

Firs Hill Community Primary School

Orphanage Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S3 9AN

Inspection dates

5–6 November 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Throughout the school, pupils do not reach the standards in writing which match those in reading and mathematics.
- Teaching requires improvement and the quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school. Pupils spend too long listening to the teacher. This reduces the time when they can learn while working by themselves.
- Teachers do not always use information from assessments to provide work that closely matches pupils' different needs and abilities.
- The most-able pupils are not always challenged to work at a higher level. Those who find learning more difficult do not make good progress over time.
- Pupils have insufficient time to correct the mistakes they have made in earlier pieces of work in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have not ensured that the handwriting scheme is consistently applied by teachers and pupils.
- The curriculum does not give pupils enough time to complete longer pieces of writing in a variety of styles.
- Pupils' attendance is below that of pupils across the country and some pupils are late for school each day.

The school has the following strengths

- From low starting points, most pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics to reach standards broadly similar to those seen across the country.
- Pupils' behaviour is mostly good in lessons and around the school. Pupils feel very safe because the school takes good care of them.
- Pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes to their learning.
- Leaders provide outstanding opportunities for parents to help with their children's learning at home.
- Leaders and managers have identified the key areas for improvement and have put the right systems in place to improve the quality of teaching, especially of longstanding teachers, to accelerate pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 20 lessons or part lessons, including two joint observations with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and members of staff. The inspectors met with two groups of pupils to find out pupils' views of the school's provision.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school's plans for improvement, and checks on how well it is doing, safety records, information about the quality of teaching over time and the checking of pupils' progress as they move through the school.
- The inspectors took account of 33 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). The inspectors also analysed the outcomes of the school's own consultation with parents.

Inspection team

Brenda Clarke Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mujahid Ali

Additional Inspector

Gillian Hunter

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The very large majority of pupils are from a range of different minority ethnic groups and most speak English as an additional language. Many enter school with little spoken English.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is just below average. The number of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above that seen across the country.
- A larger-than-average number of pupils are supported by the pupil premium which, in this school, provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the national minimum expectations for pupils at the end of Year 6.
- The school provides a breakfast club for pupils of Firs Hill, and the Burngreaves after-school club for Firs Hill and other local schools.
- In September 2013, the school received additional funding to widen the scope of sporting activities. The inspectors evaluated the school's plans for the allocation of this grant. The school has gained Healthy School Status.
- A significant minority of pupils join or leave the school at other than the usual times.
- Since January 2013, the school has admitted 50 additional pupils mostly of European Gypsy/Roma ethnicity so there has been a large increase in pupil numbers. Additionally, the school expanded and admitted a third reception class for the first time in September 2013 with 13 Roma children.
- Five teachers left the school in July 2013. Seven new teachers were appointed for September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good with a greater proportion that is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use assessment information more effectively to plan work that is at the right level of difficulty to meet pupils' different needs, especially the most and the least able
 - planning lessons that give more time for pupils to work by themselves so they can better develop their independent learning skills
 - ensuring that pupils learn at just the right speed and are given sufficient time to complete their work
 - providing more opportunities for pupils across the school to think for themselves and for pupils to plan some of their own next steps in learning
 - ensuring that the purpose of the lesson is explained in simple terms so that all pupils, especially those at an early stage of learning English, can understand what they are expected to do
 - ensuring that teachers' marking always tells pupils what they need to do to improve and that pupils are given enough time to correct their work, especially their writing and in mathematics.
- Raise standards in writing across the school to match the higher standards in reading and mathematics by:
 - extending opportunities for pupils to write at length and in a variety of styles
 - finding more ways to engage boys in writing so that they make better progress

