

Lowerhouses CofE (Voluntary Controlled) Junior Infant and Early Years School

Lowerhouses Lane, Almondbury, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD5 8JY

Inspection dates

26–27 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	15–16 October 2013

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- After a period of change, capacity in leadership has been strengthened. Leaders have successfully addressed recent low outcomes at the end of key stage 2. Pupils throughout school now make good progress across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics. Middle leaders have made a good start to taking responsibility for their subjects and areas, but this work is still in transition from senior leaders.
- A strong partnership between school leaders, the Kirklees learning partner and other local authority consultants has ensured that weaknesses, particularly in writing, have been successfully addressed.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and have responded quickly to leaders' improvement directions. As a result, more pupils are working within age-related expectations. Teachers have started to put more effective support in place for higher-ability pupils, but they agree that this is an area that still needs improvement.
- Adults make sure that children get a very positive, safe and happy start to school life in early years. Children thrive in the nurturing provision and enjoy their time there.
- All leaders and staff are committed to giving pupils the best start in life. They dedicate time and care to understanding the different needs and backgrounds of pupils and to keeping them safe. They provide a haven where expectations of pupils are high and pupils are encouraged to be happy, confident learners.
- Pupils with additional needs, including those accessing the hearing-impaired resource provision, have learning that is well matched to their needs. They make good progress from their starting points across subjects.
- Pupils' writing has improved substantially. Considerable differences between pupils' writing at Lowerhouses and other pupils nationally have been diminished. Lower-ability pupils are given clear feedback about the aspects of their work that need improvement, but in some classes they do not consistently respond to this, or know how to, as would be the school's expectations.
- Pupils' behaviour is good due to the consistently high expectations of staff.
- Leaders are trying many different strategies to improve pupils' attendance, but this still sits stubbornly below the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further strengthen leadership and management by continuing the handover of subject responsibilities to new middle leaders.
- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - providing the most able pupils with work that challenges their thinking, deepens their understanding and enables them to test out their skills independently
 - ensuring that the aspects of lower-ability pupils' work that adults identify for improvement are further supported and directed so that pupils address and improve them, in line with the school's expectations, and make more rapid progress as a result.
- Continue to improve pupils' attendance by working with parents and carers to instil the importance of attending school every day and on time.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Good leadership has resulted in significant improvements being made to pupils' outcomes over the last academic year. After a period of changes and unavoidable absences in leadership, a more sustainable structure is being implemented. Leaders have demonstrated an improved capacity for improvement through their rigorous and successful approach to improving pupils' outcomes. A successful transition has started to give capable middle leaders ownership of their subject areas. Leaders agree that this work now needs to be completed and embedded.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are united in their vision and ambition for the pupils at Lowerhouses. They know the pupils, staff and community very well and have put in place a curriculum that gives pupils access to a wide range of opportunities and experiences that will serve them well as they grow.
- The local authority has provided valuable and precise support to the school to secure its improvement. The Kirklees local authority learning partner, experienced consultants and a national leader for education have worked in partnership with school leaders to identify priorities for improvement and make regular checks on the progress and success of the actions put in place.
- In their dedication to improvement, leaders are eager to work with others. As well as regular visits from the diocese, leaders work with other local schools in the South Huddersfield Inspiring and Nurturing Excellence (SHINE) Hub to share good ideas and observe best practice.
- School leaders have high-quality systems and processes in place to record pupils' progress and attainment and to monitor school improvement work. Strategies for improvement are well thought out. The checking of the progress of the actions being taken is impressive. Leaders use a variety of lesson observations, work scrutinies and assessment information to check the quality of teaching and how well pupils are learning as a result. They also seek the views of the pupils as part of this work. During these checks, any weaker aspects are targeted and followed up rigorously. There is clear evidence that pupils' learning improves as a result of this process.
- Special educational needs (SEN) funding is used effectively to make sure that pupils in the hearing-impaired resource provision, those with an education and health care plan and those needing additional support have staff and resources in place to help them make good progress. A plethora of training, activities and teaching is in place to support pupils with a hearing impairment, and also to support other pupils and staff in communicating with them effectively.
- Undertaking a pupil premium review supported leaders in identifying and addressing priorities for improvement in disadvantaged pupils' learning. Leaders have directed additional funding accordingly and the progress that these pupils make has hastened as a result.
- Curriculum leaders and teachers provide a curriculum that they have designed to widen pupils' experiences. Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are developing

successfully across different subjects, preparing them well for adult life.

