

Sandal Magna Community Academy

Belle Vue Road, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF1 5NF

Inspection dates 10–11 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils	Requires improvement	3
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- There has not been enough time for leaders' actions to address the legacy of pupils' underachievement and low attainment over time.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress in all year groups, particularly in writing. This results in achievement that requires improvement.
- Not enough teaching is consistently good. Teachers do not always give pupils work that challenges and stretches their abilities, particularly the most able.
- Not all marking effectively helps pupils to improve their work. Teachers do not always give pupils time to act on the advice or check that they have responded.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and extend their writing skills in different subjects and in longer pieces of work.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently positive.
- Plans for improving teaching and achievement are not always clear enough in how their impact will be measured.
- Not all middle leaders are effective enough in improving teaching and the achievement of pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, shows high expectations and a steely determination to make the school the best it can be. Staff and governors share her passion for continuous and rapid improvement.
- Underperformance in teaching and the underachievement of pupils have been tackled head on. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated and the proportion of good teaching is rapidly improving. As a result pupils' progress is accelerating and standards are now rising.
- Gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closing rapidly.
- The achievement of disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those pupils who speak English as an additional language is improving. This is due to the skilled and sensitive additional support they receive.
- Governors know the strengths of the school and what needs to improve, and provide increasingly effective challenge to school leaders. Safeguarding practices are rigorously enforced and pupils feel safe and well cared for.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- Children in the early years make good progress due to good teaching and skilled leadership.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors closely observed the learning of pupils in all classes across the school and listened to some pupils read. The inspectors undertook some of the observations jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons, in a wide range of books and on display around school. They also spoke often to pupils during the inspection and met groups of pupils to discuss their views of school.
- Inspectors made very careful checks on records of the progress of pupils and their behaviour.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other senior and middle leaders and members of the inclusion team. Inspectors met governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the Academy Trust.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including plans for improvement and policies and procedures and the school's own view of its performance.
- Inspectors also checked on the work of governors and a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through checking the 10 responses to the online Parent View survey and the 46 responses to the school's own recent survey of parental opinion. Inspectors also spoke to parents dropping their children off at school.
- The inspectors took account of the views of staff expressed in the 21 responses to the voluntary inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Chris Maloney, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Carol Machell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- The school became a sponsored academy in May 2013 and is part of the Wakefield Diocesan Academies Trust. This is a Trust, based in Wakefield, serving parts of Barnsley, Calderdale, Kirklees, North Yorkshire and Wakefield. When its predecessor school, Wakefield Sandal Magna Junior and Infants School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good overall.
- There have been significant recent changes in staffing. Six of the 13 teachers were not employed at the school at the time it became a sponsored academy. The current headteacher was appointed in January 2013 as part of the process of becoming an academy and the deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2014.
- Significant proportions of pupils enter and leave the school at different stages in their primary education.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic communities is far higher than average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well-above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through pupil premium funding is well-above average. This additional government funding is provided for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school has a full-time Reception class and a part-time Nursery.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' achievement in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school has a number of awards including the Eco Schools Award.
- The school works in close partnership with the Wakefield Diocesan Academies Trust, the local Pyramid of Schools and Kettlethorpe Collaborative Partnership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, accelerate progress and so raise the achievement of pupils, particularly in writing, by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently plan work that accurately meets the learning needs of all pupils, particularly the most able
