

Childer Thornton Primary School

New School Lane, Childer Thornton, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH66 1QY

Inspection dates

7–8 March 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher and governors have created a culture where only the best will do. Their vision and determination have been key to improving the school since the last inspection.
- Senior and middle leaders have excellent knowledge of national curriculum subjects. They robustly monitor teaching and pupils' progress and attainment. They are instrumental in driving up standards.
- Governors are very knowledgeable about the school and hold leaders to account rigorously for the quality of education they provide. They check closely teaching and pupils' achievement. Governors make strategic decisions based on first-hand knowledge of the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning is exceptionally strong throughout the school. As a result, pupils' very high achievement has been sustained over a number of years.
- Staff benefit from excellent professional development, especially in English and mathematics. This ensures that their knowledge is constantly improved.
- Inspirational leadership, combined with highly effective teaching in the early years, ensures that children make outstanding progress in a nurturing and stimulating environment.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make very strong progress because of highly focused teaching by a specialist teacher and skilled teaching assistants.
- Outcomes for pupils in all key stages are outstanding. Pupils are articulate, love reading and talking about books, and enjoy the challenges posed by mathematics. They choose words creatively when writing. However, their presentation is not consistently neat.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They behave exceptionally well in lessons and at playtimes. They relish learning, engage fully in lessons and are keen to do well.
- Pupils feel very safe and cared for in school. Leaders' knowledge of all pupils and effective partnerships with other agencies contribute to effective safeguarding.
- The use of specialist teachers and coaches for Spanish, art, music and physical education (PE) provides high-quality teaching and a broad curriculum, allowing pupils to make substantial progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have enriched this provision with a vast range of extra-curricular activities which pupils and parents value. As one parent said, 'This allows all pupils to excel in something.'

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the presentation of pupils' work by:
 - building on the handwriting in the early years, so that all pupils develop a neat, joined style of handwriting
 - ensuring that pupils' reasoning and calculations in mathematics are neater, less cluttered and easier to follow.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher is unwavering in her determination for all pupils to succeed at Childer Thornton. Her drive, and that of her senior leadership team, has created a culture where only the very best education will do. Leaders are excellent role models, with very high expectations. They ensure that all pupils receive high-quality learning within a caring, supportive and nurturing environment.
- Leaders are alert to any shortcomings and take quick and effective action to bring about positive change. No time has been wasted in tackling the dip in key stage 2 outcomes in 2016. Concerted action has ensured that current pupils in the school are making exceptional progress across a wide range of subjects.
- Middle leaders have an excellent knowledge of the quality of teaching in their subjects, and of the skills that pupils develop in each year group. They use the information gained from very effective monitoring of teaching and learning, along with analysis of pupils' progress and attainment to drive up standards. They have excellent links with external advisers and training companies, and use these links well to ensure that staff's expertise is well matched to the requirements of the national curriculum for the classes they teach.
- Senior leaders' and governors' insightful self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate. It is based on detailed analysis of data, work in pupils' books, extra information from subject leaders, and discussions with pupils and parents. Consequently, leaders know what the school does well and what it needs to do to maintain excellence. Their actions have resulted in outstanding provision for all pupils, including those eligible for pupil premium funding and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The very broad and balanced curriculum is well planned and delivered. Leaders work with an external adviser to ensure that the national curriculum requirements are covered systematically. They ensure that first-hand experiences inspire pupils' learning, including visits to Chester Cathedral and the Grosvenor Museum. Pupils benefit from excellent teaching from specialist teachers of art, PE, music and Spanish. The range of subjects and the exciting programme of extra-curricular activities and residential visits enable pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. Pupils are prepared exceedingly well for the next stage of their education.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively. Disadvantaged pupils make excellent progress from their starting points in almost all subjects and year groups. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also make excellent progress. Provision for these pupils is clearly identified and tailored to individual needs, based on staff's very good knowledge of individual pupils.

- The sport premium funding is used very effectively and has been supplemented by the governors to provide an even wider range of sports and activities. Sports coaches provide a diverse and enticing range of after-school activities that is greatly valued by pupils and their parents. Coaches also support provision at lunchtime and break by supervising football matches. Pupils say that this has helped reduce minor conflicts on the football pitch. The funding has also enabled staff to develop their skills through effective training.
- Staff are passionate about the school and are fully committed to leaders' aims and vision. Their morale is high. Staff value the opportunities to further develop their teaching skills through the excellent training opportunities they receive. The skills and expertise of English and mathematics leaders are used very effectively to support the development of other staff. Governors and leaders ensure that staff's future career aspirations are included in performance management discussions.
- Leaders ensure that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is given high priority through the curriculum. Pupils are taught to be tolerant, respectful young citizens who understand different religions and show respect towards other people.
- British values are taught across the school and celebrated through dynamic displays. Pupils understand the concept of democracy, and value being involved in decisions made by the school. Leaders recognise the importance of giving pupils experiences of varied cultures and visiting different places of worship. Pupils talked enthusiastically about visits to a mosque and a synagogue. Parents spoke about their children's enjoyment of a visit by a Muslim dance group and the celebration of a variety of 'new years'.

