

# Highfields Primary Academy

Coppice Road, Highfields, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN6 7JB

## Inspection dates

16–17 May 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, pupils' progress has not been strong enough to enable them to achieve well. Despite a recent firm focus on improving teaching and learning, some gaps in pupils' learning in English remain. Too few reach the expected standards by the end of Year 6.
- Teaching in the early years does not support children in making enough progress from their low starting points.
- Pupils' mistakes in their written work are identified, but they are not addressed well enough to help them improve rapidly.
- Due to some historically weak teaching in reading and phonics, pupils of lower ability in key stage 2 have gaps in their reading skills. This slows the progress they make in other subjects.
- Lower-ability pupils do not have the support they need to make good progress in phonics.
- Although leaders are supporting pupils in developing their moral and social skills, pupils have limited knowledge of different faiths and cultures. This limits their understanding of life in modern Britain.

### The school has the following strengths

- Recently appointed senior leaders have a very clear view of what the school needs to do to improve. They have quickly implemented new, well-evaluated strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning, which are bringing about improvements in pupils' outcomes.
- Trust leaders, school leaders and members of the academy advisory board have a united approach to school improvement. Their receptive and professional approach to plans for school improvement is bringing about the changes needed to the quality of education offered.
- Safeguarding is effective and support for pupils' welfare is strong.
- Middle leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. They are enthusiastic in their roles in supporting school improvement.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of the school rules and adults' high expectations for their good behaviour. As a result, pupils say that they feel safe in school and they are happy. The number of exclusions has reduced substantially.
- Leaders' actions have raised expectations for pupils' good attendance. This means that rates of absence have decreased and are now similar to the national average.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in the early years by:
  - planning areas of learning and activities that reduce gaps in children’s knowledge, skills and understanding and challenge them to move on in their learning
  - providing rich opportunities for children to practise independently and explore the new skills they have learned in reading, writing and mathematics, in the indoor and outdoor environment
  - making sure that all adults in early years know what each child needs to do next and use effective questioning and activities to help children make good progress across all areas of learning.
- Improve the progress that pupils make from their low starting points, particularly in English, to ensure that a greater proportion reach age-related expectations by ensuring:
  - all staff who teach phonics are well trained in how to support pupils in making rapid progress in their acquisition of reading and writing skills
  - that where teachers identify mistakes and misconceptions in pupils’ work, they show pupils how to put these right so that pupils make accelerated progress in their learning
  - checks on actions for improvement are sharply linked to gains in pupils’ achievement.
- Prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain by further developing their understanding of different faiths, cultures and beliefs.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The school has faced many challenges since the last inspection and most leaders are new to their roles. The head of the academy and the associate executive principal demonstrate passion and strong commitment to the roles they started in September 2017. They, and the staff, want the very best for the pupils at Highfields. They have seized control of the aspects of the school that are not good enough and have started to improve them.
- The head of the academy and the associate executive principal work closely together. They have built on the good foundations laid in improving pupils' behaviour and welfare with a comprehensive plan of actions to strengthen teaching and learning across the school. With the good support of other leaders, they have implemented a large number of strategies this year, particularly in English and mathematics. The success of these strategies is starting to shine through.
- The Delta Academy Trust itself has been through a period of re-organisation. Trust leaders understand the challenging context of the school, but have a 'no-excuses' approach. They share high aspirations for the pupils' future successes. They support school leaders well in tackling areas of the school that need improvement and know that some aspects are not yet strong enough. They have established systems, used across the trust, that are supporting this school well on its journey of improvement.
- The documentation leaders produce for staff and the governing body (the academy advisory board, AAB) is concise and easily understood. A well-planned, trust-wide assessment system defines the progress and attainment of pupils. Leaders check this information against pupils' work to ensure its accuracy. However, leaders agree that sharper targets identifying the proportion of pupils and groups of pupils working at age-related expectations would enable leaders, such as the AAB, to better evaluate the effectiveness of their actions.
- Senior and middle leadership overall is strong. Leaders have put systems in place that are supporting staff effectively in delivering a better quality of education. For example, the lead teacher for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has ensured that appropriate assessments are in place for these pupils. Such assessments demonstrate clearly the progress pupils are making, even though many are often working below the national expectations for their age. The lead teacher consults closely with a variety of external agencies, including local authority officers, to ensure that the necessary staff training and support for pupils is in place. All of these pupils are making progress, but the leader agrees that this currently varies considerably for each pupil.
- Similarly, the leader with responsibility for pupils in receipt of the pupil premium funding has ensured that strong systems for emotional, social, behavioural and academic support are in place. As with other pupils across the school, the academic progress and attainment of these pupils show variation.
- At the start of the school year, leaders prioritised improving pupils' writing skills, as this was the area that pupils were least confident and successful in. The lead teacher for