 - teachers consistently provide clear guidance through marking on how pupils should improve their work and check that they have done so
 - pupils have more opportunities to write longer pieces of work and apply their writing skills across subjects
 - all adults apply the school's behaviour-management policy consistently in all classes so that pupils' attitudes to learning improve.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - actions planned by leaders at all levels are always crystal clear in how their success in improving the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils will be measured
 - further improvements are made to the effectiveness of middle leaders, particularly those new to role, in checking the impact of their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's uncompromising and relentless determination to improve the school has been pivotal in addressing the legacy of pupils' underachievement and underperformance in teaching. This has led to rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils and the more positive picture of pupils attending more regularly.
- Ably supported by the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders, the headteacher has galvanised the changing staff team. They share her clear focus on raising expectations and making the school the best it can be, without ever losing sight of the development of the whole child. This approach has brought the governors, Trust members and the school community together to help the school to live up to its motto of being 'the heart and future of the community'. The work of leaders has been enhanced by the school's involvement in the Kettlethorpe Collaborative Partnership, which is focused clearly on leadership at all levels.
- The morale of staff is high due to their efforts being valued and appreciated. They receive good-quality support and guidance and have many opportunities to access the training they need in order to improve their impact on the learning and progress of pupils. Staff have good opportunities to share their practice and observe colleagues in school and with the local 'Pyramid of Schools'. Staff share the drive for improvement. A typical staff comment was, 'The Academy has made clear in-roads into improving standards with impact already being seen in numerous areas.'
- The promotion of equal opportunities is good because the school offers all pupils equal access to a vibrant curriculum and good-quality support.
- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and plans for improvement are focused on the right areas. They have successfully taken decisive actions to eradicate inadequate teaching altogether and to increase the amount of good teaching seen across school. They have done this through targeted training, clear guidance and rigorous and regular monitoring of teacher performance. This has led to clear improvements in the achievement of pupils and clearly demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement. However, plans for improvement by leaders at all levels are not always clear enough in precisely how their success will be measured.
- Good use has been made of extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils. The targeted support given by additional teaching assistants has led to pupils being better engaged, making improved progress and closing the attainment gap between such pupils and others not eligible for the funding.
- Middle leaders, including those new to role, are extremely conscientious, eager to improve and fully support the need for rapid improvement. However, they are not all fully effective in checking how well their actions are improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Senior leaders make rigorous checks on the progress of all groups of pupils across school, particularly those who are in danger of underachieving and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. This ensures that they are at least making the progress expected for their age. Leaders then target additional support to address the individual needs of pupils.
- Subjects are linked together in creative and stimulating ways, with themed topics such as, 'To infinity and beyond', 'When in Rome' and 'The Grand Old Duke of York', or Science Week. Pupils enjoy the many exciting opportunities to join clubs, such as chess, mathematics, reading, environment, music, gardening or to learn French. Many of these arise out of the responses from senior leaders to the suggestions of the school council for more clubs, outlined in the excellent display on 'You said, we did'. Pupils make good use of a wide range of computers to assist their work and enjoy many visits, visitors and residential.
- Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and highly positive relationships are fostered through strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Pupils respect one another's differences and they enjoy finding out about the different languages of 'new arrivals' and discovering their country of origin on the internet.
- The school promotes British values well. Pupils learn the importance of respect for the law with visits from community police officers or the work of sports leaders at lunchtime to help with turn-taking and following rules of play. Pupils use resources on the website of another school to learn about sovereignty and patriotism, and learn about tolerance, equality and freedom of expression in school discussions and themed topic work. This prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Excellent use is made of sports funding to employ a specialist sports coach from the local 'Pyramid of Schools'. This has greatly improved staff confidence, increased opportunities for pupils to develop skills and engage in competitive sports and improved their healthy lifestyle choices.
- Excellent links exist with parents. A typical parent comment was, 'The school always deals well with any

