

Ash Grove Junior and Infant School

Ash Grove, South Elmsall, Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF9 2TF

Inspection dates

13–14 February 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- A series of short-term interim headteacher arrangements have undermined the school's effectiveness and damaged staff morale. Everyone, including parents and carers, governors and the local authority agree that standards of teaching and pupils' outcomes in the school have declined.
- Outcomes for pupils have been significantly below those seen nationally for several years. By the end of key stage 2, pupils' attainment is well below the national average with only around a third of pupils attaining the standard expected in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children make a slow start in early years. Some weak teaching and a lack of day-to-day leadership mean that the quality of provision is inadequate. Although children enter Reception Year with skills typical for their age, they finish the year below where they should.
- Disadvantaged pupils make particularly poor progress. Leaders and governors have failed to implement any coherent strategy for the use of pupil premium funding.
- The quality of teaching is inadequate. Teaching is typified by low expectations and lack of challenge because assessment practice is weak. At times, this can have a negative effect on some pupils' behaviour and pride in their work.
- The curriculum is in need of development. It does not meet the expectations of the national curriculum or prepare pupils for life in modern Britain well enough.
- Levels of pupil attendance are falling. In particular, the number of pupils missing school regularly has risen sharply.
- The capacity of leaders to improve the school is weak. Middle leaders lack the training to be effective in their roles. The new headteacher is reliant on the support of another school for many aspects of leadership and management.
- Since November 2016, the governors have been unable to recruit a substantive headteacher. They have not provided the strategic support and direction necessary to keep the school on track.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has made a promising start and demonstrates the necessary ambition and steel to deal with deep-seated barriers to improvement.
- Pupils are safe and well cared for. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and caring.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make consistently good progress by:
 - providing the necessary training and professional development to improve teachers' subject knowledge and raise their expectations of what pupils should achieve
 - ensuring that a consistent assessment system is introduced and that assessment information is used as the basis for planning lessons
 - ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants have the necessary skills to teach phonics and support younger pupils to become fluent readers by the end of key stage 1
 - ensuring that teachers expect higher standards in handwriting and presentation.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and attendance by:
 - improving pupils' attitudes to learning and determination to give of their best
 - working more closely with those families whose children are regularly late or absent from school
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to learn about and appreciate different faiths and cultures.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - taking swift action to eradicate inadequate teaching
 - managing the performance of teachers effectively
 - improving both the core and wider curriculum so that planned learning supports good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and stimulates pupils' interest and curiosity in learning more widely
 - using assessment information to target pupils who fall behind with extra help
 - developing the skills of middle leaders so that they can contribute more effectively to improving the school
 - ensuring that pupil premium funding is used well and the progress of disadvantaged pupils accelerates
 - recruiting more governors and developing the skills of the governing body so that they can manage resources more effectively and hold leaders to account.

■ Improve the quality of early years provision by:

- rapidly improving the quality of teaching so that children make good progress
- ensuring that teaching places more emphasis on the development of children's skills in reading, writing and number
- improving day-to-day leadership and ensuring that resources, including funding for disadvantaged children, are deployed to maximum effect.

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

Inadequate

- A series of short-term interim headteacher arrangements since November 2015 has precipitated a sharp decline in standards and loss of staff morale in the school. Many of the staff recognise that the school is not as good as it was when it was last inspected. Parents are also unhappy at the unresolved leadership situation and the high level of staff absence.
- The current headteacher, in the school for only five weeks at the time of the inspection, has made a promising start. However, her appointment is also a temporary arrangement until the governors again attempt to recruit a substantive headteacher. She is drawing heavily on the support of another school and is benefiting from some additional funding from the local authority. She is, however, hampered by a significant budget deficit, which is having an adverse effect upon her ability to take action to improve the school. The capacity of leaders to secure rapid improvement is limited.
- Over time, successive temporary leaders have failed to address inadequate teaching. The necessary systems required to manage teachers' performance and hold them to account have not been in place. Only recently has an appropriate performance management policy been introduced.
- Teachers have not received the level of training they have needed during a period when expectations in education nationally have been raised. As a result, the practice of some members of staff is outdated and their expectations are too low. Middle leaders have not received the training or guidance they have needed to be effective.
- The school does not have a consistent approach to assessment. The most recent teacher assessments are unreliable and overly generous. Sensibly, the new headteacher has put in place some baseline tests to gauge pupils' current level of attainment. This has very recently begun to give leaders the information they need to target extra help for pupils who have fallen behind. Some more ambitious targets for the end of key stages have been set, but these are below last year's national averages for attainment.
- Little has been done to update the school's curriculum since the national curriculum was revised in 2014. In particular, schemes of work for English and mathematics are patchy. Planning across the school is disjointed and therefore teachers do not consistently build upon what pupils already know and can do. Pupils do have various opportunities to learn across different subjects and there is secure teaching that develops pupils' social and moral development. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to learn about and experience other cultures and faiths. Educational visits to places of interest happen relatively rarely. British values are fostered effectively by some teachers, but a lack of consistent policy means that this area of the school's work is also patchy. Leaders plan to review the curriculum later this term.
- Leaders and governors have failed to use the pupil premium effectively. Until recently, teachers were not aware of who the disadvantaged pupils were in their classes. This additional funding has been used generally to support the school's budget. The pupil premium plan, established before the current interim headteacher took up post, allocated less than half of the pupil premium grant to actions designed to raise the

attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Governors cannot account for the remaining funding.

