

Ackworth Howard Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior and Infant School

Station Road, Low Ackworth, Pontefract, West Yorkshire, WF7 7HH

Inspection dates 12–13 February 2014

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		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 has not improved since the time of the last inspection and remains broadly average.
- Too few pupils make better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching has not been good enough over time for all pupils. Consequently, there are gaps in what pupils know and understand.
- Lessons are not always planned well. Sometimes the most able pupils are given work that is too easy. At other times, lessons move on at such a fast pace that some pupils struggle to keep up.
- On occasions, pupils do not always display good attitudes to their learning therefore their behaviour requires improvement.
- Pupils do not always get sufficient opportunities to write at length or read a wide range of literature.
- Leaders have not ensured that data is used well enough. As a result, staff are not able to respond swiftly enough to support pupils who are not making fast enough progress.
- Some subject and middle leaders are new to their role and are at an early stage of checking on improvements their areas of responsibility.

The school has the following strengths

- The school provides a safe and caring environment and there is a strong emphasis on nurturing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Governors have steered the school with a steady hand through a series of staffing difficulties. They have not lost sight of their primary role to hold school leaders robustly to account.
- Since the appointment of the new headteacher, the school is improving securely. There are now more examples of good teaching resulting in better achievement in some classes.
- Self-evaluation is robust and plans for improvement are focused on the right priorities.
- Attendance improves every year and is now above average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons or small group activities, of which two were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior leaders and school staff. Inspectors also met with a representative of the local authority and the Director of Education for the diocese.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their work in lessons, looked at books, listened to pupils read and met with a group of pupils from Year 5 and Year 6.
- Inspectors took account of the 51 responses to the on-line survey (Parent View). Inspectors also spoke with a number of parents during the two days of the inspection and considered a number of letters from parents.
- Inspectors also took account of the 13 questionnaires returned by members of the school staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at progress data, performance management information, records relating to behaviour and safety, as well as documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Jim Alexander , Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynne Davies

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for children in local authority care, those from service families, and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the time of the last inspection the school has experienced a number of difficult staffing issues. New appointments have been made including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader. The local authority supported the school through this period.
- The school runs a daily breakfast club for pupils to attend.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve consistency in the quality of teaching, so that it is all good or better, by:
 - making sure teachers plan lessons that suitably engage all pupils, so everyone makes good use of the time available, and pupils develop better attitudes to their learning
 - providing work that challenges the most able pupils to think hard and to achieve as well as they can
 - making sure that pupils receive consistently good advice about how to improve their work.
- Increase the proportion of pupils who make better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics and therefore raise standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2, by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 2 to enjoying reading a range of literature and across many subjects
 - raising expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve in their writing
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length
 - making certain that mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling are well taught in all classes.
- Improve the quality of leadership, by:
 - developing the role of middle leaders so they keep a careful watch on how achievement is improving
 - using data about pupils' progress more effectively in order to act swiftly if pupils' achievement is not as good as it should be.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 is typically average in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Key Stage 2, attainment remains average in reading and mathematics; this does not represent good enough progress from pupils' starting points.
- The progress pupils make can also vary from class to class, depending on the quality of teaching. Last term, for example, pupils made good progress in the mixed Year 5/6 class, but progress was not good enough in the mixed Year 3/4 class. Progress in Year 1 was also slower than progress in Year 2.
- Most children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are similar to those typically expected for their age. Children are helped to settle quickly and enjoy their time in the Reception class. They are increasingly well-prepared to start Year 1.
- Pupils who did not read as well as expected in Year 1 last year have been given additional support and now an increasing proportion are reading at the expected standard.
- School data, lessons observed and work in pupils' books all demonstrate that pupils' achievement improved last year and continues to improve this year. The vast majority of pupils are making expected progress and a growing number are exceeding these expectations. However, this improvement is not yet consistently strong in every class.
- Improvements to the way mathematics is taught are already starting to make a positive difference to the way in which pupils develop and use their mathematical skills. It is not yet fully established, however, in every class. This limits the progress some pupils make.
- The progress pupils make in their writing is mainly limited by three things. Firstly, there are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length across a range of subjects. Secondly, there are inconsistencies in the way grammar, punctuation and spelling are taught. Thirdly, expectations of what most able pupils can achieve are not always high enough.
- While pupils read regularly and move through the reading scheme, not enough is done to develop an appreciation of how literature can enrich other subjects, for example, history and religious education.
- Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals are making increasingly good progress, so that this year, their attainment in English and mathematics is typically only a few months behind others in their class.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs are usually supported well and often make better progress than others in the school. This is one example of the school's commitment to tackle discrimination.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Since the time of the last inspection, teaching has not been good enough to ensure that pupils make good progress by the time they leave Year 6. While the quality of teaching improved last year and continues to get better this year, there remain some teaching that is still not good enough.
- In lessons observed where learning was not good enough, the most able pupils were given tasks that did not stretch their thinking.
- In other lessons where learning requires improvement, some pupils are given too much to do in the time available and they struggle to keep up with the pace of the lesson. On these occasions, some can become distracted or silly, not working to their best.
- The quality of marking is improving and in some classes provides good guidance so pupils know how to improve their work. However, improvements are inconsistent and weaknesses remain. For example, a teacher had written in one boy's book 'read this sentence again'. The boy

commented that he had reread the sentence 'but I still don't know what I am meant to do to make it better'.

