise the issues facing the school around pupils' performance.
- Governors agree that they lack the experience and expertise to provide effective challenge and support to school leaders. They have not sought out training and support so that they can carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively.
- Governors have not fulfilled their statutory duties in regard to the publication of information on the school's website. The school's website does not provide parents or prospective parents with useful, up-to-date information about the school.

- Governors have not carried out the necessary checks to make sure that the school is using additional funding well for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and for disadvantaged pupils, nor for PE and sports.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders make sure that all staff are suitable to work with children. They make sure that all staff are up to date with their training so that staff understand their roles and responsibilities. They ensure that any concerns are reported and recorded appropriately and followed up assiduously. The school works well with other professionals to help children and their families access the help and support they need. The pastoral manager has well-developed systems which are used routinely by pupils to share any worries or concerns. Pupils and parents agree that pupils are well cared for and safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The teaching that pupils experience each day is uneven across classes, year groups and subjects. In some classrooms and subjects, pupils are flourishing, but in others they make slower progress.
- The school was 'floored' by the changes in assessment introduced in 2014. Teachers have not been clear about what pupils are expected to know, understand and do by the end of each academic year. Consequently, teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve have been too low. In writing and most recently in mathematics, clearer guidance for teachers has helped them to plan work which meets the demands of the national curriculum better.
- The lack of a systematic approach to the teaching of reading is hampering pupils' progress. Lack of guidance means that teachers focus on developing pupils' competence in word reading at the expense of comprehension. Teachers do not plan enough well-considered lessons to develop pupils' comprehension skills. There are limited opportunities for pupils to experience high-quality discussion or to read and discuss a range of increasingly complex writing.
- The quality of phonics teaching is variable. Not all teachers follow the school's agreed approach to the teaching of phonics systematically. This is leading to inconsistencies in how well phonics is taught, which is hindering some pupils' progress. In some classes, there are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to practise the skills they acquire in lessons across the curriculum. Consequently, pupils do not embed their phonic knowledge quickly enough.
- The quality of teaching is improving in mathematics. The school's new approach to teaching mathematics has a greater focus on solving problems, thinking about mathematical concepts and making links between them. Pupils benefit from opportunities to further develop and use their mathematical knowledge across the curriculum, for example in design technology and geography. However, teachers are setting work which is too easy for the most able pupils. Moreover, teachers have not

ensured that lower-attaining pupils have the mathematical knowledge to tackle the greater demands of the new mathematics programme.

- The quality of teaching is improving in writing. Most teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and this is ensuring that more pupils are working at age-related expectations in writing. Teachers make sure pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work. In addition, pupils have a wealth of opportunities and understand the need to maintain the quality of their work when writing across a range of subjects.
- Across the curriculum, teachers are planning work which helps pupils acquire a broad range of skills and knowledge so that they have a good understanding of the world around them. Pupils enjoy carrying out science experiments and finding out about life in the past.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Older pupils take their responsibilities seriously. They take good care of younger pupils through their different roles and responsibilities, such as junior road safety officers. The school council makes sure that any pupils who would like to join have the skills and attributes essential to the role.
- The school takes very good care of those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, as well as those with medical needs. There are a range of strategies to help these pupils cope better in school, such as 'calm couches', the sensory room and social skills programmes. Leaders make sure that staff have the knowledge and skills to meet these pupils' different needs.
- Pupils are taught well how to stay safe. The pastoral manager 'keeps her ear to the ground'. She liaises well with other professionals so that she can alert her colleagues to any emerging local issues, such as sexting. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online as part of the computing curriculum. The school takes part in anti-bullying weeks as well as working with charities to teach pupils how to speak out and stay safe from abuse. Pupils agree that issues such as name-calling and bullying are extremely rare. Pupils are confident that if there were any issues, staff would resolve them.
- New pupils are made to feel welcome, at whatever point they join the school. Recent arrivals talked about how friendly and helpful their classmates were. A comprehensive transition programme ensures that the oldest pupils are well prepared for their move to high school.
- Pupils are encouraged to make healthy choices. Middle leaders responsible for PE and sports have introduced a wealth of different sports across the curriculum as well as after-school clubs, including judo and badminton. The school has been awarded the School Games Mark recently. In personal, social and health education, pupils learn about healthy eating and how to look after their emotional health and well-being.
- Pupils and their families rate the support of the pastoral manager and headteacher very highly. They go the extra mile to make sure that children and their families