- Special educational needs funding is used more effectively. The support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is more obvious in lessons. However, this support makes only a modest difference, as these pupils also make less progress than other pupils nationally.
- There is a good range of sporting opportunities. Around 100 pupils each week stay on for after-school activities, many of which are sports such as football, rugby and athletics. The primary physical education and sport funding is used effectively to ensure pupils have access to suitable coaching. There are other activities, including a glee club, dance and yoga, which make a good contribution towards pupils' physical and mental health.
- Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Governance of the school

- Governors have tried on a number of occasions to recruit an experienced headteacher, but have been unsuccessful. As a result, they have had to accept a series of temporary arrangements.
- Governors have not, however, provided the level of scrutiny required to ensure that these temporary arrangements have been effective. They have not provided the strategic oversight required. Some governors have not been active enough to fulfil their responsibilities. The school has also failed to recruit enough governors, and a number of vacancies remain.
- The governing body has not ensured that the performance of staff was managed effectively and this has allowed inadequate teaching to persist.
- Governors' management of resources and finance has been poor. Very high levels of staff absence have gone unchecked, resulting in considerable spending on agency staff. Some of the pupil premium funding has not been spent on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are now hampered by a significant budget deficit.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors have audited the quality of safeguarding provision and addressed some gaps. Staff training, which was out of date, has been completed. Policies have been updated and practices in the school ensure that pupils are kept safe. The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.
- Leaders take appropriate steps to protect children at risk of harm. They keep good records of the steps they take. However, leaders feel they can improve record keeping and plan to introduce more up-to-date systems.
- The parents of more vulnerable pupils who made their views known feel well informed and involved in the actions the school takes to support or protect their children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching, over time, has been typified by low expectations and a lack of challenge. Weaknesses in assessment arrangements mean that teachers do not consistently use information on pupils' starting points to inform their teaching. As a result, pupils have not made the progress they should. Pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics have not been developed effectively.
- Some teachers have limited subject knowledge and only a shallow grasp of national curriculum expectations. This is a result of insufficient training and professional development opportunities. Where training has been provided, some teachers have not developed or adapted their practice.
- Staff morale has been low because there have been too many changes in leadership. Teachers and teaching assistants have frequently been moved from one phase of the school to another and some have struggled to adapt to different national curriculum requirements. Over the last year, there have been over 460 days lost due to staff absence. This severe lack of continuity has had a significant effect on pupils' progress and the quality of education provided.
- The work in many pupils' workbooks is poorly presented. There is no consistent approach to developing pupils' handwriting and standards in spelling are weak.
- The teaching of phonics is very variable. There is some effective practice in Nursery, but practice is weak in Reception. There are too many pupils currently in key stage 2 who cannot read fluently and are not equipped with the necessary phonics skills to decode new words.
- Leaders have not established a coherent curriculum. As a result, teachers are not always aware of the work pupils have previously covered and repeat work that pupils have already grasped. The lack of challenge in some classrooms means that some pupils become restless and do not apply themselves as well as they should.
- Recent guidance and training provided by the new headteacher have been well received. Staff continually told inspectors that they feel they have lacked the necessary direction. The new headteacher is demonstrating the expertise required to improve teaching and has begun to hold teachers more rigorously to account.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils learn how to stay safe through the curriculum. There is suitable information for pupils on e-safety. There is also a planned programme of learning to support pupils' personal, social, health and economic development and this is well supplemented by visiting speakers. However, the lack of any detailed and comprehensive curriculum planning means that there are gaps in pupils' learning.
- Pupils receive little information through the curriculum about different faiths and

cultures. There are educational visits to local churches but not to other places of worship. Consequently, pupils are not sufficiently well prepared for life in modern Britain.

