

Sowerby Village CofE VC Primary School

St Peter's Avenue, Sowerby Bridge, Halifax, West Yorkshire

Inspection dates 30 April 2013–1 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement is variable. Pupils make inconsistently strong progress from their individual starting points in English and mathematics throughout school.
- More-able pupils make insufficient progress, particularly in writing, and attain standards below the national average.
- Teachers do not consistently promote good progress in all lessons.
- The quality of teaching is less strong in lower Key Stage 2 and because of this pupils are making slower progress in their learning in lessons.
- Marking by teachers, particularly in lower Key Stage 2, does not consistently identify what pupils must do to improve their work further.

The school has the following strengths

- The strong and exceedingly determined leadership of the new headteacher has resulted in fast improvements in the quality of teaching and achievement.
- All staff are well focused on consolidating the improvements since the school was judged to require special measures.
- Children make effective progress from the time they start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage until they enter Key Stage 1.
- Pupils say they enjoy school and feel very safe. They are polite, caring and well behaved in lessons and around school.
- The Interim Executive Board (IEB)/shadow governing body regularly checks the work of the school well and has secured much improvement in pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. The school continues to improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons or part lessons, two of which were joint observations with the headteacher and two with a deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspectors listened to pupils read and observed a number of teaching assistants and volunteers working with pupils both in and out of lessons.
- Discussions were held with groups of pupils, parents, and teachers, the chair of the IEB/shadow governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 11 responses made by parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and scrutinised plans for improvement, as well as documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- A wide range of other evidence was also looked at by inspectors, including pupils' current work in books from all classes and the school's own data and monitoring records of how well pupils progress in their learning, and in addition the standards they are predicted to achieve at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

Inspection team

Declan McCauley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- A larger than average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional government funding for children in local authority care, those from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are supported at school action. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher took up post in January 2013 after a period as headteacher designate since October 2012, and the new deputy headteacher joined the school 12 days before this inspection.
- The IEB was re-titled IEB/shadow governing body the evening before this inspection started.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eradicate the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching which impair better achievement by:
 - making sure all teachers match learning tasks very precisely to pupils' needs
 - ensuring all teachers have high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
 - eliminating any wasted learning time in lessons
 - strengthening the quality of teachers' marking, particularly in lower Key Stage 2, to identify fully what pupils should do to improve their work further
 - providing more extensive opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of what they read.
- Strengthen achievement and ensure that progress, particularly in writing, is consistently strong throughout school by:
 - increasing the rate at which pupils learn in lessons
 - substantially increasing opportunities for pupils, particularly the more able, to finely hone their writing skills
 - using the key leaders even more effectively to support weaker teachers
 - further enriching the curriculum to fully meet the needs of all pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement is insufficiently strong because of a legacy of weak teaching, which has resulted in gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills in literacy and numeracy. However, pupils are now making better progress in lessons compared to that at the time of the previous inspection.
- Most pupils are now making the progress expected of them, with the majority exceeding expectations from their individual starting points. However, this is not consistent in all year groups. Pupils' attainment in writing remains lower than the national average, particularly at the end of Year 2, where no pupils are predicted to attain the higher level this year. Accurate school tracking data show pupils' achievement is stronger in reading and mathematics than in writing.
- Pupils leave Year 6 with standards below the national average in English and mathematics. School predictions based on pupils' tracking data suggest this will be the case again this year although they are predicting the gap will be narrower.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress in their learning in lessons because teachers and teaching assistants have a clear understanding of their needs and plan to meet their individual and specific learning needs.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium are making good progress and gaps in their attainment compared to all pupils in the school and nationally are closing. This is because school leaders ensure the additional funding is spent precisely on what pupils need to help them to make good progress in their learning. Small groups of pupils observed working with teaching assistants were making good progress because learning tasks were well matched to their specific needs.
- The good progress made by groups of pupils, such as disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and pupils eligible for the pupil premium, is as result of the caring and supportive ethos which pervades school and has 'success for all' as a key goal.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- In the past, teaching has been weak overall, resulting in pupils making progress which was too slow and consequently, achievement was inadequate. This is not now the case and teaching has improved strongly.
- Inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching. Strong teaching results in faster progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and upper Key Stage 2.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers plan activities which challenge children well to develop their understanding of the sounds which letters make. Children are well supported, by a skilled team, to develop their language and social skills both in the classroom and outdoors, helping them to grow in confidence as the year progresses.
- More-able pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop fully their writing skills to a high level.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not always have sufficiently high expectations for what pupils are capable of achieving, providing them with work which is too easy or includes many repetitive exercises when they are clearly ready to progress in their learning. This slows the rate at which pupils learn in lessons.
- Not all teachers match learning sufficiently precisely to pupils' needs. In a mathematics lesson, lower ability pupils were taught how to calculate equivalent fractions along with more-able pupils. Following the teacher's explanation, pupils were asked to work independently to calculate equivalent fractions. This learning task was completed well by the more able pupils but the very large majority of the lower ability group were unable to complete the task because they did not understand how to approach it.
- Many teachers mark pupils' work well and identify what pupils should do to improve their work, although this is inconsistent in some classes, such as Year 3 and Year 4.

