

Highbank Primary and Nursery School

Winscombe Mount, Clifton Estate, Nottingham, NG11 9FP

Inspection dates 8–9 July 2015

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

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are too low. Despite recent improvements, teaching and learning have not been consistently good enough in all year groups to enable all pupils to make good progress over time.
- Too many pupils struggle to understand the meaning behind the written word because their comprehensions skills are weak. Pupils' communication skills are also under-developed and their vocabulary is limited.
- Weaknesses in pupils' use of grammar, punctuation and spelling limit their progress in writing. Pupils' handwriting is sometimes untidy and staff handwriting does not always provide a good example for pupils to follow.
- Pupils do not have a secure enough knowledge of number facts or of different ways to calculate, to enable them to solve increasingly complex mathematical problems.
- When pupils learn different skills in English and in mathematics, they do not always have the opportunity to practise using those skills in other subjects and activities in order to master them.
- Teachers' marking does not always show pupils what they need to do to improve. When it does, pupils do not always act on the guidance given and use what they have learned in their other work.

The school has the following strengths

- Teachers' performance is managed well. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are improving quickly.
- The headteacher's excellent leadership and his unrelenting focus on raising standards have driven improvement rapidly in the past year.
- Staff and pupils have all risen to the high expectations that leaders, including governors and the trust, now have of them. As a result, most pupils have made good progress this year.
- Nursery and Reception-aged children make good progress. The proportion reaching a good level of development this year exceeds the national average for last year.
- Parents recognise and appreciate the significant improvements in the school in the past year. They also say the academy keeps their children safe. Pupils behave well. They feel safe and are very safety-conscious.
- The provision for pupils' personal development, including their health, safety and physical and emotional well-being is a strength of the school. It has brought about very positive changes in pupils' attitudes to learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in parts of 21 sessions. The headteacher joined inspectors for two of the observations.
- Inspectors analysed the work in pupils’ books and talked to pupils formally and informally about their work and about the academy. They also observed pupils’ behaviour at play and lunchtime.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 25 parents who responded to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View. They also gained the views of parents directly as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors considered the 27 responses to the questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the academy’s data on current pupils’ progress, its self-evaluation document and the school improvement plan. They evaluated other planning and monitoring documents, including those relating to teaching, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior and other leaders, the Chief Executive Officer from the trust, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body.
- On the second day of the inspection, Reception children were out of school on an educational visit.

