

Almondbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant and Nursery School

Longcroft, Almondbury, Huddersfield, HD5 8XW

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- In Years 1 and 2, pupils do not make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because work in lessons is not always set at the right level for their age and ability.
- Teaching requires improvement because it is too inconsistent to be good. In some lessons, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and their rate of progress are too low.
- In lessons where pupils from Years 1 and 2 are taught together, teachers do not plan thoroughly enough and make sure every pupils has challenging work.
- Leaders do not carry out the range of checks needed to gain a good understanding of how well pupils are progressing and to ensure pupils always have appropriately challenging work in reading, writing and mathematics. They do not use their accurate knowledge of the quality of teaching robustly enough to drive good improvements in the classroom.
- The limited information there is on pupils' progress means that governors are unable to challenge leaders over pupils' performance with sufficient rigour.

The school has the following strengths

- Nursery and Reception age children make good progress. Teaching is good and the provision is well led and managed.
- There is good provision for pupils who need extra support with personal, social and emotional development. The Rainbow Room ensures these pupils settle and develop good attitudes to learning.
- There is some good and outstanding teaching making learning lively and enjoyable. Here, effective planning ensures work is closely matched to pupils' different abilities thus promoting good progress.
- Pupils enjoy school, feel safe and their behaviour is good.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed eight lessons which involved six teachers. One lesson was observed jointly with the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff and pupils. Discussions took place with representatives of the governing body and separately with a representative of the local authority.
- A wide range of school documents were examined including, the procedures for safeguarding pupils, the school's self-evaluation report, data on pupils' attainment and progress and a recent review of the school carried out by the local authority.
- A sample of pupils' writing and mathematics workbooks were scrutinised.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 27 parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Alan Lemon, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Baljinder Khela

