

# Birkenshaw Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Station Lane, Birkenshaw, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD11 2JE

**Inspection dates** 6–7 December 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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

# Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

#### This is a good school

- The headteacher has set high expectations and provided clear direction to staff and pupils in taking the school forward.
- Senior leaders provide effective challenge and support for all groups of staff who are proud of their work.
- Leaders and governors have focused successfully on improving teaching, which is now good. They have made good use of learning partnerships.
- Staff provide stimulating and nurturing provision to help children get off to a flying start in the early years.
- Pupils behave well, care for one another and show responsible attitudes. They enjoy school life to the full.
- Leaders have made safeguarding a priority. Secure systems and training help all adults to be safety conscious and vigilant.

- Governors reflect on their own effectiveness to increasingly challenge and support leaders.
  They check closely on the development of the school.
- New approaches to the teaching of mathematics promote understanding and enjoyment of the subject.
- The work in information technology is of high calibre. The subject leader's strong expertise helps pupils to make rapid progress.
- The presentation of pupils' writing is inconsistent across different subjects.
  Teachers do not provide sufficient guidance about handwriting.
- There are limited opportunities to apply key skills in some subjects, including science and religious education.
- Progress of the least able and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is variable across the school.



# **Full report**

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

- Improve the quality of pupils' written work by:
  - providing a cohesive and rigorous approach to the teaching and application of handwriting
  - presenting frequent opportunities for pupils to write for a variety of purposes across a range of subjects
  - ensuring that teachers set consistently high challenge and expectations in written work across different subjects.
- Accelerate the progress of the least able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities by:
  - using assessment information more effectively to provide an accurate view of progress over time
  - pitching learning activities at the right level to develop key skills securely
  - making the best use of adult support in lessons to meet learning needs.



# **Inspection judgements**

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

- The headteacher has set a clear direction for the school and has high expectations for all pupils. She has restructured the senior and subject leadership teams and strengthened the platform for school improvement.
- English and mathematics leaders, although new to their posts, have quickly settled into their roles and have worked hard to raise their expertise. They are increasingly confident in supporting and holding colleagues to account in their respective subjects.
- Partnership arrangements are very productive. Leaders and external consultants from the Whitehill Academy Trust have worked extensively together on improving teaching and raising standards.
- Senior and subject leaders use wide-ranging strategies to monitor teaching quality. They pinpoint areas for improvement and ensure that staff receive guidance, view good practice and access external training.
- Senior leaders and governors have sharpened arrangements for staff appraisal. Staff know that performance is tied to improved pupils' outcomes and that pay progression hinges on these. They have responded positively and are proud to form a cohesive team.
- As a result of clear policies and frequent performance checks, teaching is now good overall. Where a small proportion of teaching still requires improvement, leaders are confident in providing appropriate support or further challenge.
- Better teaching has led to more secure progress for pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.
- Leaders have worked hard to promote positive learning attitudes and the Investors in Pupils initiative supports this drive. Consistent approaches are evident in the way individual pupils and classes set their own behaviour commitments.
- Leaders and governors evaluate the impact of the school's pupil premium strategy. The chair of the governing body is the pupil premium champion and meets termly with leaders to review the impact of expenditure for disadvantaged pupils. Outcomes for this group were much improved at key stage 2 in 2016.
- Leaders and governors ensure that there is an inclusive approach to wider learning opportunities, such as clubs and residential visits. Leaders provide financial support sensitively so that disadvantaged pupils have equal access.
- Leaders make good use of the additional sports funding. Sports coaches from the high school work with classes and groups to support staff training and involve pupils in an impressive variety of sports. The sports leader's evaluation of funding effectiveness is very secure.



