

Sessay CofE Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Sessay, Thirsk, North Yorkshire YO7 3NA

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors' actions have not secured consistently good teaching, learning and assessment across key stages 1 and 2.
- Leaders' view of the school's effectiveness is too positive. Leaders monitor teaching and learning but systems are too ad hoc. Planning for improvement is therefore not sharp enough.
- Leadership of subjects across the curriculum is of variable quality. Action plans for English and science, for example, lack detail. Analysis of pupils' outcomes in each area is imprecise.
- Leaders do not direct additional funding for disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities with precision. Its impact on pupils is too vague.
- The quality of teaching in key stages 1 and 2, varies. Not all pupils make good progress from their starting points, particularly in science, reading and writing.
- The most able pupils are not sufficiently stretched in their thinking or challenged in their work. Too often, they fail to reach the greater depths of learning of which they are capable.
- Not all teachers make the best possible use of teaching and learning time. Transition times can be disorderly and prolonged. Too often, pupils wait for resources or further direction.
- Governors are supportive and committed. They do not yet play an effective role in challenging leaders' judgements about pupils' progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Leadership and teaching in the early years are good. Children are happy, safe and well cared for. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has increased over time.
- The executive headteacher has established a warm and inclusive ethos in the school. Pupils' social and spiritual needs are well met.
- Leaders and families work well together to ensure that pupils attend well. Absence is rare.
- Parents and pupils are proud of their school. They are vociferous in their praise of staff and leaders. The close community feel is valued.
- Pupils are unfailingly polite and cheerful. Their respect and consideration for others are evident in their work and manners.
- Leaders make good use of the primary physical education and sport funding. Pupils speak knowledgeably about how to keep themselves fit and healthy.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - securing consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across key stages 1 and 2, particularly in science, reading and writing
 - tightening procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning
 - sharpening improvement planning so that it is firmly focused on the correct priorities and links directly to pupils' progress and outcomes
 - equipping subject leaders, particularly in science and English, with the training and skills needed to manage their duties effectively
 - directing additional funding more precisely to make sure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils receive their full entitlement, and by examining the effect of this funding on pupils' progress with improved effectiveness
 - enabling governors to challenge leaders more effectively about the impact of their actions on pupils' progress and achievement.
- Improve the quality of teaching in key stages 1 and 2 so that all pupils make consistently good progress by:
 - supporting and challenging teachers to plan tasks and learning that are better matched to pupils' needs, taking account of what pupils already know and can do, especially in science, reading and writing
 - raising teachers' expectations of pupils' capabilities and potential, particularly the most able, so that sufficient challenge and stretch are guaranteed across the curriculum
 - ensuring that staff make the best possible use of all available teaching and learning time.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and governors secured a formal federation between Sessay and Huthwaite Church of England primaries in October 2016. One executive headteacher leads both schools. Leaders feel confident that this arrangement supports them to meet best-value principles and shape future developments. Leaders and governors have already offered staff some opportunities to share practice across the two schools. Leaders aim to strengthen collaboration further in terms of strategic leadership, professional development and staff training. This joint working is not yet driving rapid improvement in teaching and learning at Sessay.
- Leaders and governors have not taken sufficiently robust action to secure consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in key stages 1 and 2. This is partly due to leaders and governors' view of the school's performance, which is too generous. While senior leaders undertake various monitoring activities, these are too often irregular or unfocused. Leaders' actions, therefore, do not have a dependable impact on improvement.
- Leaders' improvement plans, including subject action plans, are not fully focused on the correct priorities. Not all subject or senior leaders evaluate their work or the effect their actions have on performance frequently or thoroughly enough. In addition, not all subject leaders monitor their areas of responsibility meticulously. As a result, inconsistencies in teaching and learning, particularly in English and science, remain.
- Leaders and staff use the school's assessment system to record pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders have used this information well recently to tackle weaknesses identified in mathematics across key stages 1 and 2. Leaders cannot, however, confidently explain how well different groups of pupils are doing over time across subjects.
- Leaders are working hard to develop a more accurate system for capturing pupils' achievement across the wider curriculum. Using the national curriculum requirements as a yardstick for assessment, they are beginning to capture the rate and extent of pupils' progress in subjects such as science. It is too soon to tell whether this work will make a difference to the quality of teaching and learning across subjects.
- Leaders have not directed or evaluated their use of additional funding closely enough. The support and resources that they have secured have been focused too broadly on the wider pupil population. Leaders know that differences persist, in terms of rates of progress and outcomes, for disadvantaged pupils, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the primary physical education and sport premium funding is used wisely. There is a clear emphasis on improving pupils' understanding of the importance of physical health and well-being. Leaders make sure that pupils take part in a wide range of exciting sporting endeavours and understand the value of competition, teamwork and perseverance.