Inspection team

Doris Bell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Danielle Thomas

Additional Inspector

Michael Lavelle

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school became an academy on 1 October 2013. It is larger than the average-sized primary school. It is sponsored by the Transform Trust.
- When its predecessor school, also known as Highbank Primary School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement.
- Historically, nursery-aged children have attended school part time. This year, they moved to being full time in February. There are plans to have Nursery children in school full time from October 2015. Reception-aged children already attend full time in September each year.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is high. The pupil premium provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- In 2014, the academy did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There was considerable staff disruption after the school became an academy. The present headteacher took up post in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching consistently good or better throughout the school and raise achievement faster in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - in reading, improving pupils' comprehension skills and ensuring they have the vocabulary they need to be able to express themselves clearly when they are talking and writing about what they have read
 - in writing, improving pupils' grammar, punctuation, spelling and handwriting, and giving them more opportunities to talk, draft and redraft their writing so that they learn faster how to improve it
 - in mathematics, sharpening pupils' ability to calculate mentally so that they can solve increasingly complex mathematical problems faster
 - ensuring that activities that follow sessions where pupils learn new skills include opportunities for pupils to practise, use and apply those skills straight away, and subsequently in different subjects, while being mindful of those pupils who might already have the skills and need to move on faster
 - bringing all marking up to the level of the best so that pupils are always clear about what they need to do to improve, and ensuring that pupils act on the guidance given, do their corrections and remember not to make the same mistakes in subsequent work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- On his appointment, the headteacher very quickly gained the trust of staff, pupils and parents and moulded a team set on improving pupils' achievement. Through his excellent leadership, together with the staff and governors he has created a calm, positive and very purposeful learning environment. As a result, staff morale is high, pupils' behaviour is good and their learning is beginning to flourish.
- The leadership of teaching is strong and effective. Teachers' performance is managed well. Despite disruptions caused by maternity leave and resignations, leaders have established successful practices to raise the quality of teaching and learning. They include, for example, half-termly meetings to discuss the progress of individuals and groups of pupils and to check the accuracy of assessments. During these meetings, teachers must explain reasons for any pupil's lack of progress and what they are doing about it.
- Checks on teaching and learning are frequent. They involve formal and informal observations, analyses of pupils' work and discussions with pupils and staff. School leaders use information about pupils' progress effectively to identify and support individual pupils or groups at risk of underachieving and, where necessary, to target support for staff to improve their teaching.
- Senior members of the trust that sponsors the academy have assisted in monitoring and training staff and helping them to improve their teaching. Staff have used the support well. As a result, even where teaching is weaker, it has improved over the year because teachers have listened to and acted on guidance given.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate. The initial action plan, written when the headteacher took over last year, set the right priorities for the academy. The review of its effectiveness involves staff, governors, parents and the trust and is well under way with a view to setting an agenda for further improvement in the next five years.
- Those who manage different subjects have, under the direction of the headteacher, also set a clear agenda for improvement. They are new to their roles and are developing their skills but their impact is already being seen in the improved progress the pupils are now making. Plans are securely in place, and staff appointed, to establish a robust management system in September, to make the school's capacity to improve even stronger.
- The curriculum is planned appropriately to serve the needs of the pupils. It has a very sharp and necessary focus on English and mathematics, which is mirrored in displays in classrooms and around the school. The displays also include evidence of a breadth of study, through topics, that show all subjects are taught and successes celebrated. Staff are on the way to implementing, in September, new assessment procedures that take account of the changes in the new National Curriculum.
- Although not explicit, provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including their understanding of British values, is implicit in the academy's work. Pupils like learning about different faiths and cultures, saying it helps them to understand and know about different ways of life. The academy prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Academy leaders, staff and governors all ensure that discrimination of any sort is not tolerated and that equality of opportunity is assured for everyone. Pupils spoken to readily defended an individual's right to speak freely, and be free of harassment or discrimination of any sort.
- Assembly themes cover topical issues, such as the Tunisian terrorism attack, in a way that helps pupils to understand the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. The academy develops in the pupils a strong sense of justice, equality and individual liberty, and a developing understanding of the benefits of living in a democratic society.
- The provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. The headteacher has been managing it in the absence of the post holder. The pupils' individual learning needs are met well and support programmes are constantly monitored to ensure their effectiveness.

- The effective use of pupil premium funding means that gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the academy and nationally are now closing. Leaders have used the funding to subsidise, for example, the cost of: additional support staff and other resources to support learning; individual tuition; breakfast club and mid-morning snacks; educational visits; and support for families in crisis when it affects the well-being of the children.
- Effective use of the primary schools sports funding has enabled the academy to extend the range of games and physical education activities available to pupils. It has also helped to raise achievement in physical education and encourage greater participation in different sorts of sport. For example, pupils have had the opportunity to experience rock climbing and ice skating during enrichment afternoons, which they thoroughly enjoy.
- Safeguarding procedures, including those for child protection, meet current government guidelines and statutory requirements. Staff understand how to identify pupils at risk of harm and what to do if they have any concerns about pupils or adults. All training is kept up to date.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors have a good understanding of published data and that held by the school. They hold leaders and staff to account for how well the pupils are doing. They gain information from the comprehensive reports they receive from the headteacher and from their own visits to school to check data, visit classrooms and talk to pupils and staff.
 - Governors support the headteacher well in making decisions about pay related to teachers' performance. They know the quality of teaching throughout the school and have ensured that decisions about staffing for the new school year are based on helping improvement to gather even more pace.
 - Governors set appropriate targets against which they can monitor the school's progress. They use their joint expertise well to monitor the impact of their spending decisions, including the pupil premium and the sports funding, on pupils' progress. They challenge leaders and staff well, while supporting them effectively in their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It plays a major part in the improved progress they are now making. Behaviour is equally good in lessons, around the academy and in the playground. Pupils and their parents say behaviour has improved significantly in the past year. Pupils' behaviour in assemblies is excellent.
- Pupils understand the need for rules so that the academy and, ultimately, society can function well. They feel the headteacher is strict but fair and that staff follow his lead. Pupils are very aware of the stage at which, if they do not change their behaviour, sanctions will be called into play. They say it is not worth getting to that point.
- Staff do a great deal to foster good behaviour and good attitudes in the pupils. Pupils respect and care for others and for the school environment. They report that they like assemblies because they are interesting and they can celebrate each other's successes, be they as a result of work in or outside of the academy.
- Pupils who have behavioural difficulties respond well to the good support they receive. The academy can pinpoint specific examples where it has been particularly successful, for example, helping pupils to remain in school and learn. There have been no exclusions this year, and there has been a marked drop in the number and type of behavioural incidents. Attendance is also improving and is now broadly average.
- Most Year 6 pupils have a clear sense of the progress they are making. For example, some proudly announced that they had made two levels of progress in the year and praised the staff for helping them to realise that they could do well. They described as a major change, what they called the 'can do' culture that now exists throughout the school and the confidence it has given them in their ability to learn.
- Pupils have a great sense of pride in the academy which, they say, is helped by the new school uniform, for which the school provided a starter kit, and the sense of belonging to the academy that it gives them. They do not, however, consistently display the same sense of pride in the work in their books.

