

# Inspection of Lowedges Junior Academy

Lowedges Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S8 7JG

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Inspection dates: 2–3 October 2019

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Leaders have made improvements to the teaching of reading. However, pupils who struggle to learn to read are not getting the right support to help them catch up quickly. This limits them from achieving well in other subjects.

Pupils enjoy their lessons. They said that physical education (PE) is a favourite. They achieve well in this subject. Pupils eagerly begin each day with physical activity. Pupils also participate in extra-curricular activities such as multi-sports and film club. However, in some subjects, leaders have not made sure that the curriculum is challenging enough. For example, history plans do not identify what pupils need to know and understand. This leaves teachers unsure about what to teach.

Most pupils have positive attitudes and behave well. Leaders have put effective support in place for pupils who need more help to manage their emotions. Pupils say that they feel safe. They are confident that staff will sort out any concerns about bullying.

Attendance is improving slowly. Staff work with parents to encourage the importance of good attendance.

Leaders have created a high-quality learning environment. It matches the aspirations they have for pupils. Pupils' work is displayed with pride throughout the school.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders and governors are ambitious for pupils' achievement. Leaders have made improvements to the curriculum and teaching. Staffing is now stable and pupils' behaviour has improved. Pupils' English and mathematics achievement by the end of key stage 2 is now similar to the national average. However, pupils' achievement is not realised consistently across different subjects. This includes how well pupils learn to read. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are particularly affected.

Leaders have made improvements to the curriculum for teaching reading. However, not all staff have the expertise they need to teach early reading effectively. Pupils do not read with accuracy and fluency as quickly as they should. This means it is difficult for them to achieve well in other subjects across the curriculum. Pupils who urgently need to catch up are not always given the expert support they need. They do not catch up quickly enough because the help they receive is not tailored to the things they need to practise.

Staff attempt to match pupils' books to their developing phonic knowledge. However, pupils struggle to read some of the words because they have not been taught the sounds they contain. They rely on other strategies to help them read the words, for example guessing by using the pictures.

Key stage 2 pupils said that they are keen to read and do so often. Staff read regularly to them. The books are of high quality and they are helping pupils to develop a love of reading. Pupils told us that they understand how important reading is in helping them to be successful in adult life.

Leaders have made sure that pupils receive a broad curriculum. Curriculum leadership has been well developed in some subjects. For example, in PE and science, leaders have created a curriculum which ensures that pupils achieve well. This is not the case across the whole curriculum. Leaders are not always clear about the ambitious end points which they expect pupils to reach. For example, plans for a cross-curricular unit of work on ancient Egypt had little reference to pupils' historical knowledge and understanding. This leaves teachers unclear about the subject-specific knowledge which pupils need to secure. Consequently, pupils do not have an age-appropriate understanding of important vocabulary and concepts in history.

Provision for pupils with SEND is not consistently effective. In some subjects, such as PE, staff have the expertise to