Governance

- The school benefits from highly effective governance.
- Governors know the strengths of the school and have accurately identified the areas for further improvement. They visit the school regularly and use their first-hand knowledge when considering proposed improvements. Their decision to extend the number of days the sports coaches work with the pupils has had a huge impact on pupils' skill development and opportunities to take healthy exercise.
- The governing body has a wide range of skills, experience and talents on which to draw. It is a reflective and forward-thinking group, which has the pupils' best interests firmly at the centre of its work.
- Governors provide appropriate challenge and support to the headteacher and her leadership team. They ask probing questions and hold leaders to account. They are well aware of their statutory duties relating to keeping pupils safe, and monitor safeguarding policies and practice closely.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- All staff and governors are appropriately trained for their roles. Staff are vigilant and knowledgeable about safeguarding policies and procedures. Pupils feel safe and secure in school. Parents and staff agree with this view. There is a palpable 'family feel' to the school, where pupils feel welcome, cared for and valued for their personality and character.
- The school engages well with parents and maintains meticulous records concerning all aspects of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour to make sure that all members of the school community are supported, safe and can flourish.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- High-quality questioning enables teachers to build on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subjects they teach and are able to quickly identify any misconceptions and address them effectively. Teachers are adept at identifying the incremental steps to help pupils produce outstanding work across the curriculum.
- Pupils really enjoy learning and are developing into resilient lifelong learners. When asked what they enjoy best about school, they enthuse about their learning. A typical response from pupils was, 'It's not just what you learn, but how you learn it.' Another added, 'Teachers make learning fun.' All pupils are given work which extends their learning from their prior knowledge. Pupils speak highly of the puzzles and challenges in mathematics that make them think more deeply.
- Leaders' vision for pupils is that they will develop the highest expectations of themselves personally and academically. Leaders ensure that learning opportunities are rich and varied. The Reception Year enjoyed a day at Manchester Airport on the first day of the inspection. Their teachers capitalised on this experience to develop children's skills in a variety of areas.
- Leaders have developed a very robust assessment system which staff use consistently.
- Staff have superb subject knowledge. Specialist teachers and coaches add to the impressive range of expertise in the school. Training is provided, following perceptive monitoring of teaching, to ensure that all teachers and teaching assistants have the highest-quality skills and knowledge in all subjects.
- Teachers have very high expectations of their pupils. Pupils are consistently provided with challenging work, such as in mathematics where Year 4 pupils confidently tackle multistep division problems and Year 6 pupils are encouraged to explain their reasoning in detail when solving problems involving square roots, algebra and decimals. Pupils' writing is vibrant with words and sentence structures chosen to engage the reader, as exemplified by a Year 6 pupil who wrote about the rain forest: 'Twisted trunks, with emerald canopies, shield the moist, luscious ground from the blazing sun overhead.' Their growing knowledge of punctuation is used well to create effect and atmosphere. Pupils understand the well-embedded systems to edit and improve their writing, and do so very well. Teachers' feedback to pupils effectively challenges them to correct mistakes, overcome misconceptions or further improve their work. However, teachers' expectations of presentation are not as consistently

high. Handwriting in pupils' books is not always neat. On occasions, in mathematics books, untidy setting out of calculations and reasoning leads to accuracy errors.