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is average. This additional funding is for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The school offers a programme of emotional and social development for a small number of pupils in the Rainbow Room, where they can spend several days each week for up to four school terms.
- The headteacher has been absent from the school for nine months and only very recently returned. A teacher is also temporarily away from school and there have been some recent changes to staffing leading to temporary teaching arrangements.
- The Almondbury Play Group and Doodles after-school club operate from the school site. They are not managed by the school's governing body and are inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so pupils in Year 1 and 2 make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - making sure every teacher thoroughly assess pupils' attainment and progress and use this information effectively to set high expectations and to plan challenging work that matches the varying skills and abilities of each pupil
 - setting each pupil a challenging target for writing and mathematics that they understand and which teachers check constantly and update when it has been achieved
 - making sure that teachers plan mathematics lessons so that pupils develop the knowledge and skills needed to effectively calculate and solve problems using a range of methods.
- Strengthen leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - developing further the leadership roles of staff, particularly those new to subject leadership so that they can effectively check and improve the school's work and pupils' progress
 - improving the range of checks made of the school's work and bringing together all the information from these checks to develop accurate pictures of teaching, other provision and pupils' progress which are consistent with one another
 - ensure governors develop a good understanding of pupils' progress from their starting points and are able to hold the school to account for pupils' performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In Years 1 and 2, pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics requires improvement. Pupils do not make good progress because the work they are set is not always well matched to the point they have reached in their learning. Inspection evidence from lessons observed and from work in pupils' books shows that too often, Year 1 and 2 pupils who are taught in the same class do exactly the same work. Where this occurs, pupils' work is not challenging enough and they do not develop their knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress because they are taught well and provided with a wide choice of activities that focus sharply on all aspects of their development. A significant proportion of children start nursery with skills and development below that expected for their age. By the end of the Reception Year, the very large majority have progressed to a good level of development for their age and are well prepared for the demands of Key Stage 1.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been broadly average in recent years. Most pupils make the progress at the expected rate in Key Stage 1.
- Achievement in reading is improving. Those pupils who were heard reading, for example, used good skills in linking letters and the sounds they make to tackle new and difficult words effectively. This reflects positively on the recent improvements in how reading skills are taught. However, pupils' attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 in 2012 dipped; pupils' progress, although improving, has not yet been strong enough to raise standards higher. In writing, progress continues to be held back because pupils that have achieved their writing target are not always given a new one so that they can quickly move to the next level.
- Pupils spoken to were adamant that work in mathematics is too easy. They said they do not learn as much as they could and that sometimes the work they do, they have done before. Evidence from pupils' mathematics work books shows that learning is too focused on practising some number skills, mostly using mental strategies, with too little attention given to pen and paper strategies. Addition and multiplication is not balanced with learning subtraction and division. Some pupils do not spend enough time learning about two- and three-dimensional shapes, measurement or gathering, setting out and interpreting data. Stimulating problem-solving activities, through which pupils can use their mathematical knowledge and skill in novel and challenging ways, is under-represented in some pupils' work.
- Recent changes to the way the school collates information that tracks pupils' progress means that leaders do not yet have a complete picture of progress over time. Even so, this data does not always accurately reflect work seen in pupils' books, which impacts on the school's otherwise good efforts to ensure all pupils have equality of opportunity to succeed.
- Overall, pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium make the expected rate of progress. In 2012, the attainment in reading, writing and mathematics of those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Year 2 was about one term behind other pupils in the school. This gap is narrower than found nationally.
- Overall, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates. When they learn in small groups or in one-to-one sessions held outside the classroom, for example, they often make good progress. Similarly, pupils who spend time in the Rainbow Room make good progress in their personal development. However, these groups of pupils do not always make good progress because when they learn alongside pupils in the whole class, they are not always taught well.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable to be good, even though there is some good or outstanding teaching taking place. When checking the quality of teaching, leaders have a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses. The focus on improving teaching has not impacted with the force needed to bring greater consistency in the quality of teaching across the school. Changes to staffing and temporary teaching arrangements have not helped in driving this improvement.
- Teachers' expectations are sometimes too low to ensure pupils make good progress. This is apparent in the quality of pupils' work over time and shows that pupils are not always challenged appropriately. While teachers assess pupils' work, there is some over- or under-estimations of pupils' levels of attainment. This hampers teachers' efforts to plan lessons effectively.
- Teachers' use of the information about pupils' knowledge and skills to plan their next steps in learning is not consistently good. This is particularly the case when pupils from Year 1 and 2 are taught together in the same class because they complete the same work regardless of their skills and abilities.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' learning are used to set targets for pupils in writing but not in mathematics. Even so, these writing targets are not always explained well enough to pupils. Teachers do not always make sure that pupils' targets are regularly reviewed, or updated when they have been achieved or challenging enough so that they make good progress.
- In most lessons observed, teachers selected pupils randomly to answer questions. This ensured that pupils were and actively participating in the lesson rather than simply listening and not contributing. Occasionally, teachers are not as successful in making sure that all pupils fully contribute, and so a few pupils are more passive, particularly the younger and less-able pupils.
- In lessons where pupils are well taught, the pace of learning is good and reflects the effective planning of challenging work pitched precisely at the next steps. This is often the case when pupils from across the school are grouped by their stage of development in linking letters with the sounds they make. Similarly, the teaching of small groups of pupils outside lessons is good because it is well planned and sharply focused on these pupils improving very specific reading or mathematical skills.
- This same sharp focus makes teaching effective in the Nursery and Reception Years. Teachers' thorough assessments of children's skills, knowledge and understanding lead to precise planning of learning opportunities. Teachers ensure that the range of activities on offer maintain a consistent emphasis on promoting children's communication, language and literacy skills, as well as their mathematical knowledge.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are happy to come to school. They enjoy learning and attendance is above average. From the outset in the Nursery class, children have a good experience of school and learning which sets the scene for the future.
 - Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is consistently good. The school has clear expectations regarding behaviour and pupils willingly adhere to these. Their attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils settle quickly at the start of lessons and pay good attention to what the teacher wants them to do. They are inquisitive and are keen to ask questions and contribute to lessons when given the opportunity. Pupils get on quickly with their work and make good efforts to complete what they have been asked to do.
 - Pupils feel safe because they know they are well cared for by staff and will get the help they need, such as if they fall in the playground or are feeling unwell. Parents who gave their views to inspectors agree that their children are safe at school, are well behaved and also that they are looked after well. Bullying very seldom occurs and does not give rise to parents' or pupils' concerns. Pupils know staff will deal with any incident effectively. However, pupils' knowledge of
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some of the different forms bullying takes is not fully developed.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- At present, the checks made by leaders on the work of the school and pupils' outcomes are not being used effectively to identify weaknesses precisely and to tackle these to good effect. The quality of teaching is checked regularly and leaders' evaluations are secure and accurate. However, although their actions have confirmed the overall quality of teaching, they do not use the outcomes as a prompt to tackle the causes of inconsistencies in teaching or to drive improvements in the classroom.
 - Although the absence of the headteacher has impacted on improving the school at a good rate, the deputy headteacher stepped in and has steered the school steadily forward. The local authority ensured the deputy headteacher was well supported during this period.
 - Recent changes in staffing have necessitated adjustments in the distribution of leadership and management roles and responsibilities among staff, particularly within subject leadership. The roles of staff who have taken on new subject responsibilities for example, are now being developed. This is at an early, but important stage of development because it is starting to increase leaders' capacity to check the school's performance and drive improvement more effectively. Key areas of the school's work are being led and managed well, such as the Early Years Foundation Stage provision, additional individual support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and the provision in the Rainbow Room.
 - Leaders use what they know about the quality of teaching to inform the management of teachers' performance. However, the limited focus on what needs improving about teaching means that teachers' performance objectives are not always aimed directly at essential school improvement.
 - Leaders have placed a lower priority on checking the quality of pupils' work in their books than observing classroom practice. This has meant that efforts to match up the quality of teaching seen in lessons, and data collected about progress with that seen in their books are not yet effective. This underlines the inconsistencies in pupils' achievement and teaching.
 - The curriculum encourages pupils' enjoyment of school and learning. It is well planned in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The planning for reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2 is adapted effectively in some lessons, promoting good learning and progress but this is not consistent in all lessons. The curriculum promotes effectively pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The members of the governing body are very closely involved with the school and highly committed to its success. Governors manage all of their responsibilities in a diligent and meticulous manner. They give close attention to the reports they receive from the school and local authority, ensuring they stay well informed and develop as good an understanding of the school's work as possible. The data on pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is analysed expertly and carefully and compared with national averages. Due to the lack of good information on pupils' progress however, governors are hindered from seeing the full picture of pupils' performance. While governors use their knowledge of pupils' attainment to question leaders, their impact on supporting and challenging leaders is limited by the lack of information on progress. The use of the pupil premium funding is reported in detail to the governing body, including an account of its impact on standards, although the progress made by the pupils benefitting from this extra funding is less clear.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	107727
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	412710

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Haigh
Headteacher	Jane Sargent
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2010
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