- The executive headteacher has worked successfully with staff to establish a warm, inclusive and distinctively Christian ethos across the school. A positive, happy atmosphere permeates the environment and contributes well to pupils' social, emotional and spiritual well-being. Leaders' work to ensure that pupils understand British values, such as democracy, tolerance and respect, is part and parcel of this enabling ethos.
- The executive headteacher and staff are determined in their efforts to ensure that pupils' experiences across the primary curriculum are enriched. Leaders plan trips, organise stimulating events and invite visitors into school. Musical sessions with specialists, topic and residential trips and a range of after-school clubs are just some of the regular activities that are available. These well-thought-out occurrences make sure that pupils have opportunities to value and celebrate their local heritage as well as other cultures.

Governance of the school

- Governors bring a range of skills to their roles of governance. Describing themselves as 'critical friends', they undertake their responsibilities conscientiously. Their enthusiasm and pride in the school is tangible. Governors' challenge to leaders about the extent of progress that pupils are making across year groups, ability groups and subjects, however, is not yet sufficiently robust.
- Governors are not able to explain the difference that additional funding makes to disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities confidently. Governors do not have a clear knowledge and understanding of how the money is spent or whether leaders are eliminating barriers and reducing differences for pupils rapidly.
- Governors visit school regularly to understand for themselves what it feels like to be a pupil at this school. They look at the work in pupils' books, talk with pupils, staff and parents and meet regularly to discuss their findings. This said, governors' too generous view of the quality of teaching and learning inhibits them from asking truly searching questions in order to drive improvement.
- Governors are committed to their role and endeavour to make a difference via their contributions. They take part in governors' training offered by the local authority and online training. This demonstrates their dedication to self-improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have been successful in creating a culture of safeguarding. Leaders make sure that staff and governors receive regular training and updates in child protection. Staff, therefore, are vigilant and sensitive to pupils' care and welfare needs.
- Leaders' child protection records are fit for purpose. Most documentation is detailed appropriately and well maintained. Occasionally, however, the chronology of actions taken by leaders is disorganised and some particulars are a little vague.