Handwriting is sometimes untidy, and mathematical calculations are not always set out clearly enough, resulting in some unnecessary errors.

- The pupils' previous lack of self-confidence means that, despite attempts by leaders, they are not yet taking on responsibilities usually found in primary schools, for example, as school councillors, monitors or play leaders. Staff are working with them effectively to build such confidence, with a view to introducing these roles again in the new school year.
- The school goes the extra mile to ensure the health, welfare and well-being of its pupils. The breakfast club provides a very happy, safe and positive start to the day for the pupils who attend it. They enjoy breakfast and a range of individual then whole group activities that contribute effectively to the development of their social skills. The academy provides the children with a healthy mid-morning snack to ensure that, in addition to having school lunches, children are well-fed and able to learn.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe at all times, including when using the internet and social networking sites. They know what to do should anything untoward happen and that they can approach any member of staff for help if they need it.
- Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take. They say there has been a huge reduction in incidents of bullying and that it is not tolerated on any level. Pupils explained at length how, for example, name-calling and other derogatory language can hurt just as much as physical bullying. They have a keen awareness of the dangers associated with belonging to gangs, holding extremist views or being pressurised into doing something they might disagree with.
- Risk assessments are thorough, including for school trips. Leaders also ensure that staff and visitors are fully checked to ensure their suitability to work with children.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has not always enabled pupils to make good progress. Marking and other feedback given to pupils still do not consistently help pupils to see what they need to do to improve. These aspects of the teaching have limited pupils' progress over time but are now improving.
- A major factor in the improvement taking place now is that the staff have risen well to the high expectations that leaders now have of them. Their willingness to improve how they assess, track and record pupils' progress, and account for it, is particularly noteworthy.
- Teachers are fully aware of the different groups of pupils within their classes and most take account of their different needs in their planning. Therefore, all pupils, from the least to the most able, and those who are disadvantaged pupils, are now making good progress. Working together, teaching and support staff ensure that all pupils are fully included in group and whole-class sessions so that they can learn from each other.
- Staff teach phonics well across early years and into Years 1 and 2. Guided reading sessions are organised well to ensure that all pupils get the right level of support to help them gain the skills they need to read and to understand what they are reading. Teaching in Year 3 and beyond is helping pupils there to catch up on reading strategies that they had not learned in earlier years.
- Across the school, the emphasis on improving writing and mathematics skills is also proving effective. While there are still some variations in progress, evident in lessons and in pupils' books, it is clear that teaching has improved and pupils' progress has become faster as the year progressed.
- During lessons, staff give pupils' constructive feedback on their work and most are skilled at adjusting learning to suit pupils' different rates of progress. Such feedback is not always evident in the marking of pupils' work. Here, what pupils have done well is often commented upon, areas for improvement less so. There are examples of good marking in Year 2 and Year 6 especially. In the rest of the school, marking requires improvement to be effective.

