

Lower Meadow Primary School

Batemoor Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S8 8EE

Inspection dates

20–21 October 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is improving but remains inconsistent. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Pupils currently in the school now make better progress, but this is still weaker in lower Key Stage 2.
- Not enough pupils have attained the higher level at Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2 in reading, writing or mathematics. This is because work provided has not always been sufficiently challenging for the most-able pupils.
- Changes in the way reading and mathematics are taught are having a positive impact, but standards in writing remain a priority for improvement.
- For many pupils, their grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar remains below age-related expectations.
- Attendance has been well below the national average. The school has improved its systems for tracking attendance and has recently seen significant improvements. However, the school needs to demonstrate that these improvements can be sustained over time.
- The curriculum provides limited experiences for pupils to develop their awareness of different faiths. Consequently, aspects of their spiritual and cultural awareness are underdeveloped. Leaders have been hampered by a high turnover of staff since the school was placed in special measures. Much has been done to secure stable staffing. This is helping to increase the pace of improvement. Nevertheless, there remain some posts that need to be filled.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have raised expectations and the staff are fully committed to driving further improvements. Leaders know their next steps and are systematically tackling remaining weaknesses.
- Staff at all levels are improving their practice because of the high-quality training they receive. Links with other schools have been highly beneficial.
- Pupils get off to a good start in the early years where they make good progress.
- The personal development and welfare of pupils have a high priority. Pupils are very safe and well cared for. Older pupils set a good example through their efforts to support younger pupils.
- Leaders are broadening the curriculum so that it better prepares pupils for life in modern Britain.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching, so that pupils make better progress, by:
 - providing more regular opportunities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum
 - ensuring that all teachers require pupils to present their work to a good standard and apply their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills better across the whole curriculum
 - sharing the good practice in mathematics teaching across the school, so that pupils, including the most able, make consistently good progress across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Sustain the recent improvements in attendance by:
 - ensuring that good attendance remains a high priority for parents and pupils
 - supporting and challenging those families from which children are more likely to be persistently absent from school.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the wider curriculum (scientific, artistic, human and social, and technical) is taught with the same rigour as the core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics
 - strengthening the quality of pupils' cultural and spiritual experiences, so that they are better prepared for life in modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

