

The Mill Academy

Lobwood, Worsbrough Bridge, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 5EP

Inspection dates

28–29 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and other senior leaders have a very clear vision for the future of the school. They clearly recognise the school's strengths and those areas that are in need of further improvement. Their future plans reflect this well and identify the school's continuous route to improvement.
- The governing body works closely with leaders to ensure that extra funding is used effectively to support the needs of vulnerable pupils.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the school became an academy in 2014. The close monitoring and high expectations of the leadership team have successfully supported and challenged staff to improve.
- Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 make good, and sometimes better, progress. This is because they are taught well, enjoy learning and believe that they can succeed.
- Children in early years get off to a flying start. Most make exceptional progress, sometimes from very low starting points. In the last two years, above-average proportions of children have reached a good level of development. Children are very well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Pupils' behaviour is nearly always exemplary and is reflected in the polite, caring attitudes they display to each other, staff and visitors. Pupils are very clear that school is a place that they enjoy coming to and where staff help them to learn how to be safe both in and outside school. Pupils say that they feel very safe.
- Pupils, and particularly most-able pupils, make slightly better progress in English than in mathematics. This is because the school has a clear focus on ensuring that opportunities to practise skills in English are present in the planning of other subject areas. This approach has yet to be fully developed in mathematics.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the staff. They particularly acknowledge the impact of the headteacher in turning the school around. A quote from one parent summed up the views of others well: 'Everyone wants to send their children to this school now. Two years ago, very few parents put it as a first choice.'
- The role middle leaders play in supporting senior leaders to bring about further improvement is at an early stage of development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics, particularly the most able, by providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum.
- Further develop the role that middle leaders play in supporting senior leaders to bring about further school improvement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has a very clear vision of how to further improve the school, which is shared by other leaders, staff and governors. Her drive and determination have brought about change at a very fast pace over the last two years. Her resolve and determination to further improve the school are clearly evident in the school's improvement plan.
- The quality of teaching and learning has improved over the last two years. This is partly due to the very high expectations of leaders, which are reflected in the high quality of monitoring carried out across the school. It is also due to the willingness and passion of staff to keep on improving their own practice. Improvements in the quality of teaching have enabled pupils' outcomes to continue to rise year on year.
- The performance of all staff is checked and measured carefully. The system used is closely linked to the targets identified on the school's improvement plan. This has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Staff are rewarded for improvements in their performance.
- Parents are very clear that the approach of the headteacher and her leadership team has won the respect of the local community. The active and effective parent teacher association has helped develop this further through events such as 'The Mill has Talent', a talent show for all pupils, which saw the school hall filled to capacity with parents and relatives.
- While middle leaders have started to develop their roles and responsibilities across the school, they have yet to play a full part in bringing about improvement, through, for example, closely monitoring the quality of teaching in their subject area.
- The curriculum has a clear focus on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Opportunities to develop reading and writing for a range of different purposes are evident in different subject areas. For example, pupils in Year 6 were observed planning a day trip away from school using both their English and mathematical skills to analyse costs and plan events. However, while opportunities to develop pupils' English skills across the curriculum are regularly planned for, similar opportunities to practise pupils' mathematical skills are less well established. This slows pupils' progress overall in mathematics, particularly in key stage 1.
- A key focus for senior leaders has been improving pupils' behaviour. The introduction of a system designed to build pupils' self-esteem, self-worth and resilience has enabled staff to develop a better understanding of the reasons behind pupils' behaviour and attitudes. The improvement in pupils' behaviour is clear evidence of the success of the initiative. The highly positive feedback from both parents and pupils further evidences the positive impact of this initiative.
- The creative use of pupil premium funding has ensured that the personal development and welfare of disadvantaged pupils have improved in line with improvements in academic achievement. As a result, the differences between the academic progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of others nationally have diminished and progress for this group is also good and better overall.

- The special educational needs funding is used effectively to support pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities. Progress information shows that the progress of this group is in line with that of others in school, demonstrating good and better progress over time.
- The primary school physical education (PE) and sport funding is effectively used to further develop pupils' interest in sport and to train staff to improve the quality of PE across the school. Evidence to support this could clearly be seen in a popular after-school club, where pupils were learning a range of dance techniques.
- Visits to an array of different destinations, including residential outdoor pursuit centres, enable pupils to effectively develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills and understanding.

