

The Darfield Primary Academy

Snape Hill Road, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S73 9LT

Inspection dates 12–13 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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

- So far, the pace of improvement has been slow. Middle leadership is underdeveloped and the high proportion of temporary teachers prevents the formation of a strong, stable staff team working together on moving the academy to 'Good'.
- Teaching requires improvement because not enough is good or better across the academy. An assessment of pupils' knowledge and skills is not always used well. Consequently, work set for pupils often lacks the appropriate level of challenge and this holds up their progress.
- Pupils' achievement requires improvement. The proportions of pupils making expected progress and more than expected progress in reading, writing and, especially mathematics, are too variable for their achievement to be good overall. Other than the most-able pupils, too few make more than expected progress.
- The library is not used enough; it lacks the range of books to encourage pupils to read widely and develop interests and their enjoyment of reading.
- Key Stage 2 pupils do not spend enough time working on aspects of mathematics other than number and have too few opportunities to solve problems.

The school has the following strengths

- The academy's senior leaders are beginning to drive improvement.
- The recent arrival of the local improvement board has started to inject pace into improving outcomes for pupils.
- The leadership of the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. These pupils thrive on being fully included in the life and work of the academy. Pupils who lack motivation to engage in learning are effectively nurtured to develop the confidence to learn and make progress.
- The most-able pupils achieved well in 2014, especially in mathematics.
- The leadership of early years is good. By the end of the Reception Year, the outcomes for children are good. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is above average. Children are well prepared and are ready for the challenges of Year 1.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the academy. They enjoy school, work hard and do their best to achieve well.
- Pupils feel safe and staff ensure they are always kept safe.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning across the academy. The executive Principal joined an inspector in observing several lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers.
- Discussions took place with representatives of the local improvement board and with an associate Principal who is currently developing middle leadership at this and another academy.
- An inspector selected small groups of pupils and listened to them reading, and also met with a group of pupils to hear their views of the academy and their experiences of learning.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the academy’s documents including information on pupils’ progress, the academy’s development plan and its evaluation of its work. The policies and procedures for child protection and safeguarding pupils were scrutinised.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 12 parents who completed Ofsted’s online questionnaire (Parent View). The views of 20 staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire were examined.