- ensuring that the handwriting scheme is consistently applied by teachers and pupils so that pupils develop a fluent and legible handwriting style
 - planning more opportunities for children in the Reception classes to practise their writing skills
 - ensuring good support is provided for pupils with the greatest and most challenging needs
 - ensuring challenging work in writing is regularly provided for the most able pupils.
- Seek more effective ways to improve some pupils' attendance and punctuality.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most children start school with skills much lower than those typically expected for their age, particularly in communication and numeracy skills. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage in all areas except writing. Children have too few opportunities to practise their writing skills in the classroom and outdoors.
- Because the children still have a lot of catching up to do, pupils enter Year 1 with skills that are below average. Current data show that standards are improving, especially in reading and early number but not so quickly in writing.
- In the 2013 phonics check, results in Year 1 were above those seen nationally. This is due to the effective teaching of a carefully planned programme of letters and sounds.
- Over three of the last four years in Key Stage 1, the vast majority of pupils have made good progress to attain below-average standards. In 2012, pupils' attainment overall in Key Stage 1 rose from below average to broadly average standards across all subjects. However, in 2013, teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 indicated a drop in standards. This was due to many staff absences which, although managed well, led to some gaps in pupils' learning as they moved through Years 1 and 2.
- In Years 1 and 2, a far larger proportion of pupils are now making faster progress especially in reading and mathematics. There is also a rise in how well pupils learn by the end of Key Stage 2.
- In 2012, by the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment rose from below average to broadly average. Results for 2013 indicate a similar picture but standards in writing lag behind those in reading and mathematics. Pupils experience problems when planning longer pieces of writing including organising a beginning, middle and end and in adding interesting words to enliven their written work. Many have yet to develop a fluent handwriting style.
- Within an improving picture, some groups of pupils make rather less than good progress. Most disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make progress in line with their classmates because of the good support they are given. However, some with the greatest and most challenging needs are not always given activities at exactly the right level which prevents them from making good progress. As a result, these pupils attained a lower level of skills in writing.
- Throughout the school boys achieve less well than girls in writing.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make progress in line with their classmates in all subjects other than writing. The gap between this group and others is closing rapidly.
- Gypsy Roma pupils are making good progress because leaders ensure that they are well supported both in lessons and in small-group work. Bi-lingual support assistants help these pupils to express their needs and spend time explaining to them the many new words that pupils will hear in lessons.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to provide additional training for support and bi-lingual assistants so they can give extra help to those at risk of falling behind. This is enabling the gap in attainment to narrow between those supported by the pupil premium who are known to be eligible for free school meals and their classmates, especially in reading. By the end of Year 6, they were around a term behind others in the class in reading, writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Inspection evidence and scrutiny of pupils' work in books indicate inconsistencies in teaching which stop teaching from being good overall. For example, some teachers spend too much time on whole-class introductions so that pupils sometimes lose concentration and do not have enough time to complete their work by themselves so they can better develop their independent learning skills.

