

Lowedges Junior Academy

Lowedges Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S8 7JG

Inspection dates

7–8 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Turbulence in staffing and a legacy of underachievement have meant that, over time, the progress all pupils make has not been strong enough to enable them to achieve well.
- In mathematics, standards are improving due to teachers' better understanding of the national expectations. However, work is not always appropriately matched to the different needs and abilities of pupils, meaning that the pace of progress is less strong for some pupils.
- Some disadvantaged pupils across school do not make good progress in reading. In some classes, disadvantaged pupils are struggling to catch up with their peers.
- There are inconsistencies in the way teachers model examples of high-quality writing. Pupils have too few opportunities to edit and refine their work. As a result, the progress pupils are making in writing across each year is variable.
- Expectations in handwriting and presentation are not high enough across key stages 1 and 2.
- Despite the school's best efforts to improve attendance, pupils' absence is still higher than the national average.
- The support that teaching assistants give to pupils in their learning and behaviour management, in classrooms and around school, is not always effective.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, governors and trust leaders work in strong partnership. They have made good headway in improving outcomes for pupils and are clear about what still needs to be better.
- The plethora of support to develop the practice of teachers this year is resulting in pupils making better progress.
- Over the last two years, standards at the end of Year 6 have improved considerably.
- Rapid improvement in the leadership, teaching and provision in the early years has resulted in children making strong progress across the curriculum.
- Leaders' commitment to improving partnerships with parents is starting to shine through.
- Pupils are developing skills across a wide, practical curriculum, for example, in science and physical education.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all pupils make at least good progress by ensuring that all teachers:
 - match work appropriately to pupils' needs in mathematics, moving pupils on quickly when they have confidently grasped a concept, and giving more support to those who are finding it tricky
 - have high expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation, particularly in writing
 - show pupils how to build up skills effectively in their writing and edit their work successfully to produce high-quality finished pieces of work.
- Deploy teaching assistants effectively so that they always support pupils' learning well and encourage the best behaviour from pupils at all times, in classrooms and around school.
- Improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in reading by responding quickly to any slowing of pupils' progress.
- Continue to work with parents and carers and pupils to:
 - promote the positive aspects of school improvement and deepen the sense of pride of being part of Lowedges Junior Academy
 - improve pupils' attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since taking over the leadership reins, the headteacher has worked in close partnership with the trust to address significant staff changes and pupils' underperformance. Her supportive, positive approach is resulting in staff, parents and pupils getting on board with the journey of improvement.
- After difficulties with recruiting and retaining high-quality staff, school and trust leaders took the brave decision to appoint a large number of staff who are new to teaching. Leaders are clear about how important it has been to get the direction and support for teachers right, so that outcomes for pupils are improved. Leaders have made sure that new teachers are given a raft of support by implementing a stringent training and support programme. As a result, these staff feel highly valued, are enthusiastic in their roles and are developing effective teaching skills. Leaders' vision for growing their own, effective team is starting to come to fruition.
- The trust has ensured that it has a good capacity to help the school improve. Where any need is identified, the trust rallies to provide focused support to aid improvement. Staff at all levels are very positive about the different forms this support takes. It includes trust members working alongside staff in school, specific professional training and working with colleagues in other schools, sharing ideas and good practice. The school is starting to share some of its strong practice across the trust too, such as that in early years. The trust's school improvement partner knows the school very well through her frequent support visits. Her knowledge and skills are fully supporting the headteacher in tackling the improvement agenda.
- Assessment systems implemented by school and trust leaders give an accurate and honest view of pupils' progress. Leaders are constantly refining these systems to ensure that staff clearly understand expectations and their accountability in ensuring pupils' progress. Information is clear, concise and understood well by leaders, including governors and staff. Teachers welcome the clarity of information. Now that effective systems are well established, leaders are working on developing these further, for example with more frequent reporting on the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- New middle leaders are starting to have an impact on the progress pupils are making. For example, leaders for mathematics know the strengths within their subject and are accurate in their view of the areas that require further improvement. Middle leaders are supported well by leaders and school colleagues in the trust in moderating work and supporting teachers in pitching work appropriately.
- While rightly giving high priority to the improvement of basic skills, leaders have been purposeful in offering pupils a broad and balanced curriculum. Curriculum leaders show passion and dedication to their roles. For example, pupils' skills in physical education have improved considerably over the last two years. There is a strong focus on keeping fit and having fun. Pupils were delighted with their performance in the recent basketball tournament. The school directs the primary school physical education and sport funding well.
- Practical science activities are high profile and many pupils can give good hypotheses

and evaluations of their work.