Governance of the school

- The governing body knows the school well. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school.
- While governors receive a regular and detailed report from the headteacher, they are quick to point out that this is not the only way they receive information about the school. Their frequent visits and discussions with staff and parents enable them to see the whole picture.
- Minutes from governing body meetings show that governors hold leaders effectively to account, particularly regarding pupils' progress and their attendance.
- Governors are clear about their responsibility to ensure that the school uses the pupil premium funding to effectively support disadvantaged pupils. They support the holistic way in which funding is spent. They know that the behaviour, attendance, engagement with learning and academic progress of disadvantaged pupils have improved as a result.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding pupils is a key priority for all members of staff who work in the school. Regular training sessions ensure that they are aware of current legislation and are clear about what to do for a child in need.
- Staff know pupils well. They have a good understanding of pupils' needs. They form strong relationships with pupils and their families. The work of the family support officer and attendance officer has enabled parents and their children to improve attendance and punctuality across the school.
- The headteacher takes a lead in safeguarding and has put in place a clear and logical system for referrals which enables staff to share their concerns effectively. Records show that her close working partnerships with other professionals have successfully supported families and pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and is continuing to improve. Staff are passionate about doing the best for all pupils in their care. This is reflected in the high expectations of what all pupils can achieve in the time available, which characterises learning in many lessons.
- Work is carefully planned to meet the needs of all pupils whatever their starting points. Most-able pupils are offered work with greater levels of challenge and this has improved their progress over time. For example, work in pupils' books shows that pupils are given good opportunities to develop their skills by writing for a wide range of audiences on different occasions. This enables pupils to practise their writing skills and develop a deeper understanding.
- Opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts are sometimes overlooked, for example including opportunities for pupils to use mathematical skills in other subjects. This prevents some pupils from reaching the higher levels of attainment of which they are capable.
- Teachers and support staff plan work which inspires and excites pupils; this is reflected in pupils' positive attitudes and excellent behaviour in the classroom. For example, pupils learning about Greek gods and goddesses were fascinated by the paintings on pottery and intrigued as to why only men were allowed to complete the work. Their inquisitive questions and subsequent theories on how to answer the question demonstrated their developing understanding well.
- Books show that pupils take pride in their work. Corrections are nearly always carried out diligently and improvements are clear.
- School leaders have focused on improving standards in reading across the school after a dip in standards last year. Pupils spoken to say how much they enjoy reading. Older pupils were keen to explain to the inspection team how much they enjoyed reading the wide variety of books available in the school library. Early indications from this year's results suggest that standards have improved in line with leaders' expectations.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and plan carefully to meet pupils' needs. If a pupil begins to fall behind or is not clear about a concept, staff pick this up quickly and extra help is given in short sessions held during daily assembly time. This swift action ensures that pupils are given help and support as soon as possible.
- Staff work very closely together to support the needs of pupils. Support staff are good at asking questions which help pupils to learn and have strong subject knowledge. Discussions with staff during the inspection confirmed that staff believe this is due to the positive atmosphere in school which 'just makes us feel we want to get better at our job and try even harder'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.

- Senior leaders have ensured that the well-being of everyone at school is a key priority. As a result, pupils whose personal development and well-being are a concern are quickly identified and are given help and support.
- Pupils and parents both agree that pupils' welfare and personal development are at the core of all that the school does. Extra training has given staff an excellent understanding of why pupils behave in the way they do and what is needed to support their social, emotional and academic development. This highly nurturing approach has considerably improved pupils' behaviour and personal development across the school.
- Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy coming to school and that staff keep them very safe. They also commented on the excellent guidance given by staff through, for example, lessons on the dangers of drugs and alcohol, and on how to keep safe both inside and outside school.
- Pupils are clear about the different forms bullying can take. They demonstrate very strong knowledge on the dangers of online cyber-bullying and have an understanding, despite their young age, about homophobic bullying. They are also very clear that bullying of all types is wrong and what to do should it occur.
- Senior leaders ensure that pupils are very well prepared for the next phase in their academic career. Parents and inspectors agree.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour both inside and outside the classroom is frequently impeccable. They show very kind and caring attitudes to each other, staff and visitors. Pupils' polite and well-mannered approach was clearly evident in corridors and classrooms across the school.
- Few incidents of difficult behaviour have been logged over the last three years and none has resulted in the permanent exclusion of a pupil.
- Attendance has continued to rise and persistent absence has fallen over the last two years. Current attendance is in line with national expectations for similar schools. Comments such as, 'I really enjoy coming to school – it's much better now than it used to be', and 'I just love learning' reflect the views of pupils and evidences why attendance has risen clearly.
- All staff consistently and sensitively apply the school's behaviour policy. It is clearly understood by pupils and their parents and contributes strongly to the dramatic improvement in pupils' behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils in all year groups in key stages 1 and 2 are making good progress across the curriculum, including in reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress in relation to other pupils nationally and boys and girls make similarly good progress.
- School leaders are justifiably proud that at the end of Year 1 in 2016, all pupils passed

the phonics screening check. This is well above that found in most schools nationally. Current pupils are on track to make similar gains after making very good progress in acquiring phonic skills and using these skills in reading.