Inspection team

Alan Lemon, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lindsay Hall

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Darfield Primary converted to become an academy on 1 September 2013. Its sponsor is the Navigate Academies Trust. When its predecessor school, Darfield Valley Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged as satisfactory.
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average. A minority of these pupils have medical conditions that keep them off school for various periods of time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The academy offers part-time nursery provision for up to 52 children and full-time provision for children in Reception Year.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The Navigate Academies Trust recently established a local improvement board for the governance of its group of academies in the Barnsley area. The board is made up of a professional membership recruited by the Trust and representatives of parents and the community.
- The executive Principal leads this and another local academy within the Trust, dividing her time each week between the two according to need. There is also a head of academy who was appointed in January 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing and extending middle leadership in order to increase the academy's capacity for rapid improvement
 - ensuring that English and mathematics have dedicated and effective leadership to quickly and effectively implement and build upon the improvements already started in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that there is consistently effective use made of assessments by all teachers in planning challenging work for pupils of all abilities
 - making sure that all teachers' marking is rigorous in correcting mistakes, giving clear advice on improving work and checking that pupils have acted on advice given.
- Encourage pupils to read widely and for enjoyment by:
 - making better use of the library and re-stocking it with a broad range of books and other reading material that is relevant and interesting to all pupils
 - ensuring that there is sufficient time in the school day for all pupils to read their choice of books.
- Ensure that pupils in Key Stage 2 have good opportunities to learn and make progress in all aspects of mathematics, and that they use their mathematical knowledge and skills frequently to solve a variety of problems.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- The academy has not improved sufficiently for its overall effectiveness to be good. Leaders are maintaining the standards of achievement and teaching. They manage behaviour effectively and are improving attendance. However, senior leaders are challenged in creating the momentum to drive improvement any harder than they already do without the stable, permanent staff team to whom wider leadership roles can be delegated.
- The high number of temporary staff employed at present slows improvement. This is exacerbated by the executive Principal needing to divide her time with the other academy that she leads. The executive Principal and the head of the academy, who was very recently appointed, are finding their feet as the academy's senior leadership team.
- Middle leadership is underdeveloped. Teachers who had leadership and management responsibilities previously have relinquished their roles and have not yet been replaced. Senior leaders have taken charge of English and mathematics and this is sufficient to sustain some improvement. Their initiatives, aimed at raising achievement in reading, writing and mathematics, are all at an early stage of implementation but are showing signs of positive impact in most classes.
- The middle leaders who are being developed currently have responsibility for the early years and the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Both have emerged as effective leaders. However, there are no teachers currently taking the reins and leading English and mathematics.
- Leaders and staff are very clear about the academy's values regarding the well-being of pupils and engagement with parents. Behaviour is managed effectively and good attendance is being promoted.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. The academy's procedures for keeping pupils safe are rigorous. Staff stay alert and are quick to pick up issues which they diligently report and, when required, raise with the appropriate agencies.
- Leaders are committed to advancing equality of opportunity; they succeed in including pupils who are vulnerable and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs. Equality is undermined to an extent because not all pupils achieve equally well. The manner in which leaders tackle discrimination and foster good relations within the academy, with parents, the community and other schools is effective.
- Senior leaders conduct wide-ranging checks on the academy's work. They observe teaching, scrutinise planning and pupils' work, and analyse progress data. This informs decisions about how teachers can improve their performance and deals resolutely with teaching that is below the required standards.
- Leaders get an external view from their representative of the local improvement board. The representative's work is incisive but at an early stage in terms of pinpointing areas for improvement. A wide range of accessible data is being collated; this sharpens the focus on strengths and weaknesses and helps to strengthen the academy's direction of improvement.
- Good links with other academies are used to share good practice and check the accuracy of teachers' assessments.
- The pupil premium is spent wisely. It is focused appropriately on raising attainment and strengthening the attitudes to learning of disadvantaged pupils. Some impact is evident on improving disadvantaged pupils' progress, thereby narrowing the gap with other pupils.
- The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. It is currently being developed in line with the new National Curriculum and its assessment arrangements. Improvements being made in English and mathematics reflect the changes. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well advanced through all of their work. Through religious education, pupils learn about world faiths. British values are effectively promoted. Each class has developed its charter of rights to which they are expected to adhere, which includes a right to have a voice and be heard. The school council is formed each year through democratic processes reflecting general election practices.
- The physical education and sports premium buys sports expertise for the academy, leading to a variety of activities and competitions raising participation and improving performance. In particular, this has increased the number and variety of after-school activities such as multi-skills, dance and cheerleading. These are popular and well attended by pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The local improvement board, which was recently formed, provides the statutory governance of the academy. Its membership has a broad range of qualifications, expertise and experience to make the board effective in understanding the academy's work, holding it to account and challenging its leaders.
 - Robust engagement with the academy and its leaders is evident in the thorough analysis of

comprehensive information gathered about the academy's work. Details of the quality of teaching and of pupils' progress and attainment are understood. The academy's report on the performance of teachers, decisions on rewarding good teaching and tackling underperformance are taken carefully into account. The board has a clear and realistic view of what good teaching and performance should look like; this informs the board's challenge and how its members would like to see the academy improve.

