

Lowerhouses CofE (Voluntary Controlled) Junior, Infant and Early Years School

Lowerhouses Lane, Almondbury, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD5 8JY

Inspection dates 15–16 October 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils of all abilities, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress in English and mathematics through school.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a good start to their learning and are well prepared for Year 1. They are sociable, curious and keen to learn.
- Pupils in the Hearing Impaired Specialist Provision Unit also make good progress. They respond well to skilled support and a welcoming and secure setting.
- The overall quality of teaching is good. It is sometimes outstanding. Lessons are well planned to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through memorable experiences in many subjects.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe. They are thoughtful and polite towards others and take their responsibilities, such as 'Befrienders' and as members of the school council, seriously. Pupils' health and emotional well-being is strongly promoted through a wide range of good quality sporting and cultural clubs and activities.
- The headteacher and senior staff provide a clear direction for improvement and rigorously review all aspects of the school's performance. They are well supported by able subject leaders and a knowledgeable governing body.
- As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and personal development has continued to develop since the last inspection and it is well placed to improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While teaching is good overall, it is not yet outstanding to fully challenge pupils in every lesson, especially the most able.
- Sometimes teachers miss opportunities to involve pupils in assessing and improving their own work.
- Teachers do not always make enough use of the other adults during the introduction and ending of lessons, to maximise pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills are not fully developed.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons including three joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The inspectors also made a number of shorter visits to classrooms.
- Discussions were held with a group of pupils, the Chair and other members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and members of staff including senior leaders and other leaders with particular responsibilities. Inspectors also heard pupils read.
- Inspectors took account of 15 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the outcomes from the school's consultations with parents.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including information on pupils' current progress, the school's plans for improvement, the management of teachers' performance, the use of pupil premium funding, and documentation and records relating to pupils' behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

Andrew Clark, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and receive the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, for children who are looked after by the local authority, and pupils whose parents are serving in the armed forces.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic families is well above average from a wide range of African, Asian and European heritages.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- A significant number of pupils join the school in different year groups other than Nursery or Reception.
- The school provides a Hearing Impaired Specialist Provision for up to 10 pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher was appointed to the school in April 2011 after the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve pupils' achievement through increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring the work set for pupils, particularly the most able, always challenges them to make the best progress they can and develops their independent learning skills
 - involving pupils more in assessing and improving their own work in lessons and through marking and feedback
 - ensuring all adults are effectively deployed in the introduction and conclusion to lessons to maximise pupils' learning.

- Improve pupils' mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills further.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and understanding which are generally well below those typical for their age. They make at least good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage in all areas of learning. They are confident, happy to share and listen attentively to others. The good development of their speaking, early reading and writing skills, in particular, leaves them well placed to continue to improve.
- Pupils of all abilities achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics throughout school. There is a good trend of improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils make good progress from their starting points to reach broadly average standards by Year 6, which is reflected in national tests and assessments.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and supported by pupil premium funding make at least good progress. The majority of these pupils work at levels which are similar to the national average for pupils who are not eligible for free school meals by Year 6.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. The focus on basic skills and the opportunities to apply them contribute to their successful achievement. The effective promotion of equality of opportunity is reflected in the good progress made by the many different groups of pupils represented through school.
- Pupils in the Hearing Impaired Specialist Resource Provision also progress well from their individual starting points. They develop good skills in communication, including signing, and speaking and reading. They are increasingly confident to learn and play alongside others.
- Disabled pupils and those supported at school action and school action plus who have special educational needs progress well. They often acquire effective reading and writing skills, which enable them to tackle a wide range of subjects, because the support they receive is carefully tailored to their needs.
- Pupils use information and communication technology well in several subjects. This contributes to pupils' good preparation for their future learning.
- Throughout school pupils read with fluency and enjoyment. Pupils in Key Stage 1 tackle new and unfamiliar words well because they have an increasingly good understanding of letters and their sounds to help them. This is reflected in a positive trend in national assessments for these skills. By Year 6, most pupils' comprehension skills are effectively developed and they read with expression and interest.
- Pupils increasingly write at length with a fluid handwriting in a wide range of subjects, such as history and science, for different reasons. This is a good improvement from the previous inspection. They present their work well. Their punctuation and spelling is largely accurate and they are often productive. For example, pupils in Year 4 made copious notes on aspects of Viking life as part of their literacy work on information texts.
- Pupils progress well in mathematics because their mental recall and calculation skills are increasingly good. However, their ability to reason and apply these skills to solve problems is less well developed.
- Although pupils' achievement is good overall, they sometimes do not make the very best progress they could because the quality of teaching is not outstanding. In particular, pupils, especially the most able, are not independent and self-critical enough in all aspects of their learning to reach the highest standards.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers' expectations are high. Lessons are well planned and relationships are very good. Consequently, all groups of pupils are busy, focused and productive throughout the school day.
- Teachers make good use of accurate measures of pupils' progress to set work which is largely closely matched to their needs and builds effectively on their earlier learning. This has improved well since the last inspection. They regularly consider the progress pupils make during the lesson and adjust their teaching to reflect this.
- In the very best lessons, teachers set an exciting pace of learning where pupils move rapidly to the next stage. They ensure that all pupils are fully engaged throughout the lesson in work which both challenges and fascinates them. For example, by teachers and teaching assistants working together to reinforce and model new ideas or through the exciting use of puppets, information and communication technology and other resources.
- Reading, writing and mathematical skills are taught well through direct and sharply focused lessons with a strong concentration on basic skills. For example, Key Stage 1 teachers skilfully model how letters and sounds blend together to make new words using a wide range of resources. In Key Stage 2, pupils learn about the intricacies of character description by writing their own detective stories. The effective use of other subjects to extend pupils' writing skills is a good improvement since the last inspection.
- Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to read aloud during the school day to each other or well trained adults. They make good use of systematic reading schemes and a well stocked library to promote good progress.
- Pupils based in the Hearing Impaired Specialist Unit are taught well because specialist staff develop pupils' communication skills well and provide rich and varied experiences, such as frequent visits and physical and creative activities for pupils to build their learning upon.
- The significant number of pupils who start the school at later stages than usual in their education are helped to meet the school's expectations through additional and bespoke teaching. As a result, these pupils also make the good progress from their starting points during their time in the school. This individualised learning and a strong focus on communication skills also helps pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well.
- Staff make good use of a wide range of homework activities to both improve pupils' basic skills, such as reading and extended investigations.
- Teaching assistants provide good support to particular groups of pupils, especially disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. However, in some lessons, teaching assistants and other adults are not fully involved, especially during introductions and conclusions led by the teacher. This limits their effectiveness in motivating and challenging all pupils.
- Occasionally, some pupils, especially the most able, are not challenged enough by the work set for them throughout the lesson. For example, sometimes pupils are given too much guidance by the teacher before they are involved in active learning at their level. This particularly limits the development of pupils' independent thinking skills and their capacity to solve problems in mathematics.
- Teachers occasionally miss opportunities for pupils to consider how well they are doing during the lesson and take steps to make even more rapid progress. Work is generally marked well, especially in literacy, but teachers do not always make certain pupils follow up on the improvements suggested.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils, including those in the Hearing Impaired Specialist Provision, behave well and take good care of each other. The school council and the Befrienders contribute well to improving behaviour and the welcoming school environment. Pupils enjoy school. They have positive attitudes to work.