- By the end of key stage 1 in 2016, teachers' assessments showed that pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with that of other pupils nationally. While this represents good progress overall, progress for the most able pupils was weaker in mathematics.
- Overall, pupils achieve well in key stage 2. In Year 6 in 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels overall in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly average. Many of these pupils had lower than average starting points and so this represents good and better progress. Pupils achieved particularly well in writing where a well above average proportion of pupils reached the higher level of attainment.
- The present Year 6 pupils are working at slightly higher standards than last year and making even stronger progress overall from slightly higher starting points.
- Across the school, the most able pupils are making rapid progress in reading and writing. Their progress in mathematics is not as rapid.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who are behind and need to catch up quickly are well supported and the school regularly checks on their progress. As a result, they make good progress from their individual starting points.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The vast majority of children start in the school's Nursery class with skills and knowledge below and occasionally well below those typical for their age. They make rapid progress and enter Reception with skills and knowledge closer to those of others nationally. At the end of the Reception Year, many attain a good level of development overall. In 2016, a larger proportion attained a good level of development than others nationally from low starting points. This represents excellent progress overall.
- Teachers and the other staff understand the needs of the children exceptionally well. Staff check on children's knowledge and understanding when they join the school, and frequently throughout the year.
- Activities are meticulously planned so that children's learning is focused directly on their needs and they are very well equipped with appropriate skills and knowledge by the time they move on to Year 1. This is particularly beneficial for those children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who are disadvantaged.
- Staff are highly skilled at developing children's vocabulary and language skills through conversations and questioning. Children are encouraged to express themselves in full sentences rather than one-word answers, and this accelerates the progress they make in reading and writing.
- Every opportunity is used to encourage children to become independent. While playing at being superheroes, they independently put on their costumes and discussed the

superpowers each could have, demonstrating cooperation and a great sense of fairness.

- Parents spoken to in the playground said that they felt their children got off to a flying start. They praised the way that staff included them in every aspect of their child's development. Parents explained how they always felt welcomed each morning and enjoyed carrying out tasks set alongside their children. All would wholeheartedly recommend this school to others.
- The head of early years and the class teacher work together very closely to provide strong leadership within the unit. Planning for learning demonstrates this well as individual children's needs are clearly planned for and this ensures that none gets left behind. Other staff have strong levels of expertise in how to develop children's learning, which they use to excellent effect.
- Children's behaviour is excellent. They quickly learn to understand the class routines and the behaviour expected of them. Children learn how to listen to their teacher and each other. This is clearly evidenced in the impressive way they share, and take turns using equipment and in conversation.

School details

Unique reference number	141097
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	10031939

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	224
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Sue Williams
Headteacher	Tamara Gulliver
Telephone number	01226 289096
Website	www.themill.stmarysacademytrust.co.uk
Email address	m.priestley@smat.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- 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.
- The Mill Academy converted to become an academy in 2014 and joined the St Mary's Academy Trust. When its predecessor school St Edmunds was last inspected, it was judged by Ofsted to be inadequate overall.
- The school appointed a new headteacher in September 2014, as it became an academy.
- The school has a link with a local children's centre and runs a weekly playgroup in partnership with children's centre staff.
- The vast majority of pupils come from within the locality of Wosborough Bridge near

Barnsley. Most are of White British origin.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for primary schools, which are the minimum standards set for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning in classrooms across the school. Some observations were carried out with members of the senior leadership team.
- A range of school documents, including safeguarding documentation, pupils' progress information and the school's curriculum planning, were analysed by the inspection team.
- Meetings were held with pupils, senior leaders, middle leaders, members of staff, the vice-chair of the governing body and three other governors and five members of the academy trust.
- Informal meetings were held with 17 parents at the start of the day. The inspection team took into account the feedback from 12 parents given via Ofsted's online text service and 15 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Eve Morris	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Bissett	Ofsted Inspector

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