

Lower Meadow Primary School

Batemoor Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S8 8EE

Inspection dates

5–6 June 2019

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have a clear, ambitious vision. They want nothing less than the best for all the pupils.
- Leaders have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Their plans for improvement are all clearly focused on improving outcomes for pupils.
- Governance is strong. Leaders are challenged and held to account for their actions.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is enriched with a wide range of different experiences.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school.
- Current pupils are making good progress across the curriculum.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported and therefore make good progress.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They work hard and are keen to find out how they can improve.
- Pupils are well behaved in lessons, when moving around school and at breaktimes. Leaders have been quick to address concerns raised by parents about behaviour during social times.
- English and mathematics leaders, with support from the trust, are having a positive effect on teaching and learning. However, the impact of other subject leaders is not as strong.
- Teachers give clear explanations and use questioning well. They have high expectations and generally set demanding tasks. However, middle-attaining pupils are not always given enough challenge.
- Phonics is consistently well taught across the school. However, the books that pupils are asked to read to practise their skills are not always well matched to their phonics knowledge.
- Children in the early years make good progress from typically low starting points. The outdoor learning environment has recently been improved but is not number or language rich.
- Attendance has improved and is broadly in line with the national average. However, too many boys still miss school frequently.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of middle leaders by giving them more opportunities to assess the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the subjects that they lead so that they are able to:
 - identify strengths and weaknesses
 - provide support for their colleagues.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that the books that pupils use to practise their reading match their phonics knowledge
 - setting learning tasks that provide a consistent challenge for all pupils, especially middle attainers.
- Improve early years provision by creating plentiful opportunities outdoors to deepen children's language development and their mathematical understanding.
- Continue to develop strategies to improve attendance, especially for boys.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for the school. They believe that their pupils deserve the best and are determined to ensure that is what they get.
- When the principal joined the school in December 2017, she worked with other senior leaders and the trust to carry out a thorough evaluation of the school. Strengths and weaknesses were quickly identified. Priorities for improvement were established and detailed action plans were put in place which resulted in rapid improvement.
- The current self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders are very open and honest about current strengths and weaknesses. They are taking appropriate actions to ensure that the school continues its journey of improvement. They regularly monitor the current development plan to make sure that it has an impact on outcomes for pupils.
- Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is systematic and thorough. Leaders use the information they gain from observing lessons, looking at pupils' work and analysing test data in order to identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are very positive about the support and challenge they regularly receive. They value the opportunities they have for professional development and could give examples of the impact this has on their classroom practice. Leaders have created a culture where staff are encouraged to reflect and make changes for the benefit of the pupils.
- Leaders have a clear plan to provide additional support for the large number of disadvantaged pupils in the school. The plan is regularly reviewed to make sure that funding is being used effectively.
- Work to support pupils with SEND is a strength of the school. Pupils' needs are identified at an early stage and interventions are quickly put in place. These are carefully monitored to make sure that they have a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- The school uses the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium to make sure that pupils have a wide range of opportunities. Pupils can take part in competitive sport, attend after school clubs and enjoy quality PE lessons. Sports coaches are being used effectively to model good practice to staff, which is helping to make this work sustainable.
- A new approach to the curriculum was introduced in September 2018. The way it is structured ensures that pupils can develop subject-specific skills, knowledge and understanding. Plans are in place to make sure that these are built on, year on year, as pupils move through the school.
- The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of different experiences, such as visitors to school and educational trips. These experiences support spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the understanding of British values well.
- English and mathematics leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in their subjects. They have worked effectively, with support from the trust, to make improvements which are having a positive impact on pupil outcomes across the school. However, the leaders of other subjects have limited

opportunities to observe and influence practice across the school.

Governance of the school

- The transition management board (TMB) works in partnership with the trustees of the multi-academy trust to provide strong governance. Board members have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have gained this knowledge from published data, reports from school leaders and from visits to the school. For example, a member of the board was able to explain how she visits the school to check on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.
- The minutes of meetings show how well-thought-out questions are used to challenge leaders and to hold them to account for their actions. Board members expect leaders to be able to explain how their actions have had an impact on pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have made sure that all policies and procedures are fit for purpose. Record-keeping is well organised and, where necessary, appropriate actions are taken immediately.
- Staff are well trained and receive regular updates. They have a clear understanding that safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone. They know the signs to look out for and confidently report any concerns, no matter how small. There are effective relationships with external agencies. As a result, there is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They say that adults act quickly to provide support whenever they report concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. This knowledge is updated and enhanced by regular training and opportunities to discuss different aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They work hard and are eager to find out what they can do to improve their work. There is little variation in the presentation of work between subjects.
- Teachers and teaching assistants give clear explanations. Teachers use assessment well throughout lessons. Most use questioning well, not only to check understanding but also to add challenge. They are constantly checking pupils' work. Therefore, errors and misconceptions are picked up and addressed quickly.
- Teaching assistants are generally used well to lead interventions and to support groups and individuals of different abilities. Intervention work is well planned and carefully checked for impact.
- Pupils were keen to describe the work they are enjoying on whole-class texts. For example, some were able to explain the use of figurative language in 'The Highwayman'. Others were keen to explain how a cat's character changed as a story

progressed. Pupils say that this work is helping them to become better readers and writers.

