

Old Earth Primary School

Lower Edge Road, Elland, West Yorkshire, HX5 9PL

Inspection dates

10–11 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Old Earth is led by an exceptional headteacher who inspires all pupils and staff to be the best they can be.
- Members of the governing body are extremely passionate about the school. They provide very effective challenge and support. Governors are highly visible around school, seeing the effectiveness of the school's work first-hand.
- Many children start the school with abilities below those typical for their age. Teachers' precision in teaching and the provision of vibrant and exciting activities assist children in making quick progress in the early years.
- Teaching is never less than good and much is outstanding. As a result, pupils make sustained and rapid gains as they move through the school so that, by Year 6, attainment and pupils' progress is significantly above that seen nationally in English and mathematics.
- At the heart of the school's effectiveness is the determination of all staff to help pupils to become confident and resilient learners. Pupils' involvement in their own learning is impressive. Due to a highly consistent approach by all staff, pupils really do understand what they are learning and why, but, more importantly, pupils are motivated to continually improve.
- Senior and middle leaders robustly support the headteacher in the drive for excellence, monitoring and evaluating the work of the school to ensure that pupils have the best teaching possible. Assessment systems are focused on individual pupils, making comparisons of the success of different groups of pupils hard to quantify.
- Leaders and teachers work intently to provide an outstanding curriculum. The school's work to teach pupils about ecological issues is excellent.
- As a result of high-quality training, the work of teaching assistants is highly effective in supporting pupils to learn well.
- Leaders' and teachers' work to involve parents in the life of the school is very effective. Parents speak highly of their experiences with Old Earth and feel part of a whole-school community.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is excellent. Pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures is less well developed.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding as a result of consistently high expectations from staff, leading pupils to feel safe. Consequently, Old Earth is an extremely happy school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure assessment systems enable leaders to check the progress of all groups of learners as well as individuals.
- Provide planned opportunities for pupils to further develop their understanding of different faiths and cultures.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher has led to an energetic learning community where all pupils and staff feel valued and proud to be part of the Old Earth 'family'. The headteacher is earnest in his desire to see all pupils make the very best progress possible. His insistence on meeting the needs of every individual is leading to a highly successful learning culture.
- Leaders' work to develop dynamic approaches to teaching has been highly effective. A large element of this work has been to support teachers in developing what leaders call the 'Big 4', and teachers understand this as quality planning, challenge for pupils, independence in learning and feedback to improve, contributing to the consistently good and often outstanding teaching that is present in school.
- Senior and middle leaders are skilled in supporting the teaching of other staff. Through a range of monitoring, they regularly and robustly check the quality of teaching and ensure the progress of all individual pupils in school. Leaders are working through the challenge of introducing new assessment recording systems, making it difficult to identify trends for groups of pupils (boys, girls, disadvantaged pupils) at the time of the inspection.
- Leaders provide a creative and lively curriculum, which includes a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their social and academic skills. Regular visits to museums or galleries, or special visitors to the school, help pupils to experience hands-on learning. Extra-curricular activities are varied and include sewing and gardening.
- The school's work to promote pupils' understanding of environmental issues is exemplary. As a result, Old Earth has gained many recognised awards for its environmental and ecological work, the highlight of which involved a trip to Westminster as a finalist for 'greenest school'. Pupils learn about the many ways they can live more sustainably, and understand how the biomass boiler, water-heating panels and grey-water harvesting contribute to looking after the environment. Pupils saved thousands of bottles, subsequently recycled, to build a greenhouse.
- Additional money provided to the school is used to help pupils participate in a wide range of sports. Pupils take part in many competitions with other schools locally and regionally, including cross-country, hockey, football and gymnastics, contributing to their healthy lifestyles.
- Extra money provided to the school to support disadvantaged pupils is used very effectively to provide a range of additional support. This support includes the purchase of school uniform, subsidising attendance at the breakfast club, providing individual mentoring for pupils in writing, and training teaching assistants to better support individual pupils with reading. Disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils as a result of this carefully planned support.
- Displays around the school and teaching through assemblies and lessons are helping to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain, but pupils' knowledge of people from different faiths and cultures is limited and their understanding of families unlike their own is not well developed.