- Curriculum enrichment opportunities abound and include science clubs, musical instrument tuition, environmental challenges, craft activities and choir groups. Pupils can enjoy residential outdoor pursuit experiences, unusual sports including new age kurling, or social activities such as ballroom dancing.
- Senior leaders and governors have produced a thorough analysis of strengths and areas for improvement. This is underpinned by development plans that outline actions to move the school forward. While these actions are well chosen, there is insufficient clarity about how their success will be evaluated and reported.
- The Christian ethos runs through all facets of school life and makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils demonstrate a strong sense of Christian values, but leaders have not yet explicitly linked these to fundamental British values.
- Although senior leaders review provision and outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, they do not yet have a clear overview of progress. This makes it hard to identify whether targets for these pupils are ambitious enough or if teaching is meeting their needs sufficiently well.
- Although leaders have monitored the quality of teaching, they have not checked closely enough on pupils' written presentation. This is inconsistent across different subjects and slows progress for some pupils.
- Opportunities to apply key mathematical and writing skills in a range of subjects such as science and religious education (RE) are as yet limited. Leadership of the wider curriculum is at an early stage of development.

#### Governance

- The governing body has responded positively to an external review following the previous inspection. Governors have introduced new committees and working practices to keep themselves better informed about the work of the school. They are now checking more effectively that leaders are moving the school in the right direction.
- Governors with specific responsibilities for classes and subjects meet with leaders to assess progress against identified priorities. This ensures that they maintain a high profile in school.
- Governors work systematically to verify the detailed reports that senior leaders provide. They have introduced a policy and assessment review calendar to ensure that they discharge key responsibilities at the right time.
- After viewing other schools' governing bodies at work, governors have improved some of their own procedures. There is an expectation that all governors share the workload responsibility.
- Governors have attended recent training on school assessment information and are consequently more confident about asking challenging questions about pupils' progress.

#### Safeguarding

■ The arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective. Recruitment procedures are exemplary and all statutory requirements are in place.



- Arrangements are in place to ensure that site safety checks, risk assessments, care plans, first aid records and medical information are all kept up to date. The electronic safeguarding recording system ensures that communication is swift and secure.
- Induction arrangements for new staff are comprehensive with regard to safeguarding. Staff receive frequent updates and opportunities to contribute to the school's safeguarding policy.
- Leaders and governors have made safeguarding a high priority and this has led to a strong safety-conscious culture across all areas of the school. Governors have worked closely with leaders on auditing and approving safeguarding arrangements.
- The site is safe, tidy and secure. Leaders manage access arrangements particularly well, in view of the five different buildings that comprise the school site.
- Leaders and governors have taken a strong line on improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. They have sought assistance from external agencies, but this group's attendance remains well below the national average. Leaders know that further strategies are required to address the issue.

#### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Teachers design engaging tasks to hook in pupils' interest. Year 6 pupils were very motivated when asked to write descriptions about fantasy workings of household appliances.
- Teachers plan learning to take equal account of the interests of boys and girls. They also ensure that all pupils are able to take part in the full range of learning opportunities on offer, including disadvantaged pupils. The school has a very inclusive atmosphere.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge helps them to plan sequences of learning activities that deepen understanding. This is particularly evident in the new teaching approaches in mathematics, where pupils demonstrate numerical competence before moving on to deeper reasoning tasks.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to probe understanding and capitalise on prior learning. This was seen in Year 2 when the teacher skilfully drew together ideas from a science lesson on birds to support a descriptive writing activity about robins.
- Teachers set weekly homework to consolidate work covered in lessons. Pupils particularly like the choices they can make in the termly thematic learning challenges. One Year 6 pupil was keen to describe his research presentation about Victorian inventions.
- Teachers make good use of poetry to deepen and develop language skills. Year 5 pupils produced their own well-crafted poems in response to the Lewis Carroll poem 'Jabberwocky' while Year 6 wrote atmospheric descriptions after studying Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'. An annual school 'good speaking' competition promotes confidence in recitation.



