

Halfway Nursery Infant School

Station Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S20 3GU

Inspection dates 10–11 December 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils of all abilities make good progress. For the past five years standards have been above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those who are entitled support through the pupil premium make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress.
- The quality of teaching is good overall with some outstanding teaching in each year group. Lessons are well planned, meet pupils' needs and interests, and motivate pupils to learn.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start. Teaching is good and the vibrant learning environment excites and captures children's imagination.
- The curriculum offers a wide range of exciting experiences, including clubs during and after school, and local and residential visits. It makes a positive contribution to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Pupils develop outstanding attitudes to learning due to the excellent relationships they form with adults. Their excellent behaviour is evident in all aspects of school life.
- The headteacher and assistant headteacher provide strong leadership. Together with all staff, they have forged an effective team.
- The governing body is well informed and successfully holds senior leaders to account for the school's performance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not yet of sufficiently high quality to bring about outstanding achievement.
- Activities provided for pupils are occasionally too easy or too difficult. When this happens the rate at which pupils make progress slows.
- Pupils do not always have enough time to make improvements to their work, in response to teachers' written comments.
- Leaders do not make sufficiently rigorous checks on how well teachers and teaching assistants promote pupils' understanding of the links between letters and sounds.
- The role of middle leaders is not fully developed. They have not had sufficient opportunities to promote high quality teaching.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons of which three observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with pupils from Year 1 and Year 2, three members of the governing body, senior leaders and a representative from the local authority. Informal discussions were also held with pupils at break times and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of the 60 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered the views expressed in the 24 responses to the staff questionnaire. In addition, inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and scrutinised the work in pupils' books, the school's own data on pupils' current progress, the school's improvement plans, planning and monitoring information and minutes of governing body meetings. Records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding and child protection were also considered.

Inspection team

Anthony Kingston, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Baljinder Khela

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Halfway Infant Nursery School is slightly smaller than an average-sized primary school.
- There have been a number of staff changes since the school's previous inspection including that of the headteacher who has been in post since May 2012.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through 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.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- Halfway Infant Nursery School is a nationally-accredited Healthy School and Eco-School, and holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and raise pupils' attainment by:
 - ensuring that there is always sufficient challenge in the work provided in lessons for different groups of pupils
 - giving pupils more opportunities to make improvements to their work in response to teachers' written comments.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills of middle leaders in driving improvements in teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility
 - checking, supporting and improving the effectiveness of the teaching of the links between letters and the sounds they make.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The majority of children start school with skills that are below those typically expected for their age.
- The extremely well-organised and exciting Early Years Foundation Stage learning areas, both indoors and out, and the highly motivated team of teachers and assistants mean that children settle quickly into the routines, get off to a very good start and develop an enthusiasm for learning. They make good progress and, by the time they enter Year 1, pupils' attainment is average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Consequently, the standards reached by pupils have remained above average for the past five years in reading, writing and mathematics. The most able pupils make good progress and, in 2013, the proportion reaching the higher National Curriculum Level 3 by the end of Year 2 was above average.
- Reading is a priority throughout the school. The teaching of linking letters and sounds (phonics) is enabling younger pupils to tackle new and unfamiliar words with greater confidence. However, the proportion of six-year-olds who achieved the expected level in the recent phonics check, although higher than that in the previous year, was below average. The proportion of pupils in Year 2 who retook the check was above average.
- As pupils move through the school, they develop a keen interest in reading. This was exemplified by one pupil who said, 'I can't stop myself from reading. I just love it!'
- There are numerous opportunities for pupils to learn through practical activities, for example in the well-planned areas set up in each classroom to develop pupils' investigation skills. These are very effective in encouraging pupils to work things out for themselves. This contributes to the achievement of all groups of pupils, especially the most able.
- The school promotes and checks that all pupils have equal opportunities. As a result, all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language, make progress similar to, and often better than, that of their peers.
- The income received by the school to support pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is spent judiciously on a range of well-considered actions, including one-to-one tuition and additional teaching assistants. As a result, these pupils make slightly more rapid progress than their classmates and attain standards similar to them in reading, writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good, with some that is outstanding in each year group. The overwhelming majority of parents agree that their children are taught well.
- In lessons where pupils make good progress, the work is planned at the right levels to support pupils' needs and abilities. Clear and precise explanations promote pupils' understanding, and effective questioning enables teachers to assess swiftly pupils' learning and move them on quickly to more challenging activities.
- However, in a few lessons, pupils are offered work which, for some, is too easy and for others too difficult. This makes it more difficult for them to make more rapid rates of progress and to reach the levels of attainment of which they are capable.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers plan a range of exciting activities both in and out of the classrooms. Children's imaginations are captured and their interests are excited through these carefully chosen and well-structured activities. Early literacy and mathematical skills are taught and practised exceptionally well so that children are well equipped for their future learning.
- In Years 1 and 2 reading, writing and mathematical skills continue to be taught well. There is a

sharp focus on the development of basic skills with many well-considered opportunities for pupils to apply them across a range of topics and subjects.