- Communications between school and home are very strong. Parents' opinions are regularly canvassed through the parents' forum and through questionnaires. Almost all parents are impressed with the quality of relationships they have with school staff and speak very highly of the school. Parents express real satisfaction with information they receive about their child's progress and feel welcome at the school. One parent wrote: 'I love how the school invites parents to be involved with everything, a real open door to be proud of.' At the time of the inspection, a buzz around school was created as parents and children took part in 'Chinese cooking and valentine art'.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are highly experienced and contribute fully to the life of the school. Governors show their commitment through frequent attendance.
 - This first-hand experience, reinforced by comprehensive information provided to them by the headteacher, ensures that governors have an in-depth knowledge of the workings of the school and provides them with an excellent platform from which to challenge school leaders about pupils' and teachers' performance.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff and governors have received appropriate training to help keep pupils safe and all are alert to the risks of radicalisation of pupils. The dedicated 'welfare committee', comprising a range of staff and governors, is very effective in ensuring rigour in, and compliance with, safeguarding policy and practice.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Staff are constantly reviewing their practice against research, aiming to improve the education they provide for pupils. They exemplify the school's vision 'to have a committed staff who inspire and motivate individual children to achieve their highest standards' through 'going the extra mile', as one parent puts it.
- Pupils are making rapid progress as a result of careful planning and highly effective teaching that ignites pupils' interest and makes learning relevant and fun. Pupils observed in Year 6 fully understood the importance of being able to negotiate a train timetable and the teacher used this as a very efficient vehicle for pupils solving mathematical problems. In a Year 2 writing lesson, pupils enjoyed writing their own valentine's poems, while successfully learning about commas in lists and noun phrases.
- Teachers' excellent ability to question pupils to deepen understanding is leading to independent and resourceful learning at all levels through the school. Expectations of all pupils, including the less able, are high and, as a result, almost all pupils reach expected standards by the end of Year 6.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) is effective in helping all pupils to make a rapid start to reading and writing. Teaching assistants are highly efficient in these sessions, providing very good support to groups of pupils and displaying strong subject knowledge. In some mathematics lessons seen, teaching assistants displayed skilful use of questioning to fully ensure pupils' understanding.
- The teaching of reading throughout the school is highly effective in encouraging a love of reading and preparing pupils to read independently. Reading records show that pupils read a range of texts. In Key Stage 1, pupils use their knowledge of phonics to read unknown words and confidently predict what might happen in a text. In Key Stage 2, pupils are using sophisticated methods to interpret and answer questions about texts, so that almost all reach high standards in reading.
- Teachers are highly successful in developing the skills of pupils in writing. Frequent opportunities to write independently, followed by intensive scrutiny by their peers and teachers, are helping pupils to develop as expressive and fluent writers. Pupils write extremely well in English lessons, and in history or science lessons. Pupils present their writing neatly and use an accurate cursive script starting in Year 2. Teachers' high expectations, combined with the pride expressed by pupils through their work, is leading to rapid progress and writing of a high standard by the end of Year 6.
- Teachers' very careful planning and excellent subject knowledge is helping pupils throughout the school to understand and use mathematical learning independently. The most-able pupils are challenged to tackle more complex problems. The continual checks on understanding and timely intervention by both teachers and teaching assistants during lessons are helping pupils to make speedy progress, so that by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are exceeding national expectations. Pupils get regular opportunities to use their mathematical skills in other lessons, for example in science.
- Pupils receive regular homework to support their learning in reading, spelling and mathematics. All pupils have homework books and take care to execute their homework to the standard expected of the work done in school. A very small number of parents feel that pupils receive too much homework, but the view of the inspectors and of pupils themselves is that the homework they do helps to consolidate pupils' learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Leaders ensure that pupils have many opportunities to demonstrate their learning and to celebrate their successes. In an assembly seen, an inspector was moved by Year 1 pupils' loud and clear explanation of Lent, followed by a spiritual, whole-school rendition of 'I have Old Earth in my heart'.
- Pupils demonstrate impressive attitudes towards their learning. They are quiet, concentrated and productive in almost all lessons, answering thoughtfully when teachers question for understanding. Pupils have embraced opportunities to reflect on feedback from their teachers, but also their peers, in order to improve their work.
- Pupils' awareness of the needs of others, and contribution to the community, is exceptional. At the time