- Leaders and governors take the protection of pupils seriously. They understand the need for safe recruitment practices. They strive diligently to make sure that all adults working with pupils are suitable to do so.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable across key stages 1 and 2. While some adults have high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve, others' expectations are too low. Pupils' rates of progress and learning across the curriculum, therefore, are inconsistent over time.
- Some teachers do not take sufficient account of pupils' prior learning and existing knowledge and skills. Work planned and presented, therefore, does not match pupils' needs precisely. The most able pupils in particular undertake work that lacks challenge and fails to fascinate or fully stretch them in their thinking. Consequently, too few reach the greater depths of learning that should be expected of them, particularly in science, reading and writing.
- Some teachers and teaching assistants make good use of every available teaching and learning moment. These adults manage transitions promptly without fuss or loss of time. They manage and organise their time, equipment and classroom resources skilfully to make the most of available teaching time. These effective practices do not, however, feature consistently across classes or over the school day.
- Some teachers challenge pupils' misconceptions expertly so that pupils develop the capacity to learn from mistakes. They make learning really explicit for pupils and use clear, succinct explanations to avoid any confusion. This strength in practice, however, is not yet consistent across subjects.
- Teaching and learning of mathematics have improved recently. Staff and leaders have worked well together to raise the profile of mathematics and to dispel a few lingering negative perceptions of pupils' potential and capabilities in mathematics. Teachers' confidence and subject knowledge have developed well. This is having a positive impact on pupils' progress and achievement, particularly in upper key stage 2 and in the early years.
- Teachers use a systematic approach to the teaching of phonics. Teachers' workshops and guidance for parents have helped to develop a shared understanding between home and school of how children learn and develop these early language skills. The majority of adults in school articulate sounds and letter names carefully and precisely, and encourage pupils to do likewise. Most pupils make good progress in this area of learning.
- Pupils usually display cheerful, positive attitudes to their work and learning. Even where teachers have matched tasks less effectively to their needs and interests, most pupils get on and try their best or politely seek further clarification and guidance.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Opportunities for pupils' moral, cultural and spiritual development are woven through the distinctively Christian and inclusive ethos, which is skilfully embedded by leaders. Links with the immediate and wider localities are well established. Regular 'circle' (discussion) times to explore topical issues and Friday assemblies held in the neighbouring church of St Cuthbert's, for example, are firm favourites with pupils and parents. Pupils learn to contribute their views and take pleasure in their community and cultural heritage.
- Staff pride themselves on knowing pupils and their families well in this close-knit community. Pupils say that they feel safe. Parents agree and say that their children are 'treated as individuals' by 'caring and attentive' staff who look after their children well. Sentiments expressed by a number of parents matched one parent's comment, 'Staff deserve to be commended for the way in which they ensure all children and parents are valued.'
- Staff have a warm, respectful rapport with pupils. Pupils relish the wide range of responsibilities afforded to them. They respond with enthusiasm to their roles within the environmental gardening group and the healthy schools group and they thoroughly enjoy being playtime buddies. Such activities build pupils' confidence, develop a multitude of skills and make pupils feel valued.
- Adults' careful attention to pupils' personal, social and emotional needs means that pupils feel protected. Pupils told the inspector that regular fire drills, secure entry/exit systems and adults who listen all help them to feel secure and well cared for.
- Teachers equip pupils with the skills needed to keep themselves safe online through frequent internet and e-safety work. Pupils, therefore, understand and appreciate the benefits of filters and blocks when working online, as they learn to use information technology safely and responsibly.
- Pupils' understanding about what it means to be a successful learner is inconsistent and at times inhibited by the variable quality of teaching. Where adults' expectations are too low and work lacks challenge, or the poor use of time means that the pace of learning slows, not all pupils learn to develop skills of application, perseverance and persistence. The most able pupils in key stages 1 and 2, in particular, do not experience consistent messages about challenging and testing oneself, especially in science, reading and writing.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Adults and pupils work collaboratively to tackle any rare occasions of poorer behaviour or unkind comments. Pupils say that usually 'everyone behaves well' and incidents of bullying are extremely rare. The vast majority of pupils who responded to Ofsted's survey agreed that their peers' behaviour in

lessons and around school is good 'most' or 'all' of the time. They are confident that teachers will sort out any little 'fallings out' between friends.

- The school works well with parents to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Leaders celebrate pupils' good attendance and communicate clearly the importance and benefits of coming to school each day. Consequently, overall attendance is consistently above the national average and no groups of pupils are unfairly disadvantaged by frequent absence.
- Pupils are polite and make visitors feel welcome. They are inquisitive, confident and articulate, eager to share their views and opinions yet able to listen respectfully to the views of others. Playtimes are lively, fun and enjoyable because all pupils, older and younger, get along well together. A friendly camaraderie is evident.
- Pupils conduct themselves in a positive manner in and around school. Pupils told the inspector, however, that occasionally there are distractions when they are working. At times, work is too easy and they lose focus while waiting for teachers to direct them to their next piece of work. Pupils also said that at times the learning environments can be 'a bit noisy' and pupils 'a little over-excited'.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes require improvement because pupils' progress in key stages 1 and 2, particularly in science, reading and writing, over time, is too variable. Adults do not take enough account of pupils' starting points to challenge pupils sufficiently to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- Current pupils' progress in science, reading and writing remains inconsistent. Pupils' workbooks from key stages 1 and 2 show that too few of those pupils from typical or better starting points are working at age-related expectations or are striving to reach greater depths of learning. The school's own assessment information shows that not all pupils make good enough progress to reach their end-of-year targets.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in key stage 2 in reading, writing and science was average in 2016 and below national averages in 2017. From pupils' starting points, this represents rates of progress over time that require improvement. Not all pupils are effectively prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- Evidence in pupils' books and work in lessons demonstrate that too few of the most able pupils make good progress over time. Inconsistencies in teaching and learning, including a lack of challenge and expectation, have meant that not enough pupils are stretched in their thinking and challenged to reach the higher standards of achievement that should be expected of them.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils in key stage 2 reaching greater depths of learning in reading and writing was below national averages. No pupils in key stage 1 reached a greater depth of learning in writing.
- Pupils' outcomes in mathematics in 2017, in key stage 2, improved considerably. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard at 92% was well above the national average. Furthermore, the proportion of pupils reaching a greater depth in mathematics was broadly in line with that in other schools nationally. The majority of

pupils were well prepared for the secondary mathematics curriculum.