- Pupils are well supported by experienced and well-trained teaching assistants. Their effective deployment is key to improving pupils' learning. A variety of resources are well used to promote pupils' learning, particularly pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those identified as needing short-term support in English or mathematics.
- Parents value the enthusiasm of teachers and teaching assistants and, particularly, the individual support pupils receive. Parents know that they can discuss concerns with teachers and that these will be addressed swiftly and successfully.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Parents value the support and care of staff and are very proud of their children's school. Senior leaders provide valuable support for identified, vulnerable pupils, which is well matched to the needs of each individual.
- Mutual respect and care are evident across the school. Pupils are extremely polite and well mannered. Inspectors observed very courteous and friendly behaviour. Pupils walk around school in an orderly manner and show impressive respect during assembly.
- Pupils are very independent and will try to sort out their own disagreements, but know that staff will help if they cannot do it themselves. Younger pupils state that 'adults look after them, but also Year 5 and Year 6'.
- Pupils play amicably together in the breakfast club and look after each other very well. The school environment offers extensive and varied outdoor provision which caters for all pupils. A social area, all-weather turfed area, basketball goal and trim trail are very popular during playtimes.
- The Year 6 pupils willingly act as 'buddies' to children in the Reception Year and relish the responsibility of this role.
- Pupils are very aware of their own safety, especially when working online. They are taught about personal safety in age-appropriate ways.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range of responsibilities provided by the school. Pupils are elected to some of these and volunteer for others. Older pupils are willing and enthusiastic voluntary play leaders and are well trained for this role.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Parents have very positive views about the behaviour of pupils in school. Pupils also state that there is no poor behaviour at Childer Thornton. They are superbly behaved around school, including at lunchtime when they behave very sensibly with minimal input from adults.

- The school environment is vibrant and powerful displays celebrate pupils' work across the curriculum. There is a 'buzz' of learning underpinned by very high levels of cooperation between pupils and adults.
- Attendance levels are monitored very closely. The school has robust systems in place to challenge those few pupils with poor attendance patterns. Attendance is above average and there are no differences in attendance between key groups of pupils.
- The school maintains detailed records of the very few behaviour concerns raised, and involves parents and children in establishing whether school actions to improve matters are effective or not. Racist and homophobic bullying are not tolerated. Pupils state that this sort of verbal bullying does not happen in their school. Bullying is extremely rare. Pupils are tolerant of others' views and recognise that individual differences are important. They greet visitors with warmth and welcome them to their school. They are keen to help and are very proud of their school and its environment.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Outcomes for pupils at Childer Thornton have been outstanding for several years across a wide range of subjects. Excellent progress leads to high standards of attainment. Over time, Year 6 pupils have been very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- In 2016, pupils made exceptionally strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1. They start Year 3 as confident and assured learners.
- In contrast, the 2016 published data for key stage 2 indicates that Year 6 pupils did not make the usual strong progress across key stage 2. Swift and effective action by leaders means that this one-year dip has been arrested quickly. Pupils' books and current tracking data show a marked improvement in the rates of progress all groups are making. For example, over one quarter of the current Year 6 have already made better than expected progress at this point in the year.
- In each year group and across the curriculum, including English and mathematics, pupils attain very highly and demonstrate considerable and consistent progress. They develop an increasingly strong range of skills to support their excellent knowledge and understanding.
- Different groups of children currently in school are well supported and appropriately challenged to attain and progress exceptionally well. Proportions of pupils attaining higher levels are increasing as staff become more familiar with national expectations and the associated assessment requirements.
- Pupils make extremely strong progress in writing from their starting points. Their writing in different subjects is crafted well to create atmosphere and effect. Pupils use an increasing range of sentence structures as they move through the school. These are well constructed and engage the reader.

- Pupils make outstanding progress in mathematics in all year groups. Work in pupils' books at key stage 1 shows their strong understanding of number, shape and data handling. Pupils are confident when using practical resources to gain answers to problems, and are then able to apply their newly acquired knowledge confidently to reason mathematically and tackle problems. Pupils continue to make outstanding progress in key stage 2. They show their mastery of mathematical topics through the application of their strong knowledge to problems and puzzles. In Year 6 lessons, pupils' reasoning is highly developed and draws on the very effective teaching of algebra, square roots and decimals.
- Phonics is taught extremely well and, as a result, pupils make excellent progress. The vast majority of pupils in Year 1 pass the phonics screening check. Teachers' and teaching assistants' excellent subject knowledge ensures that all pupils achieve highly by developing and applying their phonic skills to their writing and reading. Teaching assistants reinforce the consistent approach to phonics. No pupil is left behind.
- Pupils enjoy reading and read confidently, with good expression and intonation. Progress is outstanding from the pupils' various starting points, with the vast majority of key stage 2 pupils in 2016 making significantly better progress than similar pupils nationally. Their comprehension skills are developing, including their ability to infer meanings. Pupils use their phonics knowledge extremely well to read unfamiliar words. The most able pupils speak enthusiastically about reading and use a variety of strategies to develop their understanding of what they are reading. Pupils have a growing range of strategies to work out how to read increasingly complex words as they go through school. They talk enthusiastically about books they have read, including classic literature, and enjoy books by a wide variety of authors. They read non-fiction books linked to their history, geography and science work. They have excellent comprehension skills and use the context of what they have read to work out the meaning of unknown words with considerable accuracy.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. Across all year groups, the majority of disadvantaged pupils make good progress in line with that of other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported to make good progress from their starting points. The training and experience of the headteacher, who is also the special needs coordinator, and the specialist teacher ensure that these pupils benefit from a very structured programme of support, matched to identified and assessed needs. The additional funding to support these pupils is spent effectively.
- The most able pupils make outstanding progress. In reading, their progress in 2016 was significantly better than similar pupils nationally. Childer Thornton pupils attain exceptionally high results, especially in reading and writing. In key stage 1, the most able attain very highly in writing and mathematics. The school's results over time indicate that the most able pupils make strong progress and attain highly. The school's assessments, confirmed by inspection evidence, indicate that the most able pupils continue to thrive and flourish.