- There are a growing number of lessons where pupils make good progress. Activities are planned to capture pupils' imagination from the start, and technology is used well to maintain pupils' interest through different stages of the lesson. An example of this was seen in a mixed Year 3/4 class mathematics lesson on reflective symmetry. The teacher had a very clear appreciation of what pupils had understood from a previous lesson and where they were still struggling. As a result, appropriate activities were provided for pupils to make the most of the time available.
- Support staff are being used increasingly well, particularly to help pupils in small groups or one-to-one activities. Sometimes, teaching assistants' time is not always used to best effect. This occasionally limits the difference they can make to those pupils who might be finding work too hard.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because pupils' attitudes to learning are not always as good as they could be in every lesson. Also, while the majority of pupils behave very well at lunchtimes and playtimes this is not the case for all. While overtly bad behaviour is uncommon, there is unnecessary pushing and shoving at times, and some unkind comments are not always picked up quickly enough by staff.
- The majority of pupils enjoy their time at school and as a result their attendance continues to improve every year.
- Most pupils show a great deal of respect for one another when learning and this allows an increasing number of lessons to move along without interruption. Where teaching has not been good enough however, pupils are in the habit of calling out, which interrupts the pace of learning.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about different forms of bullying and keen to tell inspectors that there are far fewer incidents now compared with last year. School records show that incidents of bullying are indeed now rare.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school provides a calm environment and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is nurtured, helping them to feel confident.
- Pupils are also aware of how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management requires improvement because leaders have not yet ensured that all teaching is good. Data is not always used effectively enough to ensure swift action is taken when pupils are not making enough progress.
- Following the last inspection, the school experienced a number of difficult staffing issues and long-term staff absence. While these have now all been addressed, they did initially affect how quickly the school responded to the recommendations identified in the last inspection report.
- The recently appointed headteacher, together with the deputy headteacher, has quickly established an effective team spirit within the school. There is a shared determination that this improving school becomes a good school.
- Self-evaluation is robust and accurate and plans for school improvement are now sharply focused on the right priorities.
- The headteacher has set clear expectations related to good quality teaching for those on a higher salary, and pay progression is not automatic.
- Middle leaders, many of whom are new to their role, have already identified what is working well and what needs to further improve in their subjects. Development plans have been written and

agreed actions are being implemented. However, not all middle leaders have fully developed the skills that will allow them to make thorough checks of the impact of these new initiatives on achievement in their areas of responsibility.

- Leaders are making further necessary improvements to the system for tracking pupils' progress and measuring their attainment. Even so, this information is not yet used well enough by all staff to keep careful watch on pupils' progress in lessons.
- The new primary school sports funding is being used to provide more clubs for pupils to attend, as well as to improve the quality of teaching in physical education (PE) lessons. While this is still at a relatively early stage of development, more pupils are enjoying their PE lessons as well as after-school clubs, for example choir.
- Pupils benefit from an increasingly wide range of clubs and activities outside the school day. The breakfast club is well attended and provides an opportunity for friends to socialise and eat together at the start of a busy day.
- The recently appointed headteacher has the full confidence of the local authority, staff, parents and pupils in her ability to drive forward improvements in the school.
- The local authority was swift to offer appropriate support during the school's difficult period. While they still keep a close eye on the school, they now do not need to visit so regularly.
- Leaders and staff speak very warmly about the advice and guidance provided by the diocese.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair and vice-chair of governors have strengthened the governing body by recruiting experienced members and also by taking advantage of training provided by the local authority. Governors regularly visit the school to look at work in pupils' books, achievement data and observe lessons. This helps them to ask searching questions of leaders, holding them to account for the school's performance. They have set challenging targets to be met and agreed a timescale for any remaining underperformance to be addressed. They make sure good teaching is rewarded and take every opportunity to encourage the staff when appropriate. The skilled leadership of the governing body has helped to keep the school on an even keel through a period of difficult staffing issues, carefully following all agreed procedures. They are knowledgeable about how additional funds are being used, including the pupil premium funding, and the difference being made to pupils' achievement and enjoyment of school life. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

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	130977
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	430940

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Wrightson
Headteacher	Lisa Metcalfe
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2012
Telephone number	01977 722275
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Email address	headteacher@howard.wakefield.sch.uk

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