- The teaching of reading is effective. Teachers take good account of different abilities in phonics at key stage 1, so that most-able pupils have plentiful opportunities to broaden and apply their vocabulary. Older pupils have regular practice in developing comprehension skills.
- In mathematics, pupils thrive on opportunities to tackle challenging questions and carry out investigations. After checking that the most able pupils in Year 5 understood basic line graphs, the teacher set them a task to time and plot their heart rates after exercise.
- The teaching of information technology is very strong. In Year 4, pupils were able to identify potential coding errors, having built up secure knowledge over time. They worked seamlessly together and understood subject-specific vocabulary. A Year 1 pupil used a graphics program independently to produce a detailed snow picture.
- Teaching assistants contribute strongly to learning, working unobtrusively in lessons with different groups. They know the pupils well and relationships are overwhelmingly positive. There are a few times in lessons, however, when they could be more actively involved rather than as observers.
- Parents commented favourably on the communication they receive about their children's progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities generally receive good support through additional adults and intervention work. It is not always clear, however, whether their longer-term targets are sufficiently challenging or precise.
- Teachers frequently check on understanding and follow the school's written feedback policy in books by identifying basic errors for correction. Pupils generally respond to these next steps, but sometimes fail to complete them in a timely way.
- Where teaching was less effective in a minority of classes, the least able pupils were given tasks that were too challenging or unclear. In some cases, the teaching of writing failed to focus on basic sentence construction, while in reading pupils required more explanation of unfamiliar words.
- The presentation of written work across subjects is variable and although handwriting is taught, pupils do not apply skills consistently. Insufficient guidance is provided to pupils of all abilities who struggle to form and join letters correctly. Some teachers do not present their own writing well as a model to pupils.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

#### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school, like to please their teachers and mix positively. 'Lessons are interesting,' a Year 6 pupil said, 'There are lots of different activities to challenge us.'
- Pupils like to carry out different roles, such as school ambassadors, members of the school council or eco council, digital leaders, play leaders and class monitors. Some older pupils support younger ones in improving their computer skills. These opportunities instil a sense of contribution and belonging.



- All groups feel safe and trust the adults at school to look after them well. They have a good understanding of safety issues, especially e-safety. Key stage 2 pupils are very clear about how to report inappropriate content and that they need to exercise caution about sharing personal details online.
- Pupils say there is very little name-calling and no prejudiced-based harassment. They explain that any such incidents would trigger serious consequences. They feel that behaviour systems are fair and managed well.
- Older pupils have a growing awareness of other cultures through RE lessons and visits to different places of worship, such as the mosque, synagogue or gurdwara. They remember lessons about role models from other cultures, such as Nelson Mandela or Rosa Parks.
- The 'sponsored child initiative' promotes understanding about children in developing countries. Every class helps to raise funds that provide food and clean water for a named child. It makes a powerful contribution to pupils' capacity for care and compassion.
- The school encourages pupils to develop positive attitudes to the environment. It promotes walking activities, growing fruit and vegetables, and involvement in energy-reduction projects. Teachers make productive use of links to organisations such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Eco-Schools.
- Staff at all levels are fully aware of the procedures for raising concerns about pupils who may be at risk. Records show that designated safeguarding staff are persistent in seeking support from external agencies where appropriate.
- Pupils are encouraged to voice any worries or concerns by talking to adults or using the worry box, checked daily by the learning mentor. Safety education is built into the curriculum and highlighted through a series of assemblies.
- There are many extra-curricular choices that include popular sports activities such as judo and athletics. There are also other well-attended groups such as Christian Crackers, film reviewers, coding and construction-kit building. A homework club supports pupils who may need additional support in learning.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are more confident in talking about healthy lifestyles and diet than younger pupils. They are able to describe key elements of nutrition and knew the dangers of consuming excessive sugar, salt or fatty foods.
- The good provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education promotes consistently positive attitudes among pupils. Pupils display a strong sense of Christian values but are less confident in linking these explicitly to fundamental British values.

#### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves well around school and especially in the dining hall. They like going out of their way to greet visitors or hold doors open for others. Little time is lost in lessons because pupils are keen to learn.
- Playgrounds are well supervised and pupils enjoy being active with their friends. They play cooperatively and there are few clashes. At the end of playtimes, pupils return to school promptly and sensibly in readiness for lessons.