receive the help and support they need. Following a tragic event last year, parents agree the support offered by the school to those affected was 'second to none'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils look smart in their uniforms. They take good care of their school, classroom resources and their books. They are pleasant and polite to staff, visitors and each other.
- Any rare behaviour incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. The pastoral manager works with pupils to resolve any 'fallings out' amicably, helping pupils to appreciate each other's point of view.
- The school is calm and orderly. Pupils work and play well together. Pupils agree that everyone, regardless of disability, ethnicity or faith is treated with equal respect.
- The vast majority of pupils attend school on time every day. The school has taken effective action to improve the attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities as well as disadvantaged pupils. The joint working between the pastoral manager, attendance administrator and local authority attendance officer is paying dividends. Together, they provide effective support to those families who struggle to get their children to school on time every day. As a result of their systematic approach to following up on any absence, the number of pupils persistently absent has reduced.
- Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and are quick to settle to task. However, sometimes when work is too easy or the pace of learning slows, pupils' attention wanders and they become distracted.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Achievement varies between cohorts, classes, groups and subjects. This mirrors the variability in the quality of teaching. There has been a decline in outcomes at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. Too few pupils are reaching the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- In Year 1, teachers do not capitalise on the good start pupils have made in phonics in early years. Since 2015, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard has declined and is now below the national average. The school's information suggests this is unlikely to improve for the current cohort. The limited opportunities for pupils to develop their comprehension skills and knowledge are hampering reading progress across the school. Consequently, pupils are performing well below their peers nationally with similar starting points in reading.
- Despite pupils getting off to a good start in mathematics in early years, progress is too slow across key stage 1. Too many pupils are not meeting the expected standard at the end of Year 2. Pupils in lower key stage 2 are working below age-related expectations as teachers work to eliminate the legacy of underperformance. Recent

improvements to the teaching of mathematics are helping pupils catch up with those nationally with similar starting points. However, there is still a long way to go.

- The improvements in teaching of writing across most of the school have helped to stabilise progress. However, progress is not yet rapid enough, so that pupils continue to lag behind their peers nationally.
- In 2017, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 improved considerably. On the other hand, at key stage 1 disadvantaged pupils have mirrored the decline of their classmates, although they lag much further behind pupils nationally. Leaders are unsure of the reasons why key stage 2 disadvantaged pupils bucked the trend, which makes it difficult to build on this success.
- Inaccuracies in the identification of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities makes it difficult to evaluate the group's performance over time. Evidence gathered during inspection suggests that those pupils who are appropriately identified receive well-targeted support. This helps these pupils to make at least expected progress from their different starting points.
- Low expectations and work that is too easy mean that too few of the most able pupils achieve the higher standards and greater depths of which they are capable.
- In other subjects, such as history, geography, computing and science, work in pupils' books and individual pupil data show pupils working at age-related expectations. In these subjects, pupils are acquiring essential knowledge, skills and understanding.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years leader has a well-informed, accurate view of strengths and weaknesses. She picks up on any emerging patterns and trends quickly, putting in place effective actions to improve provision. Consequently, children in early years make good progress from their different starting points.
- The knowledgeable and skilled early years team make good use of the wealth of information they collect about children's learning. There are plenty of opportunities for children to develop early reading, writing and number skills so that they are well prepared for Year 1.
- Children settle quickly into school life. Staff make good use of visits to children's families and previous providers to find out about children. Staff develop strong relationships with parents, who are valued partners in their children's education. Staff make sure that parents receive regular updates about their children's progress. Parents are delighted with the good start their children have made to their school life.
- Children are well cared for and safe. Staff are up to date with training so that they understand their roles and responsibilities. Leaders make sure that statutory welfare requirements are met.
- Staff make good use of the outdoor area. During the inspection, one child was fascinated by what he could see in the woodland area through binoculars. Staff are adept at observing children carefully so that they can step in at suitable moments to move children's learning on.

- Staff closely monitor children’s progress. They are quick to pick up on any barriers to children’s learning. Consequently, timely and effective support is given to those children who need additional help to catch up.
- The early years is a ‘hive of activity’. Staff make sure that there are a range of independent and adult-led activities available linked to children’s interests and enthusiasms. For example, during the inspection children were engrossed in counting the pairs of underpants in the orangutan’s suitcase as part of their number work.
- The early years leader has rightly identified that there is room for further improvement. She is starting to use language and number more richly throughout the learning environment, so that more children reach the high standards of which they are capable.

School details

Unique reference number	104783
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10032802

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	429
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew McLoughlin
Interim Headteacher	Susan Hesketh
Telephone number	01744 678 280
Website	www.ecclestonmere.st-helens.sch.uk
Email address	ecclestonmere@sthelens.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 March 2009

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website about admissions, performance data, curriculum, pupil premium funding, physical education and sports funding, SEN and/or disabilities, governance and equalities.
- The deputy headteacher was appointed interim headteacher in April 2017. A new chair of governors was elected in September 2017.
- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, who are supported by the pupil premium, is below the national average.

- In 2016, the school met the government's current 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 teaching and learning across the school, including joint observation and a 'learning walk' with the interim headteacher and interim deputy headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, other members of staff, the chair, vice chair and members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, the school's self-evaluation, improvement planning, assessment information and checks on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils informally during the school day and observed them during playtime and lunch. They also met formally with two groups of pupils.
- Inspectors heard a number of pupils read.
- Inspectors took note of displays around the school.
- Inspectors checked a range of pupils' books.
- Inspectors spoke with a number of parents during the inspection and considered the 167 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke formally with a group of staff as well as informally to individual staff throughout the school day.

Inspection team

Pippa Jackson-Maitland, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sheila O'Keeffe	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Gill	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Shackleton	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017