requires improvement

- The leadership of teaching has been hampered by the high turnover of staff. Nevertheless, leaders have successfully held teachers and supply staff accountable. Consequently, the quality of learning has steadily improved since the school was last inspected. Following a number of new appointments, staffing has become much more settled and the quality of teaching has improved further. Members of staff have been able to access good-quality training and professional development because leaders have built strong partnerships with a number of local schools. These partnerships have served to motivate staff and improve their subject knowledge effectively.
- The recently appointed headteacher, who has led the school in an acting capacity for the last year, has raised expectations and challenged the whole community to be more aspirational. With the strong support of the acting deputy headteacher, leaders have successfully improved the quality of teaching and raised standards while managing turbulence in staffing. Parents and pupils told inspectors that this is a much improved school.
- The renewed ambition shown by leaders is having a positive impact across the staff. Middle leaders are increasingly clear about their roles and responsibilities, and their work is having a positive impact. Standards in reading and mathematics are rising steadily and pupils currently in the school increasingly make the progress they should.
- Leaders have begun to extend the breadth and balance of the curriculum. For example, the teaching of French has been extended across the whole of Key Stage 2 and there are growing opportunities for pupils to participate in music and drama. The school now has a football team and external partners work with the school to provide artistic workshops. Leaders have begun to consider how effectively the school's curriculum encourages pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, and the extent to which it promotes fundamental British values. They have recently audited the curriculum and have identified where it needs to be strengthened further. As a result, they have begun to introduce opportunities for pupils to learn about world religions and have begun to establish international links with a school in Africa.
- Additional money, such as the pupil premium and the primary school sports funding, is used wisely. There is a wide range of tailored learning opportunities that support disadvantaged pupils and help them to make similar and, in some cases, better progress than other pupils in the school. There are good arrangements in place to ensure the well-being of more vulnerable pupils. The use of expert coaches is having a positive effect in engaging pupils in sport, raising their confidence and building their self-esteem.
- The local authority brokered a number of effective partnerships with other schools and has regularly visited the school to support leaders' checks on the school's progress. Additional local authority support has helped address the challenging turnover of staff and the recruitment of suitable teachers.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The quality of governance has improved since the school was placed in special measures. Additional governors have been appointed who have brought necessary expertise. The actions they have taken over the last year demonstrate their ability to address the key factors that led to underachievement in the school. They are now more adept at checking on the school's progress and more rigorous in holding the headteacher and other leaders accountable.
 - Members of the governing body have a detailed understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They are not content to receive reports from the headteacher alone. Members regularly visit the school to cross-reference what they are told against their own first-hand observations of the school.
 - Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities to safeguard pupils. They make regular checks on the school's policies and procedures and audit provision annually.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Thorough checks are made when members of staff are appointed and all members of staff are well trained in child protection. Leaders have strong links with other agencies and staff receive regular training.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- The quality of pupils' writing requires improvement. There are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills across the curriculum. Where teaching is weaker, expectations for presentation and for spelling, punctuation and grammar are too low.
- The teaching of reading in the early years and Key Stage 1 has improved considerably and is now good. Teachers and teaching assistants manage small group sessions every day with confidence. As a result, children quickly develop an understanding of the sounds letters and groups of letters make. In upper Key Stage 2, teachers develop more advanced reading effectively.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving and there is some strong practice developing. Pupils are increasingly confident to investigate mathematics and can explain their understanding more eloquently. This is because they have more opportunities to tackle mathematical problems. The most-able pupils are now regularly challenged to go deeper into the subject. Middle leaders are aware that the level of subject knowledge across the staff remains inconsistent, and are giving regular training to improve the consistency of mathematics teaching.
- Senior leaders have done a great deal to improve the quality of teaching and learning since the school was last inspected. They are tackling weak teaching head on, which has resulted in a number of teachers leaving the school. The turbulence to staffing was inevitably disruptive, although leaders managed this effectively. Recent appointments have secured a more stable picture. Although teaching is not yet of a consistently good quality, there is more experience and expertise in the school, with some outstanding practice.
- At its best, teaching moves at a brisk pace and promotes good discussion and debate. Pupils show pleasure and enjoyment in tackling interesting topics. Teachers ask thought-provoking questions and challenge the most-able pupils to go deeper into the subject. Homework is used well to reinforce new learning. Adults work together effectively in classrooms to ensure that pupils progress from their different starting points. However, where teachers are less experienced, these positive features are less evident.
- There are good arrangements in place to support less experienced teachers and those new to the school. They all have an experienced mentor and have additional time away from the classroom to work and plan together. There is a rich programme of training in place, complemented by ongoing visits to other schools to learn from their practice.
- Teachers assess pupils' knowledge and understanding accurately and use this information to plan lessons that build on what pupils already know. Where assessments identify gaps in understanding, pupils receive additional support to help them catch up. Most pupils are given work that provides just enough challenge for their abilities. As a result, pupils make similar progress to one another from their different starting points.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and there is an expectation that pupils will respond to comments and improve their work. However, the quality of pupils' responses varies. In some classes, the teachers' comments are sufficiently precise to promote further work that deepens pupils' understanding of the subject. In other classes, less specific marking means responses are more cursory.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The climate for learning in the school is increasingly positive. Where teaching is stronger, pupils are keen to work hard and achieve. Pupils are confident to participate in lessons and collaborate with one another effectively.
- Teachers and teaching assistants encourage pupils to be polite and respectful. Pupils regularly take on responsibilities, such as being 'reading buddies'. Older pupils act as role models for younger pupils and demonstrate how they should behave. Pupils elected to the school council are very active in raising funds for various charities and local good causes.
- The school has created a smaller class for some pupils, in order to cater for their more complex needs. Pupils in this class are flourishing because they feel safe and secure. The teacher and teaching assistants have created a very nurturing climate that is helping to develop the self-confidence and self-esteem of pupils. Because of this, they are making better progress and some have begun to participate more fully in the wider life of the school.
- The needs of pupils with hearing impairments are met well. Tasks are skilfully adapted for them by the

well-trained teaching and support staff. Wherever possible, pupils join most mainstream lessons where teachers and specialist support staff ensure that they take an active part in lessons.