English has good subject knowledge and is thorough in the checks she makes on pupils' writing. The new strategy implemented for writing provides pupils with a high-quality model that they adapt to produce their own writing. This is having a positive impact on developing pupils' confidence and stamina across year groups. The lead teacher has rightly recognised that pupils are now able to write confidently, at length. However, she has rightly identified that teachers now need to modify this strategy, so that pupils can produce the same quality of writing independently. Where leaders have already given this direction, pupils' work clearly demonstrates the successful transition to more independent work.

- Leaders have implemented a range of strategies to improve pupils' reading. This work is still in its infancy. Gains in pupils' learning are being made as a result, but some pupils still have much lost ground to make up.
- The lead teacher for mathematics carefully checks the effectiveness of the strategies introduced to improve mathematics. This shines through as a stronger aspect of the school's work. Many pupils' opinions reflect this: they say that mathematics is their favourite subject, because it is 'fun' and they 'like solving problems and working things out'.
- Much of the school's work this year has been dedicated to improving pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. At the same time, leaders have given attention to ensuring that pupils have opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in other subjects. The school environment is used successfully to promote leaders' renewed high expectations and celebrate this learning.

## **Governance of the school**

- The governing board (the AAB), although currently a very small group, has a good knowledge of the school and carries out its duties with due diligence. Members receive timely information from school leaders and meet regularly with members of the trust.
- The AAB members know their responsibilities well, and gather information about teaching and learning, safeguarding, the spending of additional funding and leadership. The AAB provides both support and challenge to school leaders effectively. Members know that the school has been through some tough times, but they are confident that there is now more effective provision in place and capacity to bring about further improvements.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders give close attention to ensuring that effective systems for safeguarding are in place and that they are very well understood by everyone in school. Detailed and well-checked records reflect leaders' tenacity in following up any issues.
- Highly successful work in improving pupils' attendance and reducing the number of exclusions has contributed to the school's strong work in safeguarding. The designated leaders for safeguarding, including the pastoral learning mentor, have rigorous systems and procedures in place to support pupils in keeping safe. Leaders make regular check-ins with those pupils who are the most vulnerable. As partnerships with parents are

strengthening, so too is the effectiveness of this work.

- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. All pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they were fully confident in the support adults in the school give them should they have a concern. They said that there was very little bullying, but gave examples of knowing what to do if they or someone else was being bullied. Older pupils explained how they had been part of a local project that focused on teaching life-skills, centred on topics such as cyber bullying and sensible decision-making.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time has not been good enough. Turbulence in staffing and a lack of cohesion in approaches to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics led to a marked decline in outcomes across the school. This is no longer the case. Leaders' actions and high expectations are ensuring that teaching overall is improving strongly. Leaders are not complacent and know that there remains work to be done so that all teachers can adjust their teaching effectively enough to enable pupils to catch up in their learning quickly. Their ambition to diminish the difference between the progress and attainment of pupils in the school and pupils nationally is visible in most pupils' current work.
- Teaching in phonics is improving. Teachers who have received specialist training for the new phonics programme model sounds and routines successfully. As a result, the pupils who are taught by them are engaged and making good progress in phonics. However, although plans to train and coach all staff are in place, this has not taken place, so not all pupils receive effective teaching. Lower-ability pupils, in particular, do not have the support they need to make the rapid progress needed to catch up with their peers nationally.
- Teachers' application of the school and trust initiatives in improving reading have started to support pupils in making stronger progress in this subject. A wide range of well-thought-out strategies and resources are in place, including the reading 'RACE' (which pupils speak enthusiastically about), comprehension tasks and high-quality class texts. The older pupils say that they have many opportunities to read aloud in class and that their teachers read regularly to them. Consequently, these pupils read with interest and expression that engages the listener. This is less so for lower-ability pupils, who often do not have the skills they need to be able to decode and comprehend the books they are reading confidently. In some cases, their books are not well-matched to their reading skills.
- The quality of pupils' writing generally shows improvement. However, although teachers often identify mistakes in pupils' work, they do not support pupils in putting these mistakes right quickly enough to ensure that they make strong progress.
- In mathematics, teachers make sure that pupils have age-appropriate tasks, and that pupils with lower starting points are well supported by adults. A range of strategies, such as small-group adult-supported sessions before the main class activity, and targeted questions and problem-solving activities, enable pupils to apply their mathematical skills successfully. This means that pupils of all abilities are making stronger gains in their learning.

- A better understanding of the starting points for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and for those pupils who are disadvantaged is helping teachers and teaching assistants plan more effectively for these pupils. Although there is still variation in the academic progress these pupils are making, there is a good understanding of the barriers to learning they may face. This means that pupils' learning and emotional needs are well met.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school runs a successful breakfast club. This has contributed to pupils' improved attendance and punctuality. It offers some of the school's most vulnerable pupils a positive start to the school day.
- Leaders say that they want to give pupils the opportunity to share and develop their ideas about school improvement. They have recently introduced a school council, which has also focused teaching about the rule of law and democracy. Leaders agree that pupils need to develop a better understanding of, and respect for, the different views, faiths, cultures and beliefs of people in society.
- The pastoral leader has an excellent knowledge of which pupils are vulnerable. A high level of thought, care and guidance is in place for pupils, and their families, who may need additional support.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good, in class and at less structured times, such as breaktime. Leaders say that working with pupils and their families to improve behaviour was essential to improving pupils' learning overall. Parents and staff confirm that behaviour and attendance are greatly improved as a result of leaders' actions.
- The proportion of exclusions has reduced dramatically this year as a result of a consistency in the application of the behaviour policy and an improvement in the quality of teaching.
- Pupils can confidently explain the school's behaviour policy, which, they say, is carried out by adults consistently. Pupils know exactly what is expected of them and generally display positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' attendance historically had been consistently low. This year, attendance has improved considerably and is now similar to the national average. This is the result of a number of strategies leaders and staff have put in place to promote good attendance. This includes work with families, high expectations and swift follow-up of pupils' absences. The school has excellent partnerships with the local authority education welfare officer, who supports school leaders ably in their determined approach to improving attendance.
- Pupils' punctuality is improving too. This is a result of more engaging teaching and activities that pupils do not want to miss. In addition, the education welfare officer's

work has helped parents to understand how being late to school can make their child feel and the impact it can have on learning.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **Requires improvement**

- In Year 6 in 2017, pupils' attainment was below the national average in reading and mathematics. Pupils' progress in reading was in the lowest 10% of schools nationally in 2017. New leaders have actioned a number of improvement strategies, which are starting to bear fruit. However, historical gaps in pupils' learning mean that a high proportion of pupils across school are working below the expectations for their age, particularly in reading and writing.
- The introduction of a new, systematic programme for phonics is resulting in a higher proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard by the end of Year 1. However, some pupils with lower starting points do not make the same strong progress.
- Although the attainment of Year 2 pupils in 2017 was below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, gains were made in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard. The work of current Year 1 and Year 2 pupils demonstrates that this improvement continues.
- Strong leadership for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has resulted in a clear identification of the barriers pupils may have to their learning. Effective pastoral and behavioural support is leading to better outcomes in pupils' attendance and well-being. However, there remain some pupils for whom the pace of progress from their starting points is too slow.