- In a minority of lessons, a few pupils displayed off-task behaviour, but this was generally linked to the small proportion of weaker teaching.
- Leaders analyse behaviour records and act on any emerging patterns. Pupils accept the clear system of rewards and sanctions that encourages positive behaviour. Where a minority of pupils display challenging behaviour, staff work closely with parents and external agencies to reduce the impact. Exclusions are rare.
- Whole-school attendance has risen over time and is above national averages. However, the high level of persistent absence by some disadvantaged pupils over successive years is a concern. This is much worse than national levels despite the concerted efforts of leaders and the local authority.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

- Results in 2016 from the phonics screening check in Year 1 and Year 2 show that pupils performed much better than those nationally. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils meeting the check was greater than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2016, the proportions of pupils reaching expected standards in reading and writing were in line with national averages. Proportions reaching expected standards in mathematics were below the national average.
- Results at key stage 1 for disadvantaged pupils in reading and mathematics were well below non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, especially for the least able.
- These weaker key stage 1 outcomes contrasted with stronger 2015 results that exceeded national averages. There had been considerable staffing turbulence over the last year for Year 2, but this has now been resolved. Work in books and observation of teaching confirmed that current pupils are progressing well.
- By the end of key stage 2 in 2016, from different starting points, pupils made better progress in writing and mathematics than those nationally. Progress in reading was close to national averages.
- Most disadvantaged pupils made better progress than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally in writing and mathematics, and made similar progress in reading. The least able disadvantaged pupils made slow progress in reading and mathematics, but the most able pupils performed better than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally in all subjects.
- In key stage 2, proportions of pupils reaching expected standards in each subject and all subjects combined were above the national average. The proportions attaining high scores in writing and mathematics were also above national averages. Proportions attaining a high score in combined subjects were twice the national average.
- In comparison with national non-disadvantaged pupils, lower proportions of disadvantaged pupils reached expected standards in reading and mathematics, but performed significantly better in writing.



- At the end of key stage 2 in 2016, the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was similar to other pupils nationally in writing and mathematics. In reading it was below national averages, especially for the least able pupils.
- Older pupils are committed to their learning and are proud of their contribution to school life. These positive attitudes are sure to serve them well in their next schools.
- Pupils enjoy talking about their books and favourite authors. The school promotes reading well and many pupils were inspired to read more, following the recent visit of a local author. One Year 6 pupil told an inspector, 'Reading is the best way to educate your brain.'
- The most able pupils read confidently with understanding. In key stage 2, they enjoy reading a variety of books and also current news magazines provided by the school. The least able readers, particularly in key stage 1, struggle with fluency and this holds back their comprehension.
- The most able pupils thrive on the 'chilli challenges' they tackle in mathematics. After proving they understand the 'mild' exercises, they can progress to the 'medium' and 'hot' tasks. Most-able pupils in Year 6 quickly moved through basic practice examples before taking delight in solving testing percentage questions.
- Work in books and observations of teaching indicate that the majority of current pupils are making secure progress.
- It is not clear, however, from the school's tracking of assessments whether current pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making enough progress across year groups. This means that it is harder for leaders and teachers to be sure that end of year and key stage targets are sufficiently challenging for these pupils.
- Pupils' written presentation is variable across the school and across subjects. Handwriting is inconsistent for all groups and this slows progress.
- Although the teaching of mathematics is much improved, there are limited opportunities in some year groups to apply mathematical skills in other subjects, especially science.

# **Early years provision**

- Children join the Nursery with abilities that reflect those typically seen on entry. They make good progress during their time in the setting. Proportions of children reaching a good level of development have been above national averages for the last three years.
- Disadvantaged children also make good progress and those children whose skills are below others at the start of school are able to catch up quickly because additional support is provided. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make progress in line with other children.



