

Halfway Junior School

Halfway Centre, Halfway, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S20 4TA

Inspection dates

12–13 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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

- In 2012 and 2013, pupils reached broadly average standards in English and mathematics and, from broadly average attainment on entry to the school, this demonstrates that, in both years, pupils' achievement required improvement. There were fewer pupils than expected reaching the higher National Curriculum Level 5 in both subjects.
- Boys' progress and attainment lagged behind that of girls and in 2013, their attainment was below average in the English, grammar, punctuation and spelling tests.
- Although becoming more and more effective, teaching over time has not been strong enough to enable pupils to make good and better progress in their studies. For example, the challenge in lessons for the most-able is not consistently high enough. In addition, the curriculum does not always meet the particular needs of boys as fully as it might.
- On occasions, pupils are not independent enough in their learning and do not produce as much work as they could.
- The sharing of the good and outstanding classroom practice which already exists is a little underdeveloped.

The school has the following strengths

- Strong leadership and management from the dedicated and well-informed executive headteacher and senior team have ensured that the school continues to improve apace. The vision for how the school can move forward is shared by all staff.
- As a result, teaching is now much better than in the past and pupils' attainment and progress are accelerating rapidly.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Indeed, achievement in this subject is good and attainment is above average.
- Pupils are proud of the school, behave well, and sometimes outstandingly well. They feel safe within the school's walls. They have a high regard for the adults who work with them.
- The school's work within the community is most impressive. There is a wide range of workshops to support families and the school takes the lead in many activities within the Westfield Family of Schools and further afield.
- Governors support the school well, know its strengths and weaknesses and hold the leadership to account with rigour.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons or part-lessons and they visited each year group at least once and generally twice. One lesson observation was undertaken jointly with the head of school. In addition, they also listened to pupils in Year 3 and Year 6 read.
- Inspectors spoke to two groups of students, including members of the school council. They also met with the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, the special educational needs co-ordinator, the learning mentor, subject and aspect co-ordinators and members of the senior leadership team.
- They took account of the 31 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and of internal school questionnaires completed by parents.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and considered internal and external progress and attainment data, pupils' work in English and mathematics, school development planning, reports written by an external consultant and the school's strategies to enable it to gain an accurate view of its own performance. They also scrutinised documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

James Kidd, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Allen

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average sized school.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above that usually found.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support by the pupil premium (additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those from service families and those looked after by the local authority) is below average but has more than doubled over a three-year period.
- Most pupils are White British and there are very few pupils with English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There have been several staff changes since the previous inspection. In addition, the school entered into a hard federation with a neighbouring primary school in June 2013. The executive headteacher runs both schools and Halfway Junior also has a head of school and two assistant headteachers. Both schools share the same governing body.
- The school is an active member of the Westfield Family of Schools and the executive headteacher, head of school and two assistant headteachers lead a wide range of in-service training and support activities for schools within the Family and also across the city of Sheffield.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching, so that it is never less than good and more frequently outstanding, in order to ensure that the rapid acceleration in pupils' achievement is maintained by:
 - ensuring that the challenge in lessons is consistently what pupils, particularly the most-able, need to make good and better progress
 - further developing the curriculum so that it better meets the needs, interests and aspirations of boys
 - ensuring that pupils always react positively to teachers' expectations that they work as hard as they can
 - giving pupils more opportunities to become independent in their learning, so that they find more things out for themselves and thus take even more responsibility for their own progress
 - extending the sharing of the good and outstanding classroom practice which already exists.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In 2012 and 2013, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 was average in English and mathematics. Their achievement over time, therefore, requires improvement, given their broadly average attainment, with some pupils higher than this, on entry to Year 3.
- In both years, boys did not perform as well as girls and their attainment in the English, grammar, punctuation and spelling tests was below average. Although a small percentage of pupils reached National Curriculum Level 6 in mathematics and writing, fewer pupils than expected reached Level 5 overall.
- However, pupils' achievement in reading is good and they reach above average standards in this subject. Pupils in the current Year 3 and Year 6 classes read aloud with confidence and accuracy and many pupils read regularly at home.
- Furthermore, the senior leadership's unrelenting drive to improve the quality of teaching has led to a rapid acceleration in pupils' progress and attainment across the school. Inspection evidence, including lesson observation, scrutiny of pupils' work and consideration of internal progress data confirm this. Pupils in the current Year 6, for example, are showing the potential to reach higher standards than seen in the school for several years. Although boys' attainment is still behind that of girls, the gaps are closing.
- Pupils are now becoming more confident in producing writing in a range of genres and for a variety of audiences. In Year 4, for example, they use similes, metaphors and personification confidently when describing their feelings about crawling through a tunnel. In Year 5, they write increasingly complex persuasive sentences using a range of 'wow!' words.
- Similarly, in Year 6 they use subject-specific phrases, 'synonyms' and 'subordinate clauses' when acting as journalists and planning their newspaper reports following their reading of David Almond's 'The Savage.'
- Pupils are now applying their mathematical skills more effectively to solve problems. In Year 4, they order positive and negative numbers correctly and lower-attaining pupils in Year 3 show visitors how to order objects effectively to help them multiply.
- Pupils premium funding is used to provide more opportunities for small-group and one-to-one support. The impact is positive and the gaps between the performance of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and others are closing. Indeed, in 2013, pupils supported by the pupil premium did at least as well as others in the school and did better in reading.
- Strong support from teachers and teaching assistants ensures that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same progress as that of their classmates.
- A large majority of parents who responded to Parent View is satisfied with the progress their children are making.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, teaching has not enabled pupils to achieve well or better in English and mathematics. It therefore, requires improvement.
- Nonetheless, teaching is improving markedly and, during the inspection, more than three-quarters of teaching observed was good or better, with nearly a quarter outstanding. No inadequate teaching was seen.
- In the classroom, relationships between pupils and between pupils and the adults who work with them are strong and there is a shared sense of how all can make progress. Both teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for pupils who sometimes find the work difficult and also for the very few pupils at early stages of learning English. In a Year 5 literacy class, for example, a pupil with English as an additional language represented his group well when he presented a summary of their findings to the whole class.