### **Early years provision**

### **Requires improvement**

- Children enter Nursery and Reception with skills that are generally well below those typical for their age. The proportion of children reaching the expected good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has remained below the national average for several years. In a number of areas of learning, including writing and mathematics, almost half of the children, especially boys, do not have the skills they need to start the Year 1 curriculum.
- Boys start school with skills that are considerably lower than those of girls, and lower than those of other children nationally in many areas of learning. Adults have not ensured that the activities and resources they plan help boys to catch up quickly.
- The early years leader has a clear understanding of where support is needed. She has worked with other leaders, in school and the trust, to put support in place to improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, leaders acknowledge that improvements have not been swift enough to increase the proportion of children making the accelerated progress they need to achieve a good level of development by the time they leave the Reception class.
- There has been considerable investment in resources to support children's learning outdoors. Children have access to a wide range of resources to explore and investigate their environment and to stimulate their interest. However, teachers are not using these resources effectively to deepen children's understanding or extend their skills.

For example, opportunities for children to try out the skills they have learned in English and mathematics independently in different activities outdoors are limited.

- Relationships between adults and children are positive. Children are keen to learn and listen to the adults' instructions. Most children behave well. When teaching does not capture their interest, children's concentration and enthusiasm slip.
- Leaders' dedication to improving partnerships with parents is getting off to a strong start in early years. Parents say that the school communicates effectively with them. They are clear about the high expectations for good attendance and good behaviour. They say that leaders' recent clear messages, and those that their child relays, help them to understand the importance of good attendance, punctuality and trying hard at school.
- All staff make sure that the children are safe and well cared for. They involve the children in conversations and learning about health and safety as part of their day-to-day work. Leaders have made sure that welfare arrangements are effective and meet legal requirements.



## School details

Unique reference number	138083
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10048580

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	117
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Acting Chair	Vicki Pearson
Principal	Nikkie Wright (Head of Academy) Lisa Hillyer (Associate Executive Principal)
Telephone number	01302 722216
Website	<a href="http://www.highfieldspa.org.uk/">www.highfieldspa.org.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@highfieldspa.org.uk">info@highfieldspa.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	7–8 March 2013

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school became an academy in 2012 and is part of the Delta Academy Trust. Governance arrangements are through an academy advisory board, which is a sub-committee of the main Delta academy board.
- The head of academy and associate executive principal were new to their posts in September 2017.
- Just over half of all pupils are eligible for the pupil premium additional funding, which is a much higher proportion than the national average. The proportion of pupils who receive support for their SEN and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is lower than average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school did not meet the government's floor standards in 2017. These are the

minimum expectations of pupils' achievement in English and mathematics set by the government.

- The school runs a breakfast club.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed lessons across a range of subjects in all classes. These observations were carried out jointly with the head of academy and/or the associate executive principal.
- During visits to lessons, the inspector spoke with pupils and looked at their work to find out more about how well they are learning.
- Meetings were held with pupils and the inspector talked informally with pupils around the school. The inspector listened to pupils read and talked with them about reading. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school was observed.
- The inspector met regularly with the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with the early years leader, the pastoral leader, the lead teachers for English, mathematics and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, as well as curriculum leaders. The lead inspector met with the vice-chair of the AAB, and the regional director of education for the Delta Academy Trust.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including leaders' evaluation of school performance, school development planning, and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning. The inspector also reviewed the minutes of meetings of the local governing board and information relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- The inspector met with parents before the school day and considered the school's own recent parental questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The 14 written responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire were also taken into account.

## Inspection team

Kate Rowley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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