- While the board is moving strongly in the right direction in holding the academy to account, it is too early to see its full impact on improvement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The very large majority of pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Most attend regularly and the issue of the stubborn few who miss days is being tackled effectively. The academy's overall attendance figures are improving and are very near to the national average.
- Pupils respond well to the academy's ethos and values of respect, positive regard for others and good relationships. They thrive on the academy's friendly atmosphere and enjoy school. This is reflected in their good behaviour in lessons, on the playground and in the dining hall. A few of the youngest pupils chatter occasionally during lessons, reflecting some inconsistency in teachers' expectations.
- In lessons, pupils settle quickly to work, thinking ahead about organising the books and materials they need. Pupils engage immediately with the teacher, listening carefully to instructions and the introduction to the lesson. They are interested and keen to make contributions, for example, by recalling what they have learnt in a previous lesson or showing how they worked out a multiplication sum.
- The many opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs and small groups in lessons lead to high levels of positive cooperation and purposeful discussion of work. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are fully included by others in shared working.
- The vast majority of pupils are self-confident, responsible and capable of initiative. The few pupils who are vulnerable and unsure benefit from time in the nurture group which builds their confidence, interest in learning and positive attitudes to learning.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe as a result.
- Behaviour is managed effectively and pupils adhere closely to the high expectations set by staff. Records show that behaviour has improved and the number of previous exclusions has declined significantly.
- Pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly way. They look out for each other and show concern. This contributes effectively to pupils feeling safe and secure.
- Pupils say that they cannot recall any incidents of bullying and confirm that they have not experienced any. They learn about bullying in all of its different forms and are alert to what counts as inappropriate behaviours. Teaching the risks in using digital technologies has a high profile in the academy so pupils are aware of the dangers and how to deal with them.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching lacks the necessary consistency of quality across the academy to be effective in producing good achievement for all pupils. Improvements in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics are underway. However, they are at an early stage and, overall, not yet impacting enough on pupils' progress. Driving these improvements swiftly is hampered by the lack of a stable team of teachers.
- A lack of challenge is seen in some lessons and in workbooks for different groups of pupils. This reflects the limited use of assessment by some teachers to plan the appropriate levels of work for different groups of learners.
- In mathematics in Key Stage 1, for example, pupils completed simple additions that were too easy for some of them so they were not moving ahead as quickly as they should. Worksheets in different subjects are frequently used; sometimes they are the same for all pupils and do not always stretch pupils' knowledge and skills.
- In a Key Stage 2 lesson, the less-able pupils were not effectively supported with a reading exercise that they found difficult. They struggled on for a time and then gave up. In the same lesson, the most-able pupils received a good amount of attention, were challenged well and improved their reading skills at a

good pace.