- Although committed to improving outcomes for all pupils, leaders have prioritised intense support into Year 6, Year 2 and the early years to ensure that pupils are as well prepared for the next stage of their education as they can be. As a result, pupils' outcomes at the end of their time in each key stage are much improved. Leaders are well aware of where any gaps in learning or underperformance remain, and have either started focused work in these areas or have plans in place.
- The new leader for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well supported by the trust leader in her role. Consequently, pupils' needs are identified carefully and the funding for pupils who have special needs and/or disabilities is matched well to their needs. Most of these pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupil premium funding has been used to increase the level of teaching support for all pupils by reducing class sizes and providing additional support for specific groups. This has impacted positively on the progress disadvantaged pupils are making overall in writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils' progress in reading is more variable.
- The headteacher is clear in her view that partnerships with parents have a direct impact on pupils' achievement. She leads her team in developing effective links with parents and making sure that parents have opportunities to be involved in and celebrate their children's learning.

Governance

- Governance is strong and effective.
- There is a true sense of working together across the school, the trust and the governing body. Leaders have a shared vision and are committed to addressing the challenging circumstances the school has faced. Governors share an accurate understanding of the improvements made so far and the work still needed.
- Governors have a good knowledge of the funding the school receives. They regularly check the impact on pupils' progress of specific aspects of funding, such as that for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Governors have a clear understanding of how the pupil premium funding is directed.
- Governors are well informed about staff performance overall and understand their duties with regard to the pay progression of staff.
- Pupils' attendance is discussed at each governors' meeting. Governors regularly challenge leaders about what is being done to improve the attendance of pupils, and are accurate in their view that leaders have extensive strategies to try to improve this.
- Governors are working closely with school leaders to try to promote the improving picture of the school within the local community.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff in school know what to do and whom to report to if they have a concern about

pupils' safety or welfare. New staff have a thorough induction programme, which includes training in safeguarding. Training and updates of information are regular for all staff. During the inspection, a refresher course was held for all support staff to ensure that they had a thorough understanding of the most up-to-date guidance and information.

- School records of work with pupils, families and other agencies are organised well, thorough and shared effectively where appropriate. Effective systems are in place for careful, thorough follow-up meetings and regular monitoring is undertaken.
- A team of school and trust leaders keeps a close eye on the attendance of pupils. The education welfare officer has a notable, positive presence and is working hard to engage pupils and their families in the importance of good attendance. Where pupils have longer periods away from school, clear procedures are in place to check their whereabouts. Follow-ups are made with the local authority and other agencies if pupils are not attending school.
- Since the school became an academy, rigour is given to the safe and effective recruitment of staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not been consistently good. There has been a historical lack of clear understanding of the standards pupils are expected to reach, and not enough challenge or direction to support pupils in making strong progress. However, this year, a large amount of work has taken place across school to understand the national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Expectations of achievement have been raised. Leaders agree that higher focus now needs to be given to ensuring that the most able pupils are consistently set work that is appropriate to their needs.
- Professional development opportunities have been crucial in supporting staff new to teaching, and existing staff, in delivering lessons that are carefully matched to national expectations. Staff new to teaching have a tangible enthusiasm for their role and are highly motivated to learn as much as they can to support their pupils fully in making strong progress. Close working relationships with other schools in the trust have enabled teachers to share ideas and check that their assessments are accurate. As a result, the bar has been raised and the quality of teaching is improving. Leaders agree that this now needs to be further refined so that teaching consistently matches the needs of all pupils' different starting points. In mathematics, for example, work is sometimes too easy for some pupils and they are not moved forward quickly enough in their learning. Similarly, some pupils, who find concepts challenging, do not always receive timely support from teachers or teaching assistants to be successful in each lesson.
- Pupils' current work in writing shows improvement in spelling, punctuation and grammar starting to come through, although this is not consistently good across school. Work shows a good balance of focused grammatical activities and opportunities for pupils to write at length. However, writing styles are not modelled effectively in some year groups, so pupils are not sure exactly what they are aiming for. Pupils do not always take care and pride in their written work. They are not always shown how to build their skills to produce the best final piece of work that they can. Many are not

given the opportunity to edit and refine their work. As a result, the quality of written work and the progress pupils make is not consistently good across school.