of the inspection, pupils were supporting a school disco, while raising money for a defibrillator for the community. Through an enterprise project, one class raised an enormous sum of money to be sent to a children's cancer charity.

- Leaders' and teachers' work to promote healthy lifestyles for the entire school community is highly effective, for example, through growing food in the school's large allotment plot, cycle training and organised walks. Pupils take part in road safety training to help assure their safety outside school.
- Pupils' understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet is very secure. The school website has a safety 'button', and pupils have received stickers or bookmarks from school to remind them of the safety message while at home. A visit from 'Aunty Virus' has helped pupils understand other risks associated with the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. In the vast majority of lessons, pupils are highly attentive and follow instructions quickly. Consequently, no time is wasted, allowing pupils to be very productive and intently focused on learning.
- Pupils really enjoy playtimes and lunchtime and say that bullying is very rare indeed. A group of Key Stage 2 pupils agreed: 'no one hurts anyone else and there is no swearing – ever!' One parent commented, 'respect and manners are instilled in the children'.
- The pastoral worker is highly effective in her work with parents to ensure pupils attend school regularly. As a result, attendance is above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Children enter the Nursery class at stages of development below those typical for their age. As a result of highly effective teaching, the proportion of children leaving the Reception Year with a good level of development is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check (the sounds letters make) dropped last year. As a result, leaders urgently made changes to the teaching of phonics. Teaching observed during the inspection was highly effective in helping pupils to learn, putting pupils back on track to achieve at least the expected level in phonics.
- Pupils' work in books shows that current pupils make excellent progress across all year groups and in all subjects. The most-able pupils achieve exceptionally well by the end of Key Stage 2. This is particularly evident in writing, where these pupils are writing to a high standard. Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make rapid progress from their starting points.
- As a result of rigorous and focused individual or small-group teaching, disadvantaged pupils rapidly catch up as they move through school, so that any gaps between their achievement and that of other groups of pupils, both in the school and nationally, have closed by the time they reach Year 6.
- At Key Stage 1, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level is significantly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Key Stage 2, attainment is well above average. The amount of progress made by pupils between Years 3 and 6 is significantly more than that made on average by pupils nationally.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Children attending 'Little Earth', the provision for two-year-olds, are quickly helped to settle due to high-quality relationships with adults. Adults patiently encourage children to explore and develop their skills through a range of age-appropriate activities.
- Adults in the nursery have high expectations of children's behaviour and strongly foster independence, for example, in following instructions during a movement lesson, or in the insistence that children try to put on their own clothes. Children rise to the challenge and these expectations are met.
- The early years leader uses her excellent subject knowledge to ensure highly effective teaching in the Reception Year. Staff have created a delightfully stimulating setting where children can explore, using a wide range of materials and stimuli, to their heart's content. An 'igloo' made from recycled plastic bottles provides an excellent platform for learning about cold climates. Rigorous assessment is helping teachers

to tightly plan activities to stretch and challenge children, helping them to quickly make next steps in learning. Regular checks on equipment and risk assessments on activities, in Little Earth, Nursery and Reception classes, ensure children's safety.

- The teaching of phonics in the early years is helping children to get off to a rapid start in reading and writing. Teachers employ very creative methods to teach phonics, for example inviting children to identify the sounds in 'monkey's basket', or searching the classroom for matching words, ensuring that children really enjoy this learning.
- Outdoor provision is very well planned and provides children with extensive opportunities to continue their learning, for example in the 'mud kitchen' or allotment garden. As a result of highly effective provision, children are challenged, curious and motivated to learn.
- Leaders successfully promote children's good learning habits with parents, giving regular guidance on how children should learn sounds, or providing games to play to help secure good understanding in number. Parents regularly contribute to teachers' records showing the progress of children.

School details

Unique reference number	137398
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10003720

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	459
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Thornton
Headteacher	Paul Reynolds
Telephone number	01422 375316
Website	www.oldearth.co.uk
Email address	admin@oldearth.calderdale.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Old Earth Primary School is twice the size of an average sized primary school.
- The school converted to become an academy in spring 2012 and is a stand-alone academy trust.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium is lower than average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for children who are looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is average.
- Ninety percent of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics.
- Old Earth offers places for two-year-olds.
- Children in the Reception class attend full time. Children in the Nursery class attend part time.

Information about this inspection

- Together with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, inspectors looked at pupils' progress data, information about the performance of teachers, documents relating to behaviour and safety, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 24 parts of lessons, some alongside senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, and observed pupils' learning in small groups. They spoke with pupils in lessons, at lunchtime and at playtimes and met with groups of pupils from all classes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, class teachers, members of the governing body and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start and end of the school day. They considered the opinions of 129 parents through Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents).
- Inspectors took account of 30 online responses returned by members of staff and 38 online responses from pupils of Old Earth.

Inspection team

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Mary Lanovy-Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
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