- In the Reception classes, teachers provide insufficient opportunities for children to write frequently both in the classroom and outdoors.
- Teachers do not consistently use information about how well pupils have learned to provide work that closely matches pupils' differing abilities. This is a key reason why some pupils with special educational needs make less than good progress.
- Too often, the most-able pupils are given the same work as others in the class before receiving more challenging work. This limits their progress because they have insufficient time and opportunities to work at a higher level and explains why not enough of these pupils are reaching the standard they should in writing.
- Teachers sometimes give pupils too much help and allow too few opportunities for pupils to organise their work independently.
- Teachers do not always explain the purpose of the lesson in simple terms. Hence, those at an early stage of learning English are unsure of what they must do.
- Staff do not regularly insist that pupils use the most fluid and legible handwriting they can. Teachers mark pupils' written work but do not provide good opportunities for pupils to correct their work and take heed of the teacher's comments in their next piece of writing.
- However, there have been improvements to the quality of teaching. Good and searching questioning by staff develops pupils' speaking skills as they explain their answers. Teachers usually make learning fun so that pupils enjoy their learning and persevere for good periods of time. Relationships are very strong. One pupil speaks for many when saying, 'Friends and teachers take care of you.' Behaviour management is good and lessons run smoothly.
- Throughout the school, a programme of letters and sounds (phonics) is taught effectively and contributes significantly to pupils' good progress in reading.
- Teaching assistants give valued support and encouragement to those who find learning more difficult. Bi-lingual assistants play a key role in settling new pupils and helping them to understand their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Most pupils behave well in class and around the school. They get on well together. As one pupil says, 'Everyone is respectful'. This is very evident in lessons.
- Records for 2010/2012 also provide a similar picture. The exception was in 2012/13 when there was a higher-than-usual number of exclusions. This issue has now been fully resolved.
- Pupils feel very safe and say that adults always help them. The school cares for its pupils well and ensures that all safeguarding measures are rigorously maintained.
- Pupils say that there is a little bullying but that it is quickly sorted out by adults.
- School assemblies contribute significantly to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils benefit from working alongside others with differing cultures and beliefs. Pupils respond well to the 'star of the week' and 'learner of the week' trophies and most try to do their best.
- The Burngreaves after-school club provides a safe and exciting environment at the end of the school day.
- Although pupils' attendance is below average and some pupils are late for school, leaders have a raft of initiatives in place to improve rates of attendance. They acknowledge that more needs to be done and there are plans for an attendance officer to be employed.
- A breakfast club provides a nourishing start to the day and is now being used to target pupils who are late or frequently absent.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led and managed by a determined and successful headteacher. She has been instrumental in managing the significant increase in pupil numbers. Many challenges facing the school have been overcome successfully. Key to this is the outstanding work the school does to bring parents into the school and involve them in both their children's learning and in developing their own skills. The school has the confidence of its parents and most would recommend the school to others.
- Relevant plans for improvement are shared by all staff and governors and are assessed frequently to ensure the school is making good progress towards them.
- Thorough assessment of the school's provision has enabled leaders to identify key areas for development and to work on them as a whole-school team. This has ensured that all staff have introduced most new approaches in a consistent way; for example, group reading sessions. This practice is a key reason why standards in reading are rising.
- A new writing scheme has recently been introduced at Key Stage 2 but has not gone on long enough to make a difference to pupils' progress.
- Aspirational targets and systematic checks on pupils' progress are driving the rise in standards. Effective programmes are in place to address the needs of those pupils whose circumstances might put them at risk. Hence, most pupils meet the targets they are expected to reach and a minority exceeds them.
- Equal opportunities for all are at the heart of the school's work. The school has already identified those groups of pupils who are making less-than-good progress and has strategies in place to address this issue; for example, in providing topics that better engage boys in writing.
- Exemplary performance management procedures are closely aligned to pupils' standards and to improving classroom practice. Teachers are made accountable for the progress of pupils in their class. The frequent checking of teaching and learning in classrooms has enabled teachers to improve their practice. Leaders are very aware that the recruitment of a significant number of teachers new to the school in September 2013 has led to inconsistencies in provision across the school and are already tackling some of these.
- The curriculum has been planned with topics that mostly engage pupils and make learning fun. Pupils enjoy a good range of clubs and visits to exciting places such as The National Stone Centre. Currently, the curriculum does not provide well enough for pupils to complete extended pieces of writing.
- The school is using its new sports funding to access external support and training to develop further teachers' skills in areas such as gymnastics. Plans are in place to provide young sports-leader training. Partnerships with other schools are strong and enable teachers to share expertise and for pupils to take part in a range of competitive sports.
- The local authority currently provides a light-touch support because they judge the leadership and management of the school to be good.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring a range of important skills that enhance the school's provision. For example, they worked with contractors over the summer to remodel a teaching space for a third Reception Year class. A good cross-section of the community is represented on the governing body, enabling governors to provide support and guidance as new minority ethnic groups enter the school. Governors keep a close watch on pupils' standards and progress. They undertake additional training to enhance their skills. Governors know the school's strengths and areas for development and allocated additional funding to address pupils' below-average attendance and punctuality. Governors know about the quality of teaching and where it requires improvement and use their knowledge of performance management to ensure that stringent criteria are in place before teachers reach the next salary level.

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	133325
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	427328

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	560
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Liakat Ali Khan
Headteacher	Dina Martin
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2011
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