- The physical education and sport premium is spent effectively to provide opportunities to encourage pupils to participate in a range of sporting activities. This work has resulted in the development of teachers' and pupils' skills, as well as improvement in pupils' level of engagement and participation. The use of some of this funding to provide a games coach at lunchtime has, leaders say, supported improvements in behaviour.
- Leaders have put a number of strategies in place to improve pupils' attendance. These have included working with the local authority welfare officer, and putting rewards and sanctions in place, such as invitations to attend breakfast club and home visits. Leaders are very clear about their responsibility in checking that they know where pupils are. They carry out a range of checks to ascertain if pupils are safe when they are not in school. However, although attendance figures improved for the first two terms of this academic year, they have dipped again more recently. Leaders know that they have more work to do with parents in this area.

Governance of the school

- Governors recognised that they needed to improve their own knowledge and understanding to effectively support and challenge school leaders in improving pupils' outcomes. They say that they have a much better understanding of the strengths of the school and those areas that have needed substantial improvement, and are able to demonstrate this. They use a variety of information to inform their work, including their visits to school, and information from various school leaders and the local authority, as well as statutory data. They are confident to ask for further information from leaders if they see that an area is not improving as quickly as it could be. For example, they have rightly asked leaders for more detailed information about pupils' attendance.
- Recognising the context of the school, governors have carefully considered school leaders' roles and responsibilities. The appointment of an inclusion and pastoral leader has ensured that pupils' welfare needs are addressed, alongside improvements in teaching and learning. Governors ask pertinent questions about the systems in place to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. They understand how this money is spent to ensure pupils' academic, social, behaviour and emotional needs are addressed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders know that keeping pupils safe is of utmost priority and have developed a culture of high vigilance among staff. Staff receive regular training and updates in keeping pupils safe and, consequently, everyone knows how to recognise potential concerns and how to report these.
- The school works closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils and families are well supported. Parents say that they have confidence in school leaders and trust them to help them in getting the right support.
- Pupils, too, are unanimous in their trust in school staff. They talk confidently about the

teaching and guidance that they have had in many aspects of keeping safe, such as keeping safe online and the potential dangers that they may face when they are out in the community. During the inspection, pupils were undertaking externally led workshops, learning about how to keep safe and share any concerns that they may have.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved, particularly over the last year, due to the focused training and direction of staff, leaders' diligent checks on teaching and their swift and focused actions towards any aspect that is not good enough.
- Teachers and teaching assistants create a calm and industrious atmosphere. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and behave well. They listen carefully to adults and are keen to learn.
- Good teaching in phonics begins as soon as children enter the early years. Adults in early years and key stage 1 have established effective routines that pupils respond to well. The adults model how pupils can apply sounds straight into writing. As a result, the majority of pupils use phonics effectively in their reading and writing. Where pupils have barriers to this learning, carefully planned support and phonics activities continue in key stage 2 to help these pupils catch up with their peers.
- Pupils' reading and writing skills have improved through staff members' conscious attention to making clear links between these subjects. High-quality texts have been used to engage pupils in reading and to support them in identifying features that they can use to enhance their writing skills. Reading sessions are a calm and purposeful time of the day. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud, and most do so with expression, whether this is reading their own work aloud, or an extract from a book. The school's focus on developing pupils' vocabulary is apparent in lessons and when looking at progress in pupils' work. Pupils know how important it is to be able to read well. As one pupil said, 'You get a good education if you read lots.'
- Current pupils' work, school assessment information and external validation of teachers' and leaders' judgements demonstrate that a much greater proportion of pupils this year are working at the expected standard in writing in each year group. This proportion compares favourably to the national average. Teachers accurately identify what pupils need to improve in their written work and give them clear next steps to take. However, sometimes, the lower-ability pupils do not adapt their work as a result of this direction, mistakes are repeated and they do not catch up as quickly as they could.
- In mathematics, adults' high expectations of pupils developing fluency in number work and presenting their work clearly and carefully so that they can spot where mistakes have happened are clear in pupils' recorded work. Work is well matched to the needs of the lower- and middle-ability pupils and more pupils are working at age-related national expectations as a result. Currently, the challenge that high-ability pupils receive is less consistent. Teachers are starting to plan activities that give high-ability pupils more opportunities to select and apply mathematical strategies to tasks so that they can deepen their learning and develop more independence.