- Pupils say there is little bullying and when it does occur it is quickly addressed. Pupils are developing caring attitudes to one another because social and emotional issues are regularly discussed with adults. Pupils are aware of the risks when online and know what actions to take if they have any concerns about their safety.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Since the school was last inspected, levels of attendance have been low. There have been too many pupils missing school regularly, which hampered their learning and progress. Recently leaders have improved their tracking of attendance patterns and have been more successful in targeting their efforts with families where attendance has been lower. So far this term, overall attendance is close to the national average and over half of pupils have not missed any school at all. The attendance of pupils who were regularly absent has also markedly improved this term. These improvements are relatively recent however, and the school needs to demonstrate that they can be sustained over the whole of the academic year.
- Pupils conduct themselves well and the school is an orderly place in which to learn. Poor behaviour in the past has been tackled head on by the headteacher, who has made her expectations clear. Pupils follow instructions quickly in lessons and there are very few occasions when learning is disrupted.
- At social times, pupils play happily together and enjoy participating in organised games and sports. They are polite and courteous to visitors to the school.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Assessment information and pupils' current work confirm that most pupils are now making at least expected progress from their different starting points. Recent improvements in teaching mean that an increasing proportion of pupils are working at the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Standards are rising at Key Stage 1. Last year, the introduction of a new reading programme led to improvements in pupils' grasp of phonics. As teachers have become more skilled in teaching this programme, standards have risen further. Most pupils currently in Year 1 now demonstrate a good grasp of the sounds letters make. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards in reading and mathematics were close to those seen nationally. However, pupils had not developed the same confidence to write effectively because they did not have enough opportunities to practise writing.
- At Key Stage 2, pupils have begun to make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because the quality of teaching has become more consistent. However, older pupils currently in the school still have some gaps in their understanding resulting from weaker teaching in the past. Teaching is increasingly addressing these gaps and current predictions show that there are more pupils on track to reach expected standards by the end of Key Stage 2 than in the past.
- Since the school was last inspected, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have been relatively low. However, a much higher proportion of pupils currently in Year 2 and Year 6 are on track to reach these levels.
- Assessment data show that different groups of pupils are making similar progress to one another across both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This is because teachers have developed good systems for tailoring work to meet individual needs, and because teaching assistants are increasingly effective in the support they provide. Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairments, make similar progress to other pupils in the school. The most-able pupils, who were not always sufficiently challenged in the past, now make better progress.
- Reading has become a higher priority. New texts have been bought to support literacy lessons and to improve the library. All pupils are expected to read every day and complete their reading records. Inspectors observed an assembly designed to promote and reward the most committed readers. Pupils confirmed that the quality of books in the school has improved and they are now more interested in reading.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding across the wider curriculum are more limited. This is because the teaching and assessment of pupils' progress in other subjects, such as science, the arts and languages, are less rigorous.

Early years provision

is good

- Early years provision is good because the quality of teaching is consistently good or better. Strong ongoing assessment ensures that adults know, in detail, each child's skills and abilities, and tailor the teaching to ensure that children make good progress. Very good resources, both inside and outdoors, constantly stimulate children's senses and engage their attention. There is a good balance between activities for children to engage with freely and more focused activities led by adults. High expectations from all members of staff and clear routines ensure that children quickly know what is expected of them.
- Staff have good links with private childcare providers and the local private nursery, and information is usually shared effectively so that teaching is focused from the start.
- Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities that are below those typically expected for their age. Personal, social and language skills of many are well below expectations. Teaching targets these weaknesses from the start and children make good progress so that they quickly gain confidence and become more able to sustain their concentration. As the children's confidence grows, teachers focus increasingly on language acquisition. The Nursery Year provides a good foundation for children before they begin the Reception Year. Not all children attend the Nursery however, as some join during the Reception Year, having not attended any type of pre-school setting.
- From September 2015, the school began admitting two-year-old children. These children have settled quickly and are making good progress. They play and learn alongside other children in the Nursery happily.
- Progress becomes more rapid during the Reception Year. By the end of Reception, around 60% of children reach a good level of development and are ready to start Year 1. This proportion has grown steadily over the last three years, reflecting strong leadership and effective teamwork from all members of staff. Disadvantaged children make similar progress to other children. Current assessments show that the proportion of children on track to reach a good level of development by the end of Reception are set to rise further in 2016.
- All aspects of safeguarding and children's welfare are carefully checked. Good day-to-day management ensures that children are safe and secure.

School details

Unique reference number	133484
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10005199

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	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	283
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Law
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Miss Angela Clarke
Telephone number	0114 2372700
Website	www.lowermeadow.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@lowermeadow.sheffield.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 January 2014

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- A large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and relatively few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils entitled to support through the pupil premium is more than twice the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average.
- The school offers a specially resourced provision on behalf of the local authority for nine pupils with hearing impairments.
- Since January 2015 the school has provided a free breakfast club for pupils and parents.
- The school is below the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectation for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school has early years provision for younger children, including two-year-olds. Children's attendance in the early years is arranged flexibly in response to parents' needs.
- A new headteacher, who was previously the deputy headteacher, was appointed in October 2015.
- Since the school was placed in special measures, it has received four monitoring visits from HMI prior to this inspection.
- The school is a member of the Meadowhead Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 20 lessons or part-lessons, including lessons within the specially resourced provision for pupils with hearing impairments. The majority of these lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors observed the quality of learning and sampled pupils' books in order to evaluate the quality of current work. In addition, inspectors attended an assembly.
- Inspectors observed pupils during playtimes, lunchtimes and around the school. They also listened to a number of Year 1 and Year 2 pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the recently appointed headteacher and acting deputy headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, a group of pupils, a group of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- There were too few responses received to the online questionnaire (Parent View) during the inspection to evaluate parental views. Instead, inspectors evaluated the school's own, most recent, parental survey and spoke to a group of parents who were attending the breakfast club.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement. Inspectors also scrutinised records of pupils' learning and progress, the checks made on the quality of teaching and performance of staff, and those relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector
Hilary Ward

Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2015