- In a few classes, teachers waste learning time by allowing pupils to sit and wait for an activity to begin rather than promoting more learning.
- Enthusiastic volunteers are used well by the school to support pupils in their reading. Much has been done by school to promote reading and pupils speak with enthusiasm about the books they enjoy. Well-focused reading activities led by teaching assistants improve pupils' reading skills. Occasionally, pupils are given insufficient opportunity to explain their understanding of what they have read.
- In the best lessons, pupils learn at a fast pace and teachers question pupils well to gauge their understanding of what is being taught. Many teachers are adept at changing the lesson focus when they judge pupils have progressed well in their learning in order to increase the level of challenge for pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- In lessons, pupils listen attentively to teachers and work well with others on learning tasks. Pupils are keen to learn and take part enthusiastically in lessons.
- Occasionally, a very small number of pupils do not focus as much on their learning as they could, this is particularly the case when teachers do not notice the pupils are talking about things other than their work and not working hard enough.
- Pupils socialise well on the playgrounds at break times and over the lunch period. They use the equipment provided safely and take turns to play games. There are a number of seating areas, which are used well, by pupils to sit and chat with their friends.
- Parents have a positive view of behaviour in school. When a group of parents were spoken to on the first morning of the inspection none suggested they had any concerns about behaviour in the school. One parent explained that when she had concerns and spoke to school staff, the issues were resolved to her satisfaction.
- Pupils' attendance has improved well since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils who were previously regularly absent from school has been reduced dramatically.
- Pupils report they feel safe in school and know if they have a behaviour concern which they speak to an adult in school about it will be resolved rapidly to their satisfaction.
- Pupils are very aware of how to keep themselves safe both outside school and when using email and the internet, they have a good awareness of different types of bullying. Pupils agree there are no real instances of bullying which cause them any concern.
- Older pupils have a number of additional responsibilities around school and take their duties very seriously; they are making a positive contribution to the caring, supportive and nurturing learning environment where all pupils are successfully encouraged to treat each other with respect.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and members of the IEB/shadow governing body have taken strong, successful action to improve the work of the school since the previous inspection. School leaders demonstrate they are resilient, tenacious and determined in their quest to provide the highest quality of education for all pupils attending the school.
- The school's view of its own performance is accurate. The day-to-day work of the school is monitored effectively by the headteacher and her fellow school leaders. The recent formation of a key leaders' group responsible for literacy, numeracy and topic work has improved how well monitoring is used to further improve the quality of teaching. Key leaders lead literacy and numeracy well and have contributed well to improvements in the short time they have worked together as a group. Currently, their role is underdeveloped in improving weaker teachers.
- Teachers are held to account robustly for the amount of progress which pupils make in their classes, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. This high level of scrutiny is another

key factor in the improvements to achievement and the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.

- The curriculum meets the needs of most of the pupils. It is insufficiently enriched to meet the needs of all pupils fully. The additional curriculum support provided for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs successfully supports them in their learning well.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils is well promoted through the curriculum. The recently appointed vicar, who is now a member of the IEB/shadow governing body, is a regular visitor to classrooms and is enhancing elements of pupils' spiritual development well.
- Parents are involved well by the school and appreciate what the school does well. One parent commented, 'The school has improved but still needs to improve further.'
- Safeguarding requirements are met well by the school, therefore, pupils are kept safe in school.
- The school has been very well supported by the local authority since being judged to require special measures. The support contributed very successfully to the improvements which have been made to the quality of education provided. The level of support has been steadily reducing as the school's leadership grew stronger.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the IEB/shadow governing body are extremely rigorous in their approach to school improvement. They act on all the information they collect and have been instrumental in bringing about improvement since the previous inspection. They monitor very effectively and hold the headteacher to account fully for the progress made by pupils. The performance of staff is managed well and stronger teachers are appropriately rewarded, while weaker teachers are supported and if they do not improve are dealt with appropriately. The impact of the pupil premium funding is closely monitored. It has been used wisely, which has resulted in the gaps between these pupils who are eligible for the funding and all pupils nationally, narrowing in English and mathematics.

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	133671
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	409638

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Appropriate authority	IEB/Shadow governing body
Chair	Shirley Stoker
Headteacher	Lynsey Mitchell
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2011
Telephone number	01422 831971
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	admin@sowerbyvillage.calderdale.sch.uk

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