- Teachers and support staff have had a range of training that is pertinent to their roles. They say that this enables them to confidently support pupils in class and in one-to-one sessions. Strong relationships between staff and pupils, and adults' carefully considered, open questions, improve the quality of this support.
- Pupils speak confidently about their work across a broad curriculum. They are keen to share the memorable learning that they have experienced in a range of subjects and activities. For example, during the inspection, pupils talked about their insight into life during the Second World War through their visit to museum of wartime Britain.
- Pupils and parents speak positively about the half-termly homework activities and celebratory showcases that take place. They say that these provide the opportunity to work and celebrate together, and further embed pupils' learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Leaders are determined to provide pupils with a safe and supportive start to their school lives. They understand the challenges that some pupils and families may face, and they do their utmost to support them as well as they possibly can.
- Pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding well through experiences that leaders and teachers plan to broaden their horizons. For example, the school council recently visited the Houses of Parliament. Here, as well as widening their learning about democracy in the education centre and touring the building, they watched the members of parliament (MPs) debating and met with their local MP.
- Leaders give pupils opportunities to apply and be appointed to some roles of responsibility in school. Befrienders and playleaders make a positive contribution to enjoyable breaktimes. Leaders agree that pupils can sometimes be dependent on adults' support and direction and are looking at ways to develop opportunities to further pupils' leadership and independence skills.
- The school runs a breakfast club and after-school club. Keeping English skills high on the agenda, the morning club includes a session of Bookfast, where pupils have the chance to read and share books at breakfast time.
- Aspirational attention to ensuring that the whole school is a hearing school has resulted in all pupils developing effective communication strategies. Bespoke training for families, sign language club and a signing choir are some of the additional activities on offer.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They are delighted by the high level of care and support that the school provides for their children, and particularly value the way that leaders and staff listen to their views. One parent reflected the collective opinions of many by saying that leaders and staff 'go out of their way to make school accessible to everyone, regardless of background or circumstances, and they clearly work hard to get the best outcomes for each individual child'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils know what is expected of them and are keen to rise to teachers' high expectations. The fact that they are extremely focused and calm in class, and then eagerly join in lively exchanges with their peers at less structured times, shows their respect for and understanding of the expectations set.
- Pupils are welcoming and keen to talk about their learning and their school. During the inspection, pupils throughout school were polite, and listened carefully to each other and adults. They waited patiently for others to give their responses to questions asked by the inspectors and showed respect for the opinions of others. They say that bullying is very rare and are confident that if it did happen to them, they would be very well supported by any of the adults in school.
- Despite leaders' efforts to improve pupils' attendance, this remains below the national average. Pupils know that they should attend school every day and explain how leaders celebrate good attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Previous low performance at the end of key stage 2, particularly in writing in 2017, has been eradicated. The progress that pupils make from their often low starting points on entry to school has improved. Pupils' current work, school assessment information and drop-ins to learning show that pupils are, once again, making good progress in their learning over time.
- The school has addressed the shortfalls in key stage 2 outcomes that resulted in the school being identified as coasting over 2015, 2016 and 2017, and not meeting the government floor standards in 2017. Provisional teacher assessments in writing, moderated by the local authority, show that this year's Year 6 have performed significantly better than last year's cohort (70% achieved the expected standard compared to 28%). Standards in mathematics showed improvement last year and pupils' current work demonstrates that this continues. Standards in reading are catching up quickly. The progress that disadvantaged pupils make is improving.
- The proportion of pupils passing the phonics screening test at the end of Year 1 is similar to the current national average.
- Pupils in key stage 1, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, make good progress from their starting points.
- A lower than national proportion of the most able pupils reach higher standards throughout their time in school and across subjects. This is something that leaders have already identified for focus and improvement.
- Good middle leadership and teaching, clear direction and effective assessment systems are helping to ensure that pupils make good progress across a wide curriculum.