- Staff are beginning to involve pupils more in assessing their own work. They do not yet pay enough attention to the targets they set for pupils when they do this. Nor do they check that pupils act on the guidance given through marking, and do their corrections. Therefore, although pupils recognise that their learning is improving, they are not as clear as they might be about the progress they are making towards their targets.
- Teaching and support staff modify questioning well in relation to pupils' levels of ability. They probe and extend pupils' understanding and are increasingly challenging pupils to speak clearly, gain confidence in their own ability, and use specific subject-based vocabulary in their responses. This was particularly noted in a persuasive writing session in Year 5 and in a mathematics session in Year 6.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Weaknesses in teaching and assessment have led to underachievement in the past. Pupils are still catching up on lost ground. The situation is changing because strong leadership is improving teaching rapidly. Consequently, gaps in pupils' learning are beginning to close.
- Standards were below the national average in Year 2 and Year 6 in 2014. They continue to be below average in 2015. However, albeit with some variations, pupils in all year groups have made good progress this year and particularly in Year 6. Pupils throughout the school are now working at higher levels than in the past. Early indications from the national test results indicate that the school is likely to meet the government's current floor standards this year.
- Children start school with skills that are below those typical for their age. Communication, language and literacy skills are particularly weak. Children make good progress in Nursery and Reception and, particularly for boys and disadvantaged children, progress is sometimes outstanding. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development is now ahead of that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening test was below average in 2014. It has risen sharply in 2015, bringing the results to just above the 2014 national figure. Year 1 pupils' reading skills are now broadly typical for their age.
- Guided reading sessions, a wider range of texts and opportunities for pupils who are not heard reading at home to be heard in school, are helping to improve reading skills. Nevertheless, comprehension skills remain weak. Pupils too often do not have the vocabulary they need to express themselves clearly when talking about what they have read.
- Writing remains weak because pupils do not have a firm enough grasp of grammar, punctuation and spelling, and, as in reading, the vocabulary to use when they write at length. Pupils' handwriting and that of some staff is not always easy to read, and pupils' writing does not always sustain the reader's attention. As with reading, leaders are tackling these issues robustly and pupils' writing shows improvement, term-by-term this year.
- In mathematics, pupils' ability to calculate rapidly is limited because they do not know their multiplication tables and other number facts well enough. Weaknesses in pupils' reading sometimes hinders their learning in mathematics because pupils struggle to work out what a problem means, which calculation to use and why.
- The most-able pupils make good progress. The impact of the academy's work this year means that more pupils are working at the higher levels in all year groups. Early indications from the national test results for 2015 are that more pupils have reached Level 5 in reading, writing and mathematics, as might be expected from the work in pupils' books.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has also improved this year and is now good. The focus on improving teaching for all groups has led to a reduction in long-term support programmes. This is because staff understand who needs such support and who needs focused teaching for a short period of time to help them learn. Well-briefed support staff assist pupils in making good progress.

- The gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the academy and nationally have narrowed considerably this year. In 2014, the pupils were approximately two years behind pupils in the academy and nationally in reading. In writing, they were about one-and-a-half years behind pupils in the academy and two-and-a-half years behind pupils nationally. In mathematics, they were over a year behind pupils in the academy and almost two years behind pupils nationally. They also made less progress than other pupils in the school and nationally.
- Data in the academy for this year show that the situation has changed significantly. While attainment in reading is nearly four terms behind other pupils in the academy, attainment in writing and mathematics is just over a term behind. Data for Years 3 to 5 show that the gaps have narrowed significantly there, too, showing that, although they remain wider than national in Years 1 and 2, work in hand is closing the gaps as pupils move through the school.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about sport. They appreciate and value the wide range of opportunities available to them and are particularly proud of their success in competitive support, particularly in winning the football league this year.

The early years provision

is good

- Leadership of the early years is good. It has secured and sustained improvements in achievement and teaching last year and this. As a result, children make rapid progress and are now prepared well for their work in Year 1.
- Teaching is good. Effective planning ensures that all aspects of learning are covered and activities are engaging for the children so that they become curious and want to find out more. Additional adults are deployed effectively. Teachers brief them well so that they know what the children need to do to learn and develop, and make good progress.
- Good links between home and school ensure that parents have many opportunities to be involved in their children's learning. Staff keep parents well-informed as to how their children are doing. Recorded assessments of the children's learning are thorough. They provide a good picture of what the children have done and learned, although not always how well, or what they need to do next. Therefore, occasionally, staff miss opportunities to stretch the most-able children in particular.
- Adults ensure that children are safe, well cared for and learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Children are supervised well at all times and they display appropriately safe behaviour. Staff set the children a good example of how to socialise, interact and communicate with each other and adults. As a result, children behave well, learn to share and take turns, and concentrate on what they are doing. They play and learn amicably alongside each other, indoors and out.
- The strong emphasis that staff place on teaching phonics means that children quickly develop early reading and writing skills. The improved phonics results in Year 1 this year bear testimony to this. Activities that follow focused sessions with adults do not always include opportunities for children to practise and consolidate new skills so that their progress can be even quicker.

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	140017
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	450082

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	289
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Day
Headteacher	Giles Civil
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
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