- Half-termly expectations, moderation of work and progress meetings help teachers feel confident in accurately checking the progress their pupils are making. Analysis of the progress for disadvantaged pupils is not as refined. There is clear identification when disadvantaged pupils are not making good progress, in reading for example, but there is not always a quick enough response to adapt teaching to accelerate the progress for these pupils, so the gap between these pupils and others nationally remains.
- The quality of support that teaching assistants give is variable. One-to-one support is generally strong. For example, teachers and teaching assistants work well together to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and who need specific adaptations to the curriculum. Some pupils access the safe and nurturing resource room where they carry out their work set by teachers, support staff and outside agencies, such as the children's hospital. For other pupils within class groups, opportunities are sometimes missed to take pupils' learning forward with effective questioning and development of pupils' ideas. Some low-level disruption is not always addressed quickly enough.
- Specialist teachers in subjects such as physical education engage pupils in learning and testing out new skills. Teachers are starting to become more adept at measuring the progress that pupils are making in curriculum subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Careful decisions are made as to how best to support pupils with complex needs. Sometimes these pupils work individually or in small groups in a separate calm and nurturing environment. Work is well matched to their needs, so they make good progress from their starting points. There is close work with other agencies and parents.
- Staff, such as the inclusion manager, plan a range of activities and support to make sure that pupils' emotional needs are met.
- Lunchtime is an enjoyable time of the day. A high level of adult supervision is in place to engage pupils in a variety of activities such as team sports and music and dance.
- Pupils explain their learning confidently. They are eager to engage with adults and are able to share thoughts and opinions about their work. For example, in key stage 2, pupils were keen to talk about their new topic about the Egyptians. They explained what they had found out so far, what they were hoping to discover and how they might go about this. Pupils are proud to share and talk about their work, although they do not always take the same care over their written work.
- Pupils are taught about how to keep safe in and out of school. They give good explanations of why people may bully others and know what to do if they or others are bullied. They say that when bullying occasionally occurs, they receive good support

from adults in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are very eager to achieve an 'impeccable behaviour award' and proudly display their coloured badges on their uniforms. Many parents attend the positive behaviour assemblies.
- Good manners are evident when walking around school: pupils are keen to open doors for adults and willingly engage in short, polite conversation.
- Pupils speak confidently about the importance of tolerance and respect. They have a good understanding of British values and can give examples of when they have applied these. They have a growing understanding of different faiths.
- In class, pupils are generally engaged and demonstrating positive attitudes to learning. Where instances of the most challenging behaviour occur, these are dealt with successfully and discreetly by staff. However, occasional low-level disruption of other pupils in class and, more often, around school, is sometimes left unchecked by support staff.
- Pupils' attendance remains below that of pupils nationally. Leaders are rigorous in addressing absence, but the impact of this hard work is not as strong as they would like it to be. They know that absence has a negative impact on the progress pupils are making, and plan further work with parents and pupils to improve this.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Although outcomes are improving, they are not yet good. Not all groups of pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Results at the end of Year 6 show strong improvement over the last two years. This is due to gaps in pupils' learning from previous years being filled quickly in Year 6 to enable pupils to leave the school ready to go on to the next stage of their education. Leaders know where other gaps in learning still exist and are working hard to address these.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils across the school is variable. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 made strong progress across subjects, although in Year 2 they made slower progress in English. The work of current disadvantaged pupils and school assessment information show similar variability. High levels of support in reading for Year 6 this year have resulted in accelerated progress: disadvantaged pupils have caught up with their peers. However, disadvantaged pupils' progress in reading is not as strong across all year groups. In some cases, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in reading has widened.
- There has been a high focus on raising pupils' attainment to the national standards. Leaders acknowledge that there is still more work to be done to ensure that the progress of the most able pupils is more consistently good across school, particularly in mathematics.