worries and concerns.’ The work of the parent support advisor is of particularly high quality in providing support for pupils and their families. The ‘Believe and Achieve’ programme through St John’s University York, helps to raise pupils’ self-esteem and ambition. The local authority has provided effective support in improving the work of governors.

■ The governance of the school:

- The Chair of the Governing Body has been instrumental in rapidly improving the effectiveness of governors in raising expectations and in improving all aspects of the school’s work. Indeed, the annual planner that he has introduced, of activities to check on the work of the school and, most importantly, the achievement of pupils, is of high quality. Governors have had good-quality guidance on how to undertake their roles and responsibilities and many more individual governors are now providing greater rigour in the ways that they hold senior leaders and teachers to account. Governors have ensured that improvements in teaching and the achievement of pupils are gathering pace and becoming embedded across school. Governors have strong links to classes and areas of the school’s work, visit regularly to check that the momentum of improvement is continuing and report their findings back to governors and staff. Governors ensure that the headteacher and senior leaders provide them with the information they need to check on the work of teachers and how well different groups of pupils are progressing. Governors rigorously monitor performance management, reward good teaching and check that teachers’ pay progression is closely linked to pupils making good or better progress. Governors keep a careful check on school finances and ensure extra funding for disadvantaged pupils and physical education and sports has the impact on pupils that it should. Governors regularly check the school’s safeguarding policies and practice. These are effective and meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because, although most pupils work hard and concentrate well, the attitudes to learning of a minority of pupils are not always consistently positive. Occasionally, there is low-level disruption at times when pupils are not carefully supervised or when work does not match their abilities. There are inconsistencies in the way that staff apply the school’s approach to managing behaviour in class. This results in some pupils not always listening carefully to teachers and needing repeated reminders to stay on task. This, in turn, hinders their progress in lessons.
- The school has correctly identified that some pupils do not attend on a regular basis and has worked hard to address this. This has led to much closer working with parents and pupils on the importance of school, and the additional support given to families to help them deal with specific home-life problems. There has also been a reduction in the number of pupils taken out of school in term time. As a result the attendance of pupils is improving.
- Pupils are polite, generally get on well together and are very welcoming to visitors. Some talk enthusiastically about coming to school. As one pupil said, ‘I want to get a good job so it’s important to come to school to learn.’
- Pupils’ positive relationships with staff, based firmly on mutual respect and trust, boost their self-confidence and self-esteem well. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities such as being a member of the School Eco Council or playground friend. They show great enthusiasm for raising funds to help those less fortunate than themselves, such as ‘Race for Life’, Comic Relief or help following disasters.
- Pupils appreciate and respect other cultures and traditions well. As one pupil said, ‘Everyone is different and special and we are all equal.’

Safety

- The school’s work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of how to stay safe, particularly when using the internet. This is because of the good-quality advice and guidance they receive in lessons, and special assemblies on how to manage the risks and dangers they may face. As one pupil said, ‘Never share your details on the internet with someone you don’t know.’
- Pupils say that staff really care about them and listen carefully to any concerns they raise, particularly in the lunch-time ‘Reflection Club’. Pupils understand that bullying can take different forms, including bullying as a result of prejudice. They say that bullying does not happen often and that they are confident in the way it is dealt with by staff when it does.
- Photographs of those responsible for safeguarding are displayed around the school and in all classrooms. This makes it clear to staff and parents to whom they might speak if they have any worries or concerns.
- The response of parents to the online survey, Parent View, the views of those who spoke to inspectors

and the results of the school's own surveys clearly show that parents are confident that their children are happy, feel safe and the school keeps them safe.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, although the amount of good teaching is rapidly improving, it has not had sufficient time to address the weaknesses in the achievement of pupils, particularly in writing. Some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain.
- Teachers do not always plan work that challenges and stretches the abilities of pupils, particularly the most able. As a result pupils are not always fully engaged, because work is too easy or too hard and this slows the progress that they make.
- Teachers do not always give pupils clear enough guidance, through marking, on how to improve their work. Some teachers do not regularly check that pupils have followed the advice provided, particularly when pupils are applying their writing skills across subjects. There are clear signs that the quality of marking is improving and inspectors saw some good examples of pupils' good understanding and response to the 'yippee yellow' and 'green for growth' comments. These follow the school's marking system, pointing out what pupils have done well and steps to take to improve. However, this practice is not consistent across the school.
- The teaching of writing is improving and teachers are providing pupils with some exciting opportunities to write. These include the school 'Disaster Day', where some Year 5 and 6 pupils wrote about their work as Red Cross staff following a flood. Teachers are supporting the development of writing skills with a very structured approach involving pupils' peer- and self-assessment. However, although this is paying dividends in better progress and improved attainment, progress is slower in writing than in reading and mathematics. This is because teachers do not always provide pupils with tasks that challenge and stimulate them to use and extend their skills when working in other subjects or to write at length in order to develop their ideas.
- Recent improvements to the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) in Key Stage 1 have improved pupils' progress. During the inspection it was clear that pupils of different abilities were making good progress and enjoying the very interactive approach with staff. Year 2 pupils accurately read and matched words and the most able pupils were able to spell tricky words accurately and write them in their own sentences. Reading continues to be taught systematically as pupils move through school, with a strong emphasis on developing a love of reading. This is aiding their improving progress.
- Teachers ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to review and consolidate basic skills in mathematics and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of concepts. This is particularly evident in the way they apply their skills to solving problems and this is aiding their improving progress.
- Pupils respond very positively when work is well matched to their needs and interests and makes them think hard. This was evident in the work of Year 6 pupils when inspired to write a horror story. The most able writers produced work of a high standard such as, 'Even though all my instincts were telling me to get out, my mind was full of curiosity.'
- Staff know the pupils very well as individuals and their strong and caring relationships with them reflect the whole-school focus on developing the whole child. Skilled and sensitive teaching assistants provide good support to those who need extra help, particularly those identified as having special educational needs and those who are new to the country or speak English as an additional language, aiding their progress well.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 and attainment has been too low over time by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is because expectations of what pupils can and should achieve have not been high enough and there has been too much variability in the quality of teaching between classes.
- In 2014, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 was significantly below average in mathematics, writing and overall, and well-below average in reading and spelling, punctuation and grammar. Although the proportion of pupils making expected progress just met the minimal national expectations, the proportions of pupils making and exceeding expected progress were not high enough.
- In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 was four terms behind other pupils in the school in reading and mathematics, and over three terms behind in writing. Compared to others nationally, pupils

