

# Halfway Junior School

Halfway Centre, Halfway, Sheffield S20 4TA

## Inspection dates

19–20 January 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | Good                 |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good                 |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | Good                 |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | Good                 |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Halfway Junior School is a good school. The headteacher has been inspirational in leading rapid improvement in the quality of teaching, behaviour and the monitoring of pupils' progress.
- The high morale and motivation of the staff and governors are clearly reflected in their commitment and actions to help the school improve.
- Pupils make good progress across a wide range of subjects, especially writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Outcomes at the end of Year 6 are typically above the national average in reading, writing, mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Teachers have high expectations for all pupils and well-planned activities capture their interest allowing them to learn as a whole class, in groups or independently.
- The most-able pupils make rapid progress as they are challenged to reach standards well above those expected for their age, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils, at the end of Year 6, attain standards well above the national average in writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Expectations for behaviour, in and out of the classroom, are consistently high and pupils are keen to show they have the attitudes and skills to be successful 'Halfway learners'.
- Pupils like coming to school, attendance is above the national average and punctuality is excellent. Pupils feel safe and are extremely well cared for.
- The highly positive culture of the school and the exciting curriculum contribute to the excellent personal development of pupils.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teaching assistants are not fully trained to successfully support pupils before and after learning to ensure they do not fall behind.
- Teachers' expertise in some subjects does not yet allow them to help pupils confidently use reasoning and problem-solving skills to fully deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- The school website has not been kept up to date with all required information in a regular manner.
- Not all pupils are confident in how to maintain a healthy lifestyle through healthy eating and exercise.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the progress that pupils make by:
  - developing the skills of all teaching assistants to successfully support pupils in learning new skills, especially those who find learning difficult
  - continuing to develop teachers' expertise across all subjects, especially mathematics, so that pupils are given regular opportunities to deepen their learning and show mastery of a subject by confidently applying reasoning and problem-solving skills
  
- Continue to strengthen leadership and management by:
  - governors ensuring that the school website is always up to date and meets all requirements
  - further developing opportunities for pupils to gain and apply their knowledge of how healthy eating and exercise can have a positive impact on lifestyle.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- 'Building our dream school together', the school ethos, is the driving force behind the headteacher's passionate determination to bring about rapid improvement in the quality of teaching, behaviour, outcomes and the monitoring of pupils' progress.
- Staff and governors know how good the school can be and work tirelessly to support improvement.
- Phase leaders are effective and have contributed to the improvement in teaching and learning. They observe lessons, scrutinise pupils' work and ensure that best practice is regularly shared across the school. Pupils' progress is regularly checked by phase leaders and, if the progress of a pupil begins to slow, appropriate, tailored support is put into place. Frequent checks are made to ensure this support is helping the pupil to catch up.
- Staff are encouraged to continually improve and this is supported through regular training opportunities and thorough checks by the senior leaders on the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders regularly watch teachers at work and look at the quality of pupils' learning over time. Staff have challenging performance management targets that are linked to pupils' progress and school priorities.
- The senior leaders have an accurate picture of how well the school is doing and have identified the priorities for future improvements. For example, as a consequence of the many recent changes to the National Curriculum, there is a training need to further develop some teachers' expertise to support pupils' confident use of reasoning and problem-solving skills to fully master their knowledge, understanding and skills within a subject – especially in mathematics.
- 'Stones and Bones' and 'Arabian Nights' are topic titles that offer pupils exciting learning opportunities across all school subjects. Visits and visitors all bring learning to life. Good examples are the Year 3 and 4 trip to Cresswell Crag to explore caves or the visit from a Muslim lady to help pupils explore her life and faith. When planning the curriculum teachers take account of pupils' interests and offer opportunities to learn independently at home. For example, Years 3 and 4 were asked to research skeletons and many pupils were motivated to create their own.
- Although topics cover some learning about how to make healthy lifestyle choices, with regard to food and exercise, not all pupils apply their knowledge to their lifestyle. More planned opportunities to explore healthy choices would increase pupil confidence.
- British values pervade the school. A pupil wrote to the Prime Minister following the terrorist attack in Paris to express their concern and desire to build a tolerant, law-abiding society. This reflected the views actively promoted across the school, showing that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning is an outstanding feature of this school. Daily opportunities are given for pupils to reflect on life and the part they play within the community of the school. Peer mediators from Year 5 and 6 are well respected and help pupils resolve minor problems. The wide range of charitable works, for example the Macmillan Big Coffee Morning and events in the community, such as singing at the local care home or in Sheffield Cathedral reflect the commitment of the school to this area of learning.
- School leaders, including the governors, ensure that the pupil premium is used to good effect. Disadvantaged pupils and other pupils make similar progress in all subjects across the school.
- The primary school sports funding has led to a rise in the quality and breadth of physical education teaching. Pupils learn dance, gymnastics and many team sports, including rugby and netball. Participation in extra-curricular sports, although not as high as the school would like, is increasing, especially in karate, and the school teams are regularly successful in competitive events, for example kwik cricket.
- Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in the life of the school. Parent volunteers regularly listen to children read and the termly gardening club allows parents to improve the learning environment, for example by painting the external tables and fencing.
- Daily 'family learning', the breakfast club open to parents and siblings, the regular social events organised by the parent and community group and the active support given to families by the learning mentors, are just some of the ways in which the school tackles all forms of discrimination and fosters both good relations and equality of opportunity.
- The local authority has provided highly effective support to the school over a number of years. They enabled the appointment of the executive headteacher, who has increased the capacity of the leadership