- When teachers mark pupils' work, they do not always point out mistakes and correct spellings. They do not always give clear advice on how pupils might improve their work.
- Where teaching is effective in supporting good learning, it is planned well and includes a range of activities that engage pupils in their learning and spark their interest. Questioning encourages pupils to think deeply and checks effectively on their learning and understanding. This provides an appropriate level of challenge.
- In a Key Stage 2 writing activity, pupils were asked to choose from a variety of interesting words to begin sentences to enliven their writing. Pupils were inspired by the very effective way in which this task was introduced and were clear about the challenge. They set about work with enthusiasm, forming sentences in ways that were new to them and moving their writing to the next level. Their progress was constantly assessed and the pupils received good feedback at key points in the lesson; this helped to accelerate their progress and deepen their understanding. Pupils' achievements were well summed up at the end of the lesson and pupils' love of expressing their thoughts in writing was of a high order.
- Teaching assistants are often highly effective in supporting learning. They leave it to pupils to make connections rather than providing too much support and keep up a flow of challenging questions that deepen pupils' understanding.
- Teaching assistants assigned to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are expert in managing care and medical conditions so that no lesson time is lost. They know pupils well and are effective in keeping them engaged in learning and making progress.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- From their different starting points, pupils do not make steady progress over their time in the academy. The teaching they receive is not consistently effective enough to ensure that pupils build systematically on what they know and can do. Gaps that develop in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are narrowed to a limited extent by the rapid progress that they make in Year 2 and at the end of Key Stage 2. However, this is not the same in all classes.
- At the end of Year 2 in 2014, pupils' attainment in reading and writing was average but below average in mathematics. The academy's current data for pupils in Year 2 indicate no significant improvement in attainment in reading, writing or mathematics.
- Overall, attainment was average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2014. The academy's current data for pupils in Year 6 indicate that attainment is average in reading and writing but below average in mathematics.
- The most-able Year 6 pupils achieved well in 2014 and they performed particularly well in mathematics. Recent improvements in the ways reading, writing and mathematics are taught have raised the challenge for the most able so that they continue to make more than expected progress and achieve well.
- An improvement in teaching letters and the sounds they make (phonics) has meant that a higher than average proportion of Year 1 pupils are attaining the expected standard in the phonics screening check.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in comparison to that of their classmates was two years behind in mathematics and one year behind in reading and writing. Disadvantaged pupils were approximately one year behind pupils nationally in reading and mathematics and two terms behind in writing. A significant number of disadvantaged pupils in the 2014 Year 6 cohort had medical conditions requiring extended periods of absence or joined the school other than at normal times.
- Current data, supported by inspection evidence from observing learning and scrutiny of pupils' written work, indicate that disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress and that gaps in attainment are closing.
- The very large majority of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the progress expected of them, given their starting points. This is because they receive effective support.
- The progress that pupils make in reading varies considerably as they move up through the academy.
- In Years 1 and 2, the most-able pupils use the sounds letters make effectively to read new and difficult words. The less-able pupils are not so accomplished in linking letters and their sounds but make expected progress by reading daily.
- The extent of, and the time given to, pupils' reading is limited and this was commented on by Year 6 pupils. While pupils practise reading regularly and improve skills, Year 6 pupils nevertheless struggled to name authors. The library does not have enough books relevant to older pupils and their interests, and is

not used enough to encourage wider reading.

- The work in pupils' mathematics books shows that pupils spend most of their time learning and practising number skills and not enough time on other aspects of mathematics such as shape, space and measure. In particular, there are too few opportunities for pupils to apply the mathematical skills they have to solving problems.

The early years provision

is good

- Children's progress in early years is good. From starting points below those typical for their age when they enter the Nursery, the proportion of children who reached a good level of development in 2014 was above the national average. Current data indicate that the proportion reaching a good level of development in 2015 remains above average.
- More children in 2014 reached what is expected for their age in communication and literacy than children nationally; this was also the case in all other areas of learning in early years. As a result, children make a good start to learning and are prepared well for Year 1, even though their good rate of progress is not being replicated in Key Stage 1 because teaching does not build on their learning effectively.
- Good teaching, which is particularly strong in the Reception Year, ensures that all children make rapid progress. Children have lots of opportunities for counting, reading and writing indoors and outside. They are encouraged well to develop these key skills by staff.
- In the Nursery Year, children count confidently up to 10 and many sort objects into short, medium and long groups. In the Reception Year, children are competent and confident in using letters and the sounds they make. They progress rapidly in learning letter sounds and read effectively using their knowledge of single letter sounds and combinations of letter sounds.
- Between Nursery and Reception Years, most children move quickly from mark making to forming letters and onto writing words. One child, for example, following on from making a flower picture, wrote the caption 'dandy lion (sic) and seeds', underlining her literacy skills and knowledge of the world.
- Children are thoroughly engaged and stimulated by the wide range of work and activities which leads, by the time they finish the Reception Year, to good behaviour and them developing positive attitudes to learning.
- Good leadership and management of the early years make sure children are kept safe and secure. Leadership benefits from clear aims which ensure that provision is matched well to children's needs. Leaders' checks on the effectiveness of provision drive relevant improvement plans. Parents are encouraged to be closely involved in their children's learning and the number of parents doing so has increased. Work on reading, spelling and counting is sent home regularly.

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	139942
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	450177

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	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Soden
Principal	Alison Green
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
Telephone number	01226 753048
Fax number	Not applicable
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