- Pupils write for numerous different purposes, especially through their topic work. They are taught how to plan their work by setting out their ideas and are encouraged to write at length.
- Teachers check pupils' work diligently and give them advice about what they have learnt and how to improve their work, either by speaking to them during lessons or in written comments in their books. Pupils often make the improvements during lessons in response to this advice. However, on occasion, they do not have enough time to make the improvements in response to teachers' written comments before starting the next lesson. Consequently, opportunities are missed for pupils to eradicate quickly their errors and misconceptions.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent. This ensures that pupils learn in an environment in which they feel secure and supported, knowing that their views will be listened to and valued.
- Teaching assistants provide valuable support for different groups of pupils, including helping more able pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are proud to belong to Halfway Nursery Infant School. Coupled with their excellent attitudes, this makes a significant contribution to the quality of their learning, the very warm welcome offered to visitors and the sense of belonging to a community in which everyone is valued.
- Pupils love coming to school and some say that they 'wish it was open on Saturdays and Sundays.' Parents report similarly positive views, particularly appreciating the immense commitment of the staff to the well-being of the pupils.
- Behaviour in lessons is often exemplary. This is because pupils demonstrate an enthusiasm for learning and display high levels of perseverance, even when working on their own. They respond immediately to the guidance and direction given by staff and, as a result, time for learning is rarely lost. They need little supervision to move around the school safely because they do so sensibly on their own.
- At breaktimes, pupils play together extremely well. They relish joining in the large group games such as 'The Farmer's in His Den' organised by midday staff, seeking buried treasure aboard the pirate ship, and using their imagination to create large-scale constructions using the vast range of clean junk stored in the Play Pod.
- Pupils say they feel safe because they are cared for well by teachers and other adults. They are adamant that bullying seldom happens. School records and the significant majority of parents who responded to the online parents' questionnaire confirm this. If any unacceptable behaviour occurs, pupils are confident it will be quickly dealt with by staff.
- Since 2011, attendance has improved from below average to above average. This is due to the hard work of school leaders in convincing parents that lost time in the classroom is a lost opportunity to learn.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and assistant headteacher are ambitious for the school and are providing a strong driving force to help move the school forward.
- Self-evaluation is accurate because senior leaders regularly and rigorously check teaching and the progress pupils make. Feedback to teachers about their performance in lessons is sharp and focused. It leads to clear and unambiguous advice and carefully chosen training, including increasing the opportunities for teachers to observe the very best practice. This has led to rapid improvements in teaching.
- Middle leaders are newly appointed. They have made a very positive start in analysing subject

strengths and weaknesses and monitoring pupils' progress and attainment. However, they recognise that their roles are not yet fully developed, for example to promote outstanding teaching in their subject areas.

- The local authority provides the school with light-touch support. It has an understanding of the school's performance and has confidence in its ability to improve.
- The curriculum is well planned. It meets the needs and interests of pupils and provides them with memorable experiences. Appropriate emphasis is given to learning basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. These are reinforced frequently through the work pupils do across the different subjects they study. However, the checks made on how well pupils are taught letters and the sounds they make, currently lack rigour. This slows down their progress. Consequently, by the end of Year 1 the standards pupils reach in the phonics check are below those of which they are capable.
- There is good provision for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The results were observed in assemblies which celebrated achievements and encouraged pupils to reflect on how their behaviour impacts on others.
- The new funding to support sport and physical education is being used effectively by increasing the range of sports available to pupils and the use of a specialist to improve the skills of teachers. The school has linked with health visitors to measure the impact of the initiative on pupils' health and well-being.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire and those who were spoken to, hold overwhelmingly positive views about the school. They believe that the staff and headteacher are very approachable, and appreciate the opportunities which are arising for closer links. These include family workshops which help parents to support their children's learning at home. This was summed up by one parent who said, 'This school includes everybody. I love the parental involvement because I feel a part of it.'
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are passionate about their roles and are fully committed to improving the school's provision and outcomes. They are well-informed by high quality reports from the headteacher and other staff, by their own checks on the school's work and by regular visits to the school. They check that the information they are given fits well with their own evidence about the performance of the school. Governors engage in a wide range of training including the analysis of performance data. As a result, they have a very clear understanding of how well the school is performing in relation to schools nationally. Consequently, they are able to offer high levels of challenge to leaders. The governing body makes sure that performance management systems are in place and that the performance of staff is linked to the pay they receive and to management responsibilities. Governors keep a careful watch on the allocation and impact of any spending, including the pupil premium funding. Safeguarding is a priority and governors ensure that statutory requirements are met.

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	107038
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	425916

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gina Berry
Headteacher	Steve Varnam
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2008
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