to bring about rapid improvements in teaching, behaviour and monitoring.

- Partnership working with both the Westfield family of schools and Shortbrook Primary, with which Halfway Junior is federated, has allowed the school to benefit in many ways. Staff plan together and share expertise, allowing for an increase in the number of exciting learning opportunities offered to pupils. Standards seen in workbooks and assessments are regularly checked across the schools, ensuring expectations for progress and attainment are set high.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The governing body is a strength of the school. Governors are highly supportive of the leaders' vision for how good the school can be and share their enthusiasm and commitment to rapidly drive forward improvements.
  - Governance is shared across the two schools in the federation, allowing for strategic financial management which greatly benefits both schools. The federation enables the schools to benefit from the support of an executive headteacher and specialist staff.
  - Governors know the school well as they receive regular reports from senior staff and find out information for themselves through focused visits to the school. They use their skills well; they regularly and independently analyse and review the performance of both pupils and staff. Governors challenge underperformance and closely monitor plans for improvement.
  - Governors have not regularly checked the school website to ensure that it is up to date to keep parents well informed and that it meets all requirements. By the end of the inspection, work had been undertaken so that the website met all statutory requirements.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Expectations for what pupils can achieve are consistently high and this helps pupils learn well. For example, in a Year 5 English lesson pupils had to use descriptive language to bring alive the personality traits of Sinbad. Pupils knew what they had to do and set about this challenging task with concentration and determination.
- Well-planned activities capture pupils' interest and allow them to work well. In a Year 4 science lesson pupils were investigating the effect of different liquids on eggs. They had to take turns and discuss their findings within a group. Pupils showed well-developed skills of listening and cooperating, and this allowed learning to take place at a good pace.
- Challenge for the most able is readily seen. In mathematics, for example, the most-able pupils in a Year 5 and 6 class were asked to share their knowledge of 'pi' and then apply this to complex shapes that incorporated elements of quadrangles, triangles and semi-circles. Pupils spoke of their enjoyment when given the opportunity to problem-solve and apply their reasoning.
- 'It is good to sometimes get it wrong as this helps you learn', was a typical response from pupils when talking about their learning. Pupils are regularly given the opportunity to learn from their mistakes when they respond to the comments that teachers make in their books. Teachers mark pupils' work in line with the marking policy and this helps pupils make good progress over time.
- Teaching assistants know pupils well and support their progress in and out of class. However, some teaching assistants are not yet fully trained in the full range of strategies to ensure pupils do not fall behind when they find the learning of a new skill to be tricky. Ongoing training is in place to further develop the skills of teaching assistants.
- A love of reading is promoted across the school. Pupils speak highly of being able to read every day as this helps them to read widely. Higher-order reading skills, which develop skills of comprehension, were observed in a guided-reading session when Year 4 pupils used 'I predict...' as the opening for statements when sharing their views on what had just been read.
- Pupils enjoy writing and clearly know how well they have learnt and used new writing skills through the use of 'cold' and 'hot' writing tasks. At the start of learning a new skill pupils complete a 'cold' piece of writing and this is compared to the final task given – the 'hot' task – when progress can be clearly seen. In discussion with inspectors pupils explained how these tasks really helped them own their learning.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Pupils are motivated learners who enjoy the wide range of resources and real-life problems that help make learning interesting. Practical investigations and problem-solving activities further allow pupils to explore and deepen their knowledge and understanding. As yet,

not all teachers are fully confident to offer these opportunities regularly.

