

Inspection of Halebank CofE Primary School

Heathview Road, Halebank, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 8UZ

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and children in the early years, enjoy coming to this happy and safe school. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and supportive. Leaders and staff take good care of all pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable.

Pupils enjoy taking on extra responsibilities in school. The pupil parliament is proud of the new equipment that it bought for playtimes. Pupils enjoy the range of clubs and activities that they can do after school, including Irish dancing, construction and multisport.

Everyone knows the school rules well. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils try their best in lessons. They enjoy it when adults recognise them as 'Halebank Heroes' for their good behaviour and attitudes. Pupils know that staff will deal with any instances of bullying quickly and effectively, so that they do not continue.

Some pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged, do not achieve as well as they could. The curriculum is not equally well designed across all subjects. Children in the early years do not learn as well as they should.

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

Leaders are ambitious about what all pupils can achieve. However, they have not realised this vision in full. Pupils, including those with SEND, do not learn all that they should.

Leaders have made improvements to some areas of the curriculum. For example, in English and mathematics, knowledge is presented in a logical order. In these subjects, new learning successfully builds on what pupils already know and can do. In English and mathematics, teachers explain things clearly and check pupils' understanding in lessons. Leaders are successfully addressing the gaps in pupils' knowledge because of missed learning due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pupils are beginning to know and remember much more of the curriculum in these subjects.

The curriculum in other subjects, including learning in the early years, is not as well designed. Leaders have set out what they want pupils and children to learn. However, they have not identified exactly what learning is the most important. They have not established the order that pupils should be taught new knowledge. This means that some teachers are not sure about exactly what to teach and when. As a result, some pupils do not remember the most important information.

Leaders are in the process of refining and improving their systems to check how well pupils are learning the curriculum.

Pupils enjoy the variety of enrichment activities that are designed to complement the curriculum. However, these do not always help them remember the most important knowledge that they need to achieve well. For example, pupils spoke fondly of their interesting educational visits, including a history trip to Chester. However, this trip did not help them to remember the key facts about Roman Britain. Leaders have plans in place to address this weakness.

Leaders are appropriately prioritising the teaching of reading. They are investing in books, resources and training for staff. This investment is enabling staff to teach phonics increasingly well to pupils, including to children in the early years. However, a number of pupils find it hard to remember the phonics knowledge that they are learning. These pupils do not always get the extra help that they need to be able to read accurately and fluently. This hampers their progress through the wider curriculum.

Pupils' reading books match the sounds that they know. Most pupils practise their reading at home and enjoy the rewards that they achieve for reading regularly (especially the hot chocolate). Nonetheless, a significant minority of pupils, including children in the early years, do not have enough practise to help them to become fluent readers.

Staff identify pupils with SEND quickly and accurately. They are beginning to meet these pupils' needs more effectively and get them the additional help that they need to be able to achieve well. However, the needs of some pupils with SEND have not been met quickly enough in the past. This means that there are gaps in their learning.

From the early years, children are taught the importance of good behaviour. Pupils develop a growing understanding of the school's 'zones of regulation' and use these to self-regulate and manage their own feelings and behaviour. They say that this helps them to get ready for learning.

Staff have worked to improve attendance. There are still some pupils who are persistently absent from school. However, leaders are working closely with families to reduce the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school. Parents and carers appreciate the efforts of school leaders and know that staff are committed to helping pupils be the best they can be.

Governors understand the turbulent journey that the school community has faced over the last few years, including several changes to the school's leadership team. Governors work closely with leaders and know their roles well. However, they do not ask sufficiently challenging questions to better hold leaders to account for the quality of education that pupils receive.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They know that leaders are mindful of their workload and supportive of their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff have received appropriate safeguarding training and know that pupils' safety is a priority. They greet pupils at the door every morning and know pupils and their families very well. These strong relationships have established trust and help staff to identify any concerns quickly. They know how to report these to the designated safeguarding lead. Leaders work with external partners to get families, especially the most vulnerable, the help that they need.

Pupils said that they feel safe in school and that teachers teach them how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not clarified all of the specific knowledge that pupils, including children in the early years, must learn. This means that teachers are not as clear as they should be about how to design learning that builds on what pupils already know. Leaders should make sure that they refine their curriculum thinking in these subjects, including in the early years. They should support teachers in designing learning activities that enable pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding of these subjects over time.
- Pupils with SEND have not had their needs met well enough and so they have gaps in their learning. Leaders must make sure that all staff receive the training and support they need so that they can provide pupils with SEND with the help and support they need to achieve well.
- Pupils, including children in the early years, who are finding it hard to learn to read are not getting all the support that they need. They are not getting enough practise to learn to read. This means that some pupils are not learning to read as effectively and fluently as they should. Leaders must ensure that staff provide the specific support and practise that these pupils require to be able to read well.
- Over time, governors have not held leaders to account for the quality of education that pupils receive. As a result, pupils do not experience a sufficiently well-planned curriculum that enables them to achieve well. Governors should ensure that they ask questions that hold leaders more fully to account for the quality of education that the school provides to pupils.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	111244
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10242103
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Haley Roach
Headteacher	Claire Warner
Website	www.halebank.halton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes to the leadership of the school and a new headteacher has been appointed. There is also a new chair of the governing body.
- Leaders do not use alternative provision.
- The governing body is responsible for the before-school provision in the school building.
- The school is a Church of England primary school and part of the Diocese of Liverpool. It received its most recent section 48 inspection in May 2017.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their work and school life. They spoke with members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders and members of staff. Inspectors met with parents in the playground before school. They also spoke with a representative of the local authority and of the Diocese of Liverpool.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including information about safeguarding and the checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. Inspectors also spoke to staff about safeguarding and about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school, in class, in the dining hall and in the outdoor play areas.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and design technology. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, met with teachers and spoke with pupils. They also met with subject leaders for history and art and design.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.

Inspection team

Craig Richardson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

David Hampson

Ofsted Inspector

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 <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

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 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022