- Pupils make outstanding progress in a wide range of subjects. The quality of work they produce in subjects such as art, Spanish and PE is excellent. Pupils' readiness for the next stage of education is very secure. Parents agree, stating that pupils are 'well prepared for high school'.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Over time, children have been served very well by the early years provision at this school. Almost all children enter Nursery with skills and knowledge which are typical for their age. They make strong progress over the year and are exceptionally well prepared for their time in Reception.
- This rate of progress continues throughout the early years. Children who attended the Nursery class, and those children who join Childer Thornton in Reception, surge forward and gain the skills and knowledge they need to be successful learners. Consequently, they begin Year 1 with standards that exceed the national average. They are more than ready to face the challenges of the key stage 1 curriculum.
- Children make very good progress, whatever their starting points, because teachers accurately assess their skills and future learning needs. Outcomes for children are outstanding across all areas of learning.
- The leadership of teaching is a strength of the early years. Accurate self-evaluation and monitoring has led to further improved provision. Staff and leaders have a strong and clear view of the capabilities and needs of pupils. Observation and assessment of pupils' learning are accurate. Provision for children's development in all areas of learning is of a very high quality. Excellent liaison between Nursery and Reception classes ensures that high-quality planning and provision are maintained across both year groups.
- The quality of teaching is excellent. The environment is bright and vibrant and very well resourced. This promotes children's independence and enjoyment. There is a real purpose to children's learning. Teachers provide innovative and abundant resources to underpin all learning areas.
- Children are happy and settled. They show very positive behaviour. Their work is typically high quality as a result of well-planned activities which engage and inspire children's active participation. Children's language development has a high priority.
- Staff have an exceedingly good knowledge of each child and use this to plan purposeful and imaginative activities. Staff nurture, motivate and engage all children so that everyone has the opportunity to succeed. Where appropriate, and following leaders' monitoring of children's progress, targeted support quickly enables those identified as underachieving to catch up. There are currently no pupils in the early years supported through pupil premium funding.
- The safeguarding of children is very effective. There are no breaches of statutory welfare requirements.

- Parents have a very high regard for the provision their children receive. Families value the support provided to them before children start in the Nursery. This helps to ensure that transition into school is as smooth as possible. A good range of information is shared with parents to explain how they can support their children at home with schoolwork. The school successfully encourages parents to be valued partners in children's learning.

School details

Unique reference number	111083
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10024357

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	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Simon Grove
Headteacher	Mrs Stephanie Raynor
Telephone number	0151 338 2170
Website	www.childerthornton.cheshire.sch.uk
Email address	head@childerthornton.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 November 2011

Information about this school

- Childer Thornton Primary School is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average, as is the number of disadvantaged pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- The early years provision comprises a Nursery class and a Reception class.
- The school meets the requirements on the publication of information on its website.
- The headteacher has been appointed as an associate school improvement adviser by the local authority and is providing support to other schools. The deputy headteacher has been appointed as a local authority moderator for the early years foundation stage.
- The school runs a breakfast club and after-school club.

- Governors are currently consulting on proposals to covert to academy status.
- The school meets the government’s current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning throughout the school. Some learning walks were carried out jointly with either the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors scrutinised pupils' work.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors met with pupils, formally and informally, to listen to their views.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, English leaders, the mathematics leader, specialist teachers, the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation that covered information about pupils' attainment and progress, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, minutes of meetings, and records relating to teaching and learning, pupils' attendance and behaviour, and safeguarding of pupils. Scrutiny of the website was also undertaken.
- The inspectors considered the views expressed by parents through informal meetings and the 99 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as comments received via the free-text facility on Parent View. The inspectors also took into account the 14 responses to a questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Ian Shackleton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Cropper	Ofsted Inspector
John Shutt	Ofsted Inspector

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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.

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