- Pupils develop their English and mathematics skills across many subjects. In Year 6 history, a pupil wrote fluently about ancient Mesopotamia and compared life then with today; they were especially graphic when comparing punishments! In Year 5 books pupils had successfully used six-figure grid references to plot features, for example penguin colonies, during their geographical study of Antarctica.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** is good

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils and staff share the vision of 'Building our dream school together – being the best you can be'. Throughout the school there is a common understanding of how well the individual or group is supporting this vision. This has raised the aspirations and expectations of pupils and staff; aiming to 'be the best you can be' is allowing for exceptional personal development.
- The learning mentors in the school are central to offering highly targeted support for pupils. Their focus on building self-worth and helping pupils build on their strengths has a highly positive impact on the social, emotional and mental well-being of pupils.
- Attendance is above the national average and punctuality is excellent.
- Parents and staff overwhelmingly feel that pupils are well cared for and are safe. Pupils are actively taught how to keep themselves safe. For example, Year 4 learn water safety during swimming lessons. The school always ensures that all activities in and out of school are carefully planned and assessed to keep children safe.
- All staff complete safeguarding training and are confident in the procedures to ensure that pupils are well cared for. Learning mentors and senior leaders work closely with outside agencies to promote pupils' safety, especially those that are potentially vulnerable.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff model high standards of politeness and behaviour and all staff expect good behaviour at all times.
- The behaviour policy is consistently and fairly applied; pupils enjoy receiving 'golden tokens' for showing they have the attitudes and skills of a 'Halfway learner'.
- Adult support is required by some pupils to help them develop and maintain the high expectations for behaviour and learning, especially when they are working in a small group or independently. Low-level disruption is rare as the needs of pupils are known and appropriate support is given.
- Pupils have a strong voice through the democratically elected school council and regular whole-school opportunities to vote on changes, for example the use of the football pitch on Friday lunchtime. The school council is currently planning to meet with the catering staff to consider what changes to make to school lunch provision and the whole school is discussing possible changes to the dining room to help them make healthy choices.
- Pupils understand what is the difference between bullying and 'falling out'. They have a clear understanding of different forms of bullying including cyber bullying. Pupils say they can trust adults to act upon concerns. Parents and pupils acknowledge that bullying is infrequent and school records confirm this.

## **Outcomes for pupils** are good

- Pupils' progress has improved since the previous inspection. Across all year groups pupils are making consistently good or better progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Attainment in 2015 was above the national average in writing, mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. From the pupils' starting points, this shows good progress over time.
- 2015 saw a dip in the attainment and progress of a small number of Year 6 pupils in reading. The school has carefully looked into why this happened and has put into place a new programme of teaching to ensure that all pupils from Year 3 systematically develop their skills and confidence in using higher-order reading skills such as prediction and inference.

- The most-able pupils are aware that they are expected to tackle more challenging work than other pupils and to reach higher standards. Pupils are very positive about the opportunities to work independently and attend after-school sessions that stretch and broaden their learning. In 2015, in mathematics, writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling, a higher percentage than nationally of the most-able pupils achieved the highest Level 6, a standard well above that expected for their age.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Teaching assistants, learning mentors and teaching staff tailor support to meet their individual needs and this helps them attain well.
- Disadvantaged pupils in the school are making the same good progress, sometimes better, than other pupils. This reflects the improvements in the quality of teaching and the school's monitoring of pupils' progress since the last inspection. In 2015, the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in school had closed in writing, reading and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Disadvantaged pupils were under one term behind in mathematics. Compared to other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils were over a year ahead in writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling and just over half a term behind in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils by the end of Year 6 are well prepared for their 'step up' to secondary school as the proportions exceeding the expected levels of knowledge, understanding and skill are above the proportions found nationally in a range of subjects, including science.

## School details

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 107046    |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Sheffield |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 10002041  |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Junior   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Maintained   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 7–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 172  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Mr David Barker  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Mrs Anne Carter  |
| <b>Executive headteacher</b>               | Mrs Beverly Nicholson  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 0114 248 2629  |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.halfwayjuniorschool.org">www.halfwayjuniorschool.org</a>                       |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | <a href="mailto:enquiries@halfway-jun.sheffield.sch.uk">enquiries@halfway-jun.sheffield.sch.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 12–13 November 2013  |

## Information about this school

- Halfway Junior School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Since the previous inspection there has been a significant change in staffing, including the appointment of a new headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- The school is in a federation with Shortbrook Primary school and shares a governing body. The federation is supported by an executive headteacher.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is lower than the national average. These pupils are eligible for support through the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.
- The pre-school breakfast club was included as part of this inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes and two observations were undertaken jointly with a senior leader of the school. Small-group sessions led by teaching assistants were also observed both in and out of the classroom.
- The lead inspector met with three governors and a range of staff within the school. She also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Pupils from all year groups met with the inspectors to discuss their views on learning, behaviour, reading and safety. Inspectors spoke informally to many pupils during lessons, break and lunchtime. Views expressed by six pupils through the online pupil questionnaire were also considered.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons and reviewed work completed over time, in a wide range of subjects, with a senior leader.
- The inspectors scrutinised the school's review of its own performance and development, arrangements for safeguarding, systems for checking the quality of teaching and those for tracking pupils' progress.
- Thirty-six responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were analysed. The inspectors also spoke informally with parents at the school gate, during breakfast club and at 'Family Learning' time.
- The views of staff were gained from both meetings and from a review of 16 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Fiona Dixon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lynda Florence

Ofsted Inspector



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