- Pupils' achievements in the Year 1 phonics screening check have been consistently below the national average. However, the work of current pupils shows a better understanding and application of phonics. School assessment information supports this improvement.
- In 2016, by the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard for their age was similar to the national average in writing and mathematics. Although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading was slightly lower, more pupils reached standards of greater depth in reading than those nationally.
- Outcomes for Year 6 have improved significantly over the last two years. In 2016, Year 6 pupils made better than expected progress in writing and mathematics, and progress that was similar to other pupils nationally in reading. Their attainment at the expected standard was in line with or better than that of pupils nationally. This is a result of highly focused intervention and support to accelerate pupils' progress. Fewer pupils attain standards of greater depth than pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress over their time in school due to carefully targeted support, which is appropriate to their needs.
- Widening opportunities and teaching across a range of curriculum subjects give pupils the chance to develop new skills and knowledge through practical activities. Pupils are now making good progress across subjects such as art and science.

Early years provision

Good

- Strong leadership and clear vision in the early years have been a key steer in the improvements in the Nursery and Reception provision. From generally lower than typical starting points, particularly in speech and communication, children get off to a great start in their learning and make good progress through the early years. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception has risen significantly over the last few years and is now better than the national average.
- As soon as they are three, children are able to enter the Nursery. They settle quickly and flourish in the caring, well-organised and stimulating classrooms. Adults across the early years quickly develop a nurturing, positive relationship with children. They teach with enthusiasm and warmth. As a result, children feel safe and show delight in their learning. Children's behaviour is good.
- The early years leader has implemented effective systems and strategies to improve the progress children make. She, and the early years team, have given care and thought to the opportunities they can create indoors and outdoors to support children in making the best progress they can. Staff are working hard to further develop the support and challenge they give to most-able children. Careful assessments take place for children who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities to ensure that appropriate support is put in place swiftly. Children are well prepared to make a successful transition to Year 1.
- Children's basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics quickly develop due to

carefully planned teaching and direction, and accurate assessments of what children need to do next. This is well balanced with activities and challenge across all areas of learning, in the classroom and outdoors.

- The introduction of focused phonics teaching in Reception two years ago is having a positive impact on most children's reading and writing skills as they move on through school. Children apply their skills confidently in their reading and writing.
- Children follow the examples carefully modelled by adults and can work well independently, concentrating on the task in hand. During the inspection, for example, children were focused on activities they had chosen independently, such as making cards and presents for a friend's birthday and 'teaching' a group of other children phonics skills on the whiteboard. Children selected resources and materials they needed for their task and worked cooperatively with their friends.
- The records of children's learning are organised well and adults have high expectations of the quality of work produced. Examples of work, photographs and detailed adult observations clearly illustrate the good progress children are making.
- Staff have built positive relationships with parents. There are opportunities for parents to celebrate their children's learning, find out about teaching, such as direction in phonics, and share the success of 'impeccable behaviour'.
- The early years pupil premium funding is used effectively to increase the amount of support children receive from adults in the classroom, as well as for specific resources, such as those used in phonics.
- Safeguarding arrangements are secure. Children are safe and are taught how to keep safe.

School details

Unique reference number	141102
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10031932

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	350
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Lindsey Burgin
Principal	Rebecca Scutt
Telephone number	0114 237 2196
Website	www.lowedgesacademy.org
Email address	info@lowedgesacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Lowedges Junior Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 September 2014. When its predecessor school, Lowedges Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement.
- The school is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The early years consists of a Nursery and two Reception classes.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including observing learning across the school. Inspectors visited all classes, many with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of pupils' work across the curriculum, much of which was done alongside senior and middle leaders from the school and the trust.
- A wide range of school documents were scrutinised, including school assessment information, school improvement planning, school self-evaluation, minutes of meetings of the governing body, monitoring and evaluation information, documents relating to behaviour and safety, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Meetings took place with the associate principal, senior and middle leaders, representatives from the multi-academy trust, representatives from the governing body, staff who were new to teaching, members of the administration team, the inclusion manager, the education welfare officer and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- The behaviour of pupils was observed in lessons and during breaktimes and lunchtime.
- Inspectors gained the views of 16 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They spoke to parents during the inspection.
- The views of 13 staff who responded to the Ofsted staff survey were considered.

Inspection team

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