- Pupils say they feel safe because they are well cared for by teachers and other adults. They say that bullying seldom happens and school records confirm this. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying, especially cyber-bullying. If bullying takes place, pupils are confident it will be quickly dealt with by staff.
- Adults establish good relationships with pupils who find managing their own behaviour difficult. They provide effective strategies for improving their behaviour and emotional well-being. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour, including racial incidents, are rare as are exclusions.
- Attendance is average and improving. It has improved well since the last inspection because of rigorous monitoring by staff and the governing body to promote good attendance. Parents and staff express positive views on behaviour and their children's safety and well-being.
- Pupils' behaviour is not outstanding because they are not always fully focused and fired up for learning, especially when teaching is not appropriately challenging.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's clear vision and drive for high achievement is fully shared by all staff, the governing body and parents. There is a continuous pursuit of high standards and the school continues to build on strengths seen at the last inspection.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior staff provide good role models to their colleagues and are skilled in assessing the quality of teaching and setting challenging targets for teachers to aspire to. Team work is a strength of the school and subject leadership is more effective than at the last inspection. As a result teaching and learning have continued to develop since the last inspection and the school is clear about the next steps to take to improve further.
- The school receives appropriate, but challenging, support from the local authority and an independent consultant. Good partnerships with other schools and opportunities to share the best practice contribute to staff's professional development and good leadership.
- Staff are held accountable for the progress their pupils make and have to meet stringent criteria in order to achieve the next salary level.
- The Hearing Impairment Specialist Provision is led and managed well. Staff are well trained and have a good understanding of the needs of the pupils in their care.
- A strong factor in improving learning is the development of the curriculum. Initiatives to provide intensive support for pupils whose progress in reading, writing or mathematics work falls below expected levels, whatever their starting points, is helping to further improve standards.
- There are many sporting, artistic and musical events for all pupils to participate in and a clear policy for effective use of the new primary sports funding to broaden these experiences. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. For example, through the school's 'Circle of Care' policy and good links with local churches and other places of worship.
- The school works closely with parents and keeps them well informed through the website and increasingly through pupils' blogs.
- The school tackles any issues of discrimination well and promotes equality of opportunity.
- Policies for safeguarding meet requirements and are supported by rigorous record keeping.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well led and organised. It is well informed through detailed headteacher's reports, its own systematic checks on the school's work and detailed analysis of pupils' progress. The governing body makes good use of first-hand observations from regular visits to school, discussions with subject and other leaders and a thorough understanding of pupils' achievement to contribute to the school's self-evaluation. Governors appropriately decide whether teachers and staff should be rewarded with salary increases and review targets for the headteacher. The governing body strongly initiates its own improvement by, for example, commissioning an in-depth review of its own effectiveness. Governors manage the finances well by, for example, carefully scrutinising the use made of pupil premium funding and its impact on learning.

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	107698
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	425982

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

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	191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Garreth Tatler
Headteacher	Rachel Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2010
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