- In key stage 1 in 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with national averages.
- Over time, pupils' outcomes in phonics in Year 1 and Year 2 have exceeded the national average. Although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics in Year 1 fell below the national average in 2017, most pupils continue to make good progress from their starting points due to carefully targeted support.
- Although cohorts are small, it is nevertheless the case that inconsistencies remain in the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities over time.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership and management of the early years are good. Leaders have developed strong links with parents, carers, nurseries and pre-schools to ensure that transition into school for children is smooth and well informed. Communication between home and school is positive and built upon as the year progresses. One parent's view typified the response of several, 'Caring and enthusiastic staff... have made our daughter's induction into school-life a flawless joy'.
- Staff liaise effectively with external agencies, for example speech therapists and healthcare experts. They identify and quickly put into place the correct resources for children who may need additional support. Consequently, the vast majority of children settle quickly into the Reception class, are well supported in their development and enjoy school from the outset.
- Leaders have augmented the curriculum in early years. Staff tweak areas of learning carefully, making sure that children's needs and interests are capitalised upon. The recently added 'grassy hill' and 'mud kitchen', for example, are firm favourites with current children. Staff use areas such as these successfully to develop children's creativity, curiosity, confidence and gross motor skills.
- Most children enter the early years with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. A significant proportion of children enter with better than typical skills. Because teaching and learning are good in the early years, most children make good progress from their starting points. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has grown over time to exceed the national average. Occasionally, however, the most able children are hindered by not being given additional challenge, particularly in reading and writing.
- Leaders fully involve parents in children's assessment and development. This shared information shapes teachers' planning across the early years curriculum and informs programmes of work. Staff and parents contribute to children's profile folders with comments, photographs and a range of evidence. In this way, children's learning journeys, and development over time, are captured in some detail.
- Staff recently worked with parents to discuss how and why phonics are used in the early years. Parents learned about the precise articulation used by adults in school in supporting children to match sounds to letters. As a result, children benefit from the

consistency of approach at home and school.

- Early years leaders and staff make sure that the indoor and outdoor environments excite and stimulate children. There are plenty of opportunities for children to read, write and explore numbers. Adults actively encourage and lead learning in these areas. During the inspection, a group of children were applying their knowledge, skills and understanding of weight as they manipulated a set of scales. Adults modelled the correct use of vocabulary and used questioning skilfully to support children to think deeply about their findings. As a result of timely interventions such as this, most children develop basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics at a good pace.
- All early years staff are vigilant and mindful of the development needs of young children in terms of their well-being and welfare. Children behave well. They are happy and well looked after and make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Teaching staff sometimes do not make the most of teaching and learning time. Time is sometimes lost during transitions between one task and another. At times, valuable learning opportunities are missed as children wait for others to finish or to get ready for learning.

School details

Unique reference number	121514
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10036452

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pam Laycock
Executive Headteacher	Rebecca Bainbridge
Telephone number	01845 501239
Website	www.sessay.n-yorks.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@sessay.n-yorks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 September 2012

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about pupil premium funding or key stage 2 results on its website.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has federated with Husthwaite Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School and is now part of the Husthwaite and Sessay Church of England federation.
- This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Very few pupils are eligible for support funded by the pupil premium.
- The proportion of pupils who require additional support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is currently below average. There are currently no pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

- There are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups.

Information about this inspection

- Teaching and learning were observed in all classes across all key stages. During day one of the inspection, the lead inspector and the executive headteacher conducted all lesson observations jointly.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, senior and subject leaders, governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector listened to pupils read, scrutinised their work and talked formally and informally with groups of pupils and individuals. The 62 responses by pupils to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire were taken into account.
- A wide range of the school's own information was examined, including policy documentation, the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans and records of the checks made on teaching and learning. Information about performance management and safeguarding arrangements and practice was also studied.
- The opinions of 11 staff were taken into account via their responses to Ofsted's questionnaire and through discussion during meetings.
- The views of 22 parents were considered via their responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, and 21 responses via Ofsted's free-text service. The inspector also spoke with a parent representative during the inspection.

Inspection team

Fiona Manuel, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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