Early years provision

Good

- Positive relationships between children and staff, good links between home and school, high expectations in behaviour and an inviting learning environment ensure that pupils get off to a very good start in the early years.
- From their generally lower than typical starting points, pupils make good progress across the curriculum. Adults consistently model high-quality language and good behaviours. As a result, children cooperate well with each other, listen carefully to adults and quickly follow the routines and rules in the setting. Children show interest in their learning and happily converse about their work. A similar proportion of children to the national average reach a good level of development by the end of their time in Reception due to careful direction across a range of activities, meaning that most pupils are well prepared for Year 1.
- An early start is made to developing children’s phonics skills. Reading books are well matched to children’s abilities, and frequent opportunities are taken to engage pupils in reading and in listening to adults reading. Areas of the Nursery and Reception classes are assigned to reading and books, and children independently choose to spend time looking at books on their own and with their friends.
- All adults in early years know the children very well. They give children purposeful direction, particularly in the indoor environment, so that children can confidently take their next steps in learning. During the inspection, we discussed the leaders’ identified next steps for the whole school in ensuring that the most able pupils are fully supported in their learning, and how this work could get off to an even stronger start in the early years setting.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths in the early years setting. A smooth transition of leadership responsibilities has taken place between the deputy headteacher and the new early years leader. All the adults in early years have an excellent understanding of how to keep children safe, and have introduced effective systems to keep children safe.
- Adults know how important it is to involve parents in their children’s learning. They provide detailed reports about children’s progress, opportunities for parents to contribute to children’s records of learning, such as with ‘wow moment’ tickets, and give invitations to topic launch days and phonics workshops. Their hard work has resulted in parents saying that they feel very welcome in school and that they are well informed about their children’s progress.

School details

Unique reference number	107698
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10047388

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gareth Tatler
Headteacher	Rachel Shaw
Telephone number	01484 226 672
Website	www.lowerhouseschool.co.uk
Email address	head@lowerhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 October 2013

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, there have been temporary arrangements in place for leadership during two absences of the headteacher. The previous early years and key stage 1 leader has been appointed to the role of deputy headteacher. New middle leaders have been appointed.
- A pupil premium review took place in 2017.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for hearing-impaired pupils for pupils aged four to 11. It provides outreach for 174 pupils.
- A breakfast club and an after-school club are run by the school. The food for the breakfast club is funded by Huddersfield Town Football Club Foundation.
- The early years consists of a Nursery, which children attend in mornings, and a Reception class.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the additional pupil premium funding

is well above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan for SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who receive support for SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- About half of the pupils are of White British heritage.
- A similar proportion of pupils to the national average speak English as an additional language.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2017, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons across a range of subjects in all classes. Most of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at their work to find out more about how well they are learning.
- Meetings were held with pupils and inspectors talked informally with pupils around the school. Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked with them about reading. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors met regularly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Meetings were also held with the early years leader, curriculum leaders and the lead teacher for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The lead inspector met with members of the local governing body, including the chair, and the Kirklees local authority learning partner.
- 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. Inspectors also reviewed information relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors met with parents and took into account the nine responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They met with staff members to consider their views.

Inspection team

Kate Rowley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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