- A lot of effective work is being done to develop pupils' understanding of a wide range of vocabulary. This is helping pupils to read more complex texts with understanding and is enhancing their writing.
- Work in books shows that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics across the school. Pupils are given lots of opportunities to develop fluency, to reason and to solve real-life problems.
- The teaching of phonics is systematic and consistent across the school. Pupils have lots of opportunities to apply their developing phonics knowledge in reading and writing. However, many of the books that pupils are asked to take home to read are not well matched to their phonics knowledge.
- Leaders' high expectations are shared by most teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils are generally given challenging tasks. However, some pupils say that some things are easy, and they would like to do harder work. Inspectors agree that some middle-attaining pupils are not always challenged by the tasks they are asked to complete.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils show self-confidence in both familiar and unfamiliar situations. They value their education and most take advantage of everything school life has to offer. They wear their school uniform with pride and look after the equipment that they use.
- Pupils have positive attitudes in lessons. They are in no doubt that they are in school to work hard and learn. Work in books and on displays is well presented. Pupils cooperate well with each other to share resources and to complete joint tasks.
- Pupils have opportunities to take on additional responsibilities. There is a democratically elected school council and many pupils have been successful with their applications for jobs. These jobs include dining-room assistants, litter pickers and playground leaders. The school council is responsible for regularly updating their display of annotated photographs which show where British values are seen in school.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe in different situations. They are knowledgeable about online safety and were keen to explain the work they have done on anti-bullying. They understand the importance of sharing any concerns they may have about any form of abuse with a trusted adult.
- Pupils say that although there have been recent improvements, there is still some bullying and use of derogatory language in school. However, they say that adults always act appropriately to deal with these incidents.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils show respect for adults and each other. They are polite and friendly and were keen to chat to inspectors. They show good manners by holding doors open and saying please and thank you.
- There has been a significant decline in the number of incidents of poor behaviour, especially over this academic year. Behaviour logs are carefully analysed and used to inform plans for further improvement.
- The school has acted to address concerns raised by parents about the behaviour of some pupils during social times. After consultation with pupils, a new policy has been written and new equipment has been provided for use during break times. This means that pupils are purposefully engaged, and everyone can enjoy these social times.
- Leaders have developed lots of effective strategies to improve attendance. Parents are fully aware of the high expectations of the school. They appreciate the support they are given to improve the punctuality and attendance of their children. The improved quality of education means that pupils do not want to miss school. As a result, attendance overall is now broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils disadvantaged by persistent absence has fallen and is now below the national average. However, the proportion of boys who often miss school is still above that of boys nationally.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Inspection evidence shows that current pupils are making very good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress across the wider curriculum is also strong.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 shows year-on-year improvement. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined increased by 20% from 2017 to 2018.
- Progress across key stage 2 is also improving. In 2018, progress was average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are well supported and therefore most make good progress. The school regularly checks their progress and adapts provision accordingly.
- The most able pupils are making strong progress. In key stage 1 and 2, the proportion of pupils working above age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics has increased.
- Improvements in teaching have resulted in higher attainment at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Proportions of pupils reaching expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Years 2 and 6 have increased. However, across most measures, with a few exceptions, attainment remains below average.
- In 2018, the proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in phonics in Year 1 increased by 12%. However, this proportion also remains below the national average.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the early years with skills and knowledge which are significantly below those typical for their age. They settle into routines quickly and respond positively to the boundaries that are set. This is because of the caring, consistent approach of staff.
- Leaders show a thorough understanding of the individual needs of the children in the early years. Activities are carefully thought out to promote social and emotional development. Adults model talking in full sentences to support the development of children's speech effectively.
- The curriculum is well designed to give children rich experiences. Resources are well organised, and children can independently select and tidy away the things they need. Resources are used appropriately because of effective modelling by adults.
- Children are able to choose and sustain their interest in activities. They cooperate well to play together and alongside each other.
- Adults use a multi-sensory approach to teaching and take every opportunity to reinforce learning. For example, phonics knowledge was reinforced when children were asked to find their name cards and write their names on their pictures. Adults use skilful questioning to extend children's play.
- Adults have high expectations of what children can achieve. Barriers to learning are quickly identified and effective interventions are used to help children to make good progress. Support for children with SEND is especially effective.
- Strategies to engage with parents are well established. Parents contribute to initial and ongoing assessments. They are invited to reading sessions every Friday and to regular workshops. Parents value these sessions, which help them to support their children in their learning.
- All legal safeguarding and welfare requirements are met.
- A significant group of higher-attaining Reception children left the school in 2018. This accounts for the fall in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development. The proportion of children currently at this standard is in line with the 2018 national average. The performance of disadvantaged children also mirrors national averages, though some do even better than this.
- The outdoor area is used well to develop knowledge and understanding of the world. However, this area needs further improvement so that it becomes a number- and language-rich environment which can be used to develop all areas of learning.

School details

Unique reference number	142937
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10087488

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	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	307
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	James Muir
Principal	Karen Brown
Telephone number	01142372700
Website	www.astrealowermeadow.org
Email address	enquiries@astrealowermeadow.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Lower Meadow Primary School is a slightly larger than average-sized primary school.
- The school joined the Astrea Multi-Academy Trust in July 2016. The TMB has responsibility for governance and reports to the trust executive board.
- The current principal took up her post in December 2017.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is much higher than that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The school runs a breakfast club each morning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups. Some of the observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books alongside middle leaders.
- An inspector met with a member of the TMB and representatives from the trust, including the chief executive officer.
- A range of documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plans, minutes of transition management board meetings, records of checks on teaching and learning, and attendance and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors met formally with a group of pupils, spoke informally to pupils in lessons and listened to pupils read. Inspectors also took account of the 15 responses to the online pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents by meeting some informally at the start of the school day and through the 12 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- Discussions took place with staff about safeguarding and the support and professional development that they receive. Inspectors also took account of the 18 responses to the online staff survey.

Inspection team

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