- While the achievement of both girls and boys is higher than that seen nationally, girls do better than boys. Leaders are aware that boys may need additional direction to ensure that they access different types of tasks to broaden their development.
- Leaders and staff know the children well and plan a range of purposeful indoor and outdoor learning activities that entice and excite children. The learning journals show children engaging in a broad variety of rich learning experiences.
- All welfare requirements and safeguarding arrangements are in place. Staff take care to remind children to put coats on for the weather conditions and to wash their hands thoroughly. The setting is secure and tidy.
- Children become absorbed in tasks and adults capitalise on opportunities to extend their thinking and language skills. Nursery children filling a balanced bucket with gravel were able, with adult prompting, to explain that the bucket becoming heavier would soon tip the scale.
- Adults use opportunities to model actions and develop language. In Reception, a skilled teaching assistant demonstrated correct letter formation by painting letters onto the outdoor messy area wall. In phonics, the teacher introduced the word 'train' after observing a group building Santa's train station earlier.
- Children work and play in a kind and caring manner. They respond quickly to adults and are able to work independently in both the Nursery and Reception classes, so that focused teaching of key skills to small groups proceeds without interruption.
- All adults across the setting are confident in teaching phonics effectively. Teaching is well matched to children's needs and a variety of resources are used to hold the children's interest.
- The early years leader has a keen eye for progress and promotes effective teamwork to ensure that children reach expectations. She monitors consistency of assessment to provide a clear picture of starting points and achievement.
- There are established systems for links with other pre-school providers to aid entry into the Nursery. Parents comment on how well their children settle in. Good liaison with key stage 1 staff ensures a smooth transition into main school.
- Parents are able to learn about teaching approaches through workshops and other information that staff provide. There are some opportunities for parents to contribute to electronic learning records but this is still at an early stage of development.
- Occasionally, children working outdoors are not engaged in an activity from the very start and then lose their learning focus. Staff quickly get them back on the right track.
- The changeover from play activities to more formal teaching situations sometimes takes longer than necessary and this reduces time for taught sessions.



#### **School details**

Unique reference number 107730

Local authority Kirklees

Inspection number 10019723

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

Type of school Primary

School category Voluntary controlled

Age range of pupils 3–11

Gender of pupils Mixed

Number of pupils on the school roll 467

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair Neil Auty

Headteacher Rebecca Martin

Telephone number 01274 651 232

Website www.birkenshawprimary.org.uk

Email address head.birkenshawprimary@kirkleeseducation.uk

Date of previous inspection 19–20 November 2014

#### Information about this school

- This school is much larger than the average-sized primary school. It has only functioned as a primary school since 2012 following conversion from a first school.
- Approximately 92% of pupils are of White British heritage with no significant representation of other ethnic groups.
- The proportion of current pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is much lower than average.
- There are similar numbers of boys and girls in the school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs, or education, health and care plans, is below the national average.



- The school meets the government's current floor standards that set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been changes in staffing and leadership responsibilities since the time of the previous inspection. The deputy headteacher and three other teachers have left the school. Three newly qualified teachers took up their positions in September 2016. The learning mentor position was extended to a full-time role.
- The key stage 1 leader became acting assistant headteacher in January 2016 and subsequently was promoted to deputy headteacher in September 2016. A new assistant headteacher has recently been appointed and will take up his post in January 2017.
- The middle leadership team has been restructured to sharpen the focus on teaching and learning. The English and mathematics leaders were new to their posts in September 2016.
- The senior leadership team has been working closely with leaders from Whitehill Academy Trust. The school also benefits from links with the local family of schools and the Stronger Together Partnership.
- The school operates over five separate buildings within one site.
- External reviews of governance and the use of the pupil premium, recommended at the previous inspection, have been completed.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.



# Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 31 lessons or part-lessons across all classes to assess teaching and learning.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading from Years 2, 3, 5 and 6.
- Work in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects was sampled.
- Meetings were conducted with senior leaders, middle leaders, subject leaders, the governors and a representative from the diocese.
- In addition, a meeting was held with a representative of the Whitehill Academy Trust, from whom the school has been receiving support over the past eighteen months.
- Telephone discussions were conducted with the chair of the governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors analysed information from a scrutiny of school documentation. This included published data about pupils' progress and attainment, previous inspection reports, external reports by the local authority and the school's latest assessment information.
- Inspectors viewed school and subject improvement plans, the school's own evaluative judgements, information about the performance of current pupils, curriculum outlines and school monitoring information. Inspectors also looked at governing body minutes and safeguarding documentation.
- The views of parents were taken into account through several informal discussions with them and by analysing responses from the 65 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The views of pupils were taken into account by analysing responses from the 39 pupils who completed the online pupil survey and through three planned meetings with a group of pupils from Year 2, a group of pupils from Years 3 and 4, and a group of pupils from Years 5 and 6.
- The views of staff were taken into account by analysing responses from the 34 staff who completed the inspection questionnaire.

# **Inspection team**

James Reid, lead inspectorOfsted InspectorIan ClennanOfsted InspectorChristopher PearceOfsted Inspector



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