were four terms behind in reading, five behind in writing and six terms behind in mathematics. However, the gaps in attainment between current disadvantaged pupils and others in school are narrowing rapidly.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their needs are identified quickly and they receive skilled extra support. Those pupils who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language are also improving in their learning and progress due to the skilled additional support they receive.
- The achievement of the most able pupils has not been good enough and too few pupils have been reaching the higher levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. The picture for current pupils is better, with more pupils working at the higher levels. However, although the most able pupils in some classes are making good progress because they are given work that is demanding and makes them think hard, this is still too variable between classes, particularly in writing.
- High numbers of pupils arrive and leave at different times in their school life. The school works very effectively to manage the changing numbers in each class and the progress of pupils during their time in school is rapidly improving.
- Although results in the Year 1 national screening check on reading in 2014 were below average, they showed a sharp rise on those of 2013. This reflects pupils' improved understanding of phonics. Pupils continue to build and develop their skills and love of reading as they move through school.
- Inspection evidence shows that the achievement of current pupils in school is improving rapidly in reading, writing and mathematics due to strong improvements in the quality of teaching. Pupils are making much better progress across school and attainment is rising, particularly in Year 6.

The early years provision

is good

- Children usually start school with skills that are lower than those typical for their age, particularly in their communication and language and personal development. They settle quickly due to well-established routines, caring staff and very strong relationships with parents.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. As a result all children, including the most able, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress from their different starting points. Indeed, they make particularly strong progress in their personal and social development. The proportion of children who are reaching a good level of development when they enter Year 1 is increasing. However, progress in writing remains weaker.
- Children's learning needs are identified early so that they quickly receive any additional support needed. Staff regularly check closely on how well children are learning and plan further opportunities for them to follow their interests and develop their skills and understanding. There is a good mix of learning opportunities that children choose for themselves and those led by adults. As a result children develop their early reading and mathematical skills well and their writing is improving.
- Children gain confidence in working with numbers and recognising shapes, due to the good quality resources and the way staff capture opportunities to reinforce these.
- Adults develop children's language skills by modelling and extending sentences and there is a strong emphasis on developing children's understanding of phonics. For example, in Nursery, a child was able to write the word 'kiss' accurately at the end of her mother's day card, without any help.
- The 'Talking Partners' programme is used very well to help those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language or who lack confidence to speak. This was evident when children listened carefully to the differences between hard and soft sounds so that they were able to understand that bones are hard, as they investigated bones in a skeleton. An exciting range of stimulating resources, visits to places such as the farm or Whitby, seasonal walks or observations of land snails or hatching eggs, is provided, and children's interests are considered and developed in their everyday activity. For example, children followed their interest in a film by investigating properties of ice and castles.
- Staff make a lot of effort to break down any barriers between home and school. This gains the confidence of parents and supports them in helping their children learn and make progress. The weekly reading club is very popular and staff support and encourage the large numbers of parents who attend so that reading and writing activities can take place at home. Staff regularly spend time with parents in discussing the learning and progress of their children.
- The behaviour of children is good. They are happy, concentrate well and show a good awareness of safety.
- The leadership of the early years provision is good. The leader's passionate approach to providing the best learning experiences for the children is supported by the whole staff, who work together well as a team.

The leader has a very clear understanding of strengths and areas for further improvement.

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	139280
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	449830

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Bell
Headteacher	Louise Sennett
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01924 303530
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	headteacher@sandalmagna.co.uk

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