- In the best lessons, for example a Year 4 session in which the teaching was judged to be outstanding, challenge is ever in the air, pupils are desperate to learn, and group work gives pupils opportunities to act as extra resources for each other's learning. Pupils are given sufficient opportunities to reflect on their progress and they are delighted to show their teacher and their peers just how well they have done.
- On occasions, challenge in lessons is not high enough to ensure that pupils, particularly the most-able, make maximum progress; they are also not always required to become more independent in their learning and to take greater responsibility for their own progress. In addition, a minority of pupils, and in a minority of classes, does not always rise to the expectations of their teachers and teaching assistants that they remain focused on the activities and work as hard as they can.
- On-going assessment in class is good and teachers are not afraid to modify approaches and activities if they feel that pupils are not making the progress they should. Marking is a strength and pupils pay testament to the 'smiley faces' and the next steps in learning. They receive accurate advice on how they can improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are proud of their school and speak highly of the adults who work with them. In their words, 'The grown-ups are always around, keep us safe and make us happy.' Indeed, the vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View believes that their children are safe and happy in school. Pupils certainly feel secure and mention 'stranger danger' when they explain how to stay safe outside the school walls.
- A small minority of parents expressed concerns about how effectively the school deals with bullying. Inspectors saw no evidence of bullying. Indeed, pupils expressed the view that, although bullying happens, it is rare and is handled quickly and effectively by staff. Pupils understand the dangers of cyber-bullying.
- Pupils emphasise the responsibilities older pupils have for looking after younger ones. They talk positively about the 'playground buddies' and the 'friendship bench' and say they always make sure that no-one is isolated at break and lunchtime.
- Pupils' conduct is good and on occasions outstanding in lessons and around school. They are polite to visitors, holding doors open for them and making sure that they know that they are going in the right direction for the next class. They are proud to show visitors their work and say that, if they have to use the Internet in their learning, they know how to use it safely. They say that many websites are blocked and demonstrate a good understanding of which websites to avoid when they are not in school.
- On occasions, pupils' engagement in learning is not as good as it should be. Overall, however, most pupils enjoy learning and show good attitudes to study in class.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Colourful wall displays enable pupils to become more aware of religions and cultures which are different from their own. Pupils are more than willing to support each other and they also take the lead in raising money for a range of charities. Dance classes, the after-school film and acting clubs and music tuition develop pupils' creative talents.
- The school places considerable emphasis on supporting the families of pupils in its care and also events in the local community. The 'red' and 'green' community rooms are in continuous use for community meetings and workshops, to help parents support their children's learning at home.
- Pupils' attendance continues to be high.

The leadership and management are good

- The talented and committed headteacher, supported to the full by the impressive senior team, ensures that the school continues to improve at a rapid pace. Indeed, all members of the senior

leadership team have a positive impact on improvements in teaching, learning and achievement in Halfway Juniors, within the Family of Schools and across the city. Leaders also support other schools in relation to special educational needs and inclusion.

- They are not, however, complacent and recognise that the curriculum could be further developed to meet the needs of boys more closely and that the sharing of the good and exemplary examples in teaching could be extended.
- Although some subject and aspect leaders are relatively new in post, they have a good understanding of how to promote better performance in the areas for which they are responsible. They analyse data with accuracy and are fully aware that the on-going promotion of good and better teaching is a key part of their work. They hold senior leaders in high regard and comment, 'We all share the same vision for how the school can move forward. The senior leadership team trusts us, supports us but also holds us to account!' They believe that performance appraisal arrangements are rigorous and that they are linked directly to classroom targets for pupils' progress.
- The curriculum is led well, is continuously under review and staff take great pains to ensure that pupils acquire discrete subject skills within a themed approach. Pupils particularly enjoy physical education and art and their creative paintings and drawings as part of the 'Dragonology' project adorn the corridor walls. They also speak highly of the many after-school clubs and of the frequent educational visits, to Kingswood for example.
- The school is currently undertaking an audit of provision, resources and staff skills prior to using the Primary School Sports Funding. They are placing emphasis on how the impact of this funding can be sustained through the purchase of resources, staff training and activities which link to all areas of the curriculum. The school has strong links with the local specialist sports college and sports coaches, for example from Sheffield Wednesday Football Club, already visit the school.
- Child protection and safeguarding policies and practice fully meet requirements. Pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are identified early and supported effectively. The school promotes equality of opportunity soundly and rejects all forms of discrimination.
- The local authority continues to support the school well, particularly in relation to performance reviews, governor development and data analysis.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well-informed about the school's strengths and areas for development and they continue to ask searching questions of the leadership about performance in all areas of the school's life. They support the school well but hold senior leaders to account with rigour.
 - Members of the governing body are fully aware of how the school is attempting to improve the quality of teaching and learning and they visit lessons to observe classroom practice at first hand. They also scrutinise data on pupils' achievement and keep a close eye on trends in progress and attainment across the school.
 - They oversee the spending of pupil premium funding and monitor the impact of this spending on the performance of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Their evaluation of the impact of this initiative is accurate.
 - Along with senior leaders, governors ensure that performance appraisal arrangements are secure and that teachers receive financial reward only if they meet their classroom targets in relation to pupils' progress.

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	107046
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	425747

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Delia Kay
Headteacher	Beverly Nicholson
Date of previous school inspection	9 November 2011
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