- An area of relative strength is the provision for pupils' physical and mental health. There are good sporting activities, which are well attended. A wide range of sports coaches work in the school at lunchtimes and after school. A forest school has recently been introduced and has a positive effect on some pupils who are less engaged with learning.
- Relationships between members of staff and pupils are warm and friendly. Pupils trust their teachers to help them if they have any concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Although most pupils behave appropriately in lessons and during assemblies, some pupils do not take enough pride in their work and settle for easy options. A small minority of pupils present challenging behaviour, often as a result of teaching that fails to capture their interest. New guidance from the headteacher, such as the school's ABC system for marking pupils' effort with their presentation, has begun to inspire pupils to strive harder.
- Last year, a small number of pupils were excluded from school for fixed periods of time. So far this year, no pupils have been excluded.
- Overall, pupils' attendance was close to the national average in the last academic year. However, overall attendance has fallen this year and the proportion of pupils who miss school regularly has risen sharply. To date, over 20% of pupils are missing school regularly. The long-term absence of the learning mentor has meant that the school has limited resources to support families whose children miss school often. Levels of punctuality are also a concern.
- The school has recently introduced a new system to record incidents of poor behaviour. The system shows that there have been few incidents. Records also show that incidents of bullying are rare.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes have declined sharply since the last inspection. Pupils began to make poor progress in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015. Since then, their progress deteriorated further because inadequate teaching was not addressed. In 2017, outcomes were particularly weak and pupils left the school at the end of key stage 2 with levels of attainment well below those seen nationally. Around two thirds of pupils failed to attain the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, meaning they were not well placed for future success at secondary school.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are particularly poor. Leaders and governors have, over time, failed to make effective use of the additional funding the school has received for these pupils. Disadvantaged pupils have not received any extra help and therefore, over successive years, they have made significantly less progress than other pupils

nationally.

- Too many teachers take no account of pupils' prior attainment when they plan lessons. As a result, most pupils are not challenged or encouraged to think deeply. Pupils with middle- or high prior attainment have typically made very poor progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils currently in the school continue to make weak progress because too many teachers have low expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Pupils with lower prior attainment, including some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, make slighter better progress. The special educational needs coordinator has done much since her appointment last September to ensure that these pupils receive extra help.
- The work in pupils' workbooks shows that their progress continues to be highly variable. As a result of guidance issued by the new headteacher, some teachers have recently begun to expect more of pupils. In some classes, therefore, there is evidence of some improvement, particularly in writing. Progress in mathematics, however, remains weak, as teachers consistently miss opportunities to extend pupils' thinking and address misconceptions.
- The quality of learning across the wider curriculum is weak. The new headteacher has recognised this and intends to review the curriculum in the coming weeks so that it matches the expectations of the national curriculum. Currently, pupils make poor progress in many subject areas, including science, history and geography, because topics are shallow and often not completed satisfactorily.

Early years provision

Inadequate

- Children enter Nursery Year with skills that are broadly typical for their age. They make secure progress in Nursery. However, weak teaching in Reception Year means that they do not make the progress they should. In recent years, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development by the end of Reception Year has remained below that seen nationally. Too many children, therefore, are not ready to start Year 1.
- Disadvantaged children typically make considerably less progress and attain less well than other children. Last year, none of the disadvantaged children attained a good level of development at the end of Reception Year. The additional funding the school receives for disadvantaged children in early years has not been targeted well.
- Teaching in early years is too variable for children to make the progress they should. Some teachers do not engage children's interest well enough and struggle to manage children's behaviour. As a result, some children do not develop good learning routines and sometimes are not respectful of one another or members of staff.
- The quality of basic skills teaching is weak. Children's attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is well below that seen nationally because learning activities are not designed well enough to move children's learning forward. Inspectors observed children looking for things to do when they had time to choose activities for themselves, because there were few well-organised or appealing activities provided for them.
- Arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements. The site is safe and secure and staff are attentive to children's needs. Children who have SEN and/or disabilities

receive a high level of additional support. At times, however, the nature of this support means that they are not always included in group activities, inhibiting their social development.

- Leadership of early years is problematic. The deputy headteacher, who holds the responsibility, does not work in either the Nursery or Reception Years on a day-to-day basis. As a result, she is not there to organise and deploy staff or to check on the quality of provision. Recent reviews undertaken by the local authority have raised a number of concerns regarding the quality of practice in early years and the need to improve the learning environment, both inside and outside.

School details

Unique reference number	130858
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10042227

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	331
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Caulton
Headteacher	Deborah Birdsall
Telephone number	01977 640625
Website	www.ashgrovejandi.co.uk
Email address	headteacher@ashgrove.wakefield.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 June 2014

Information about this school

- Ash Grove Junior and Infant School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of key stage 2.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

- Since the last inspection, there have been a series of temporary interim headteacher arrangements following the retirement of the last substantive headteacher. The current interim headteacher was appointed at the start of January 2018.
- The local authority brokered the support of Upton Primary School at the end of last term. This support is currently focusing on developing aspects of leadership and management in the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons across all phases of the school, including the Nursery and Reception classes. Most visits to lessons were undertaken jointly with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. During observations, inspectors sampled pupils' workbooks and talked to pupils to evaluate the quality of their current work. In addition, inspectors scrutinised in detail a sample of books containing work from English and mathematics and the wider curriculum. An inspector also listened to a number of pupils read.
- Inspectors observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime and observed their movement and behaviour around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, curriculum leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also met a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the headteacher of Upton Primary School, who is providing support to the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies, assessment information and records of checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors looked at records of attendance and behaviour, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of the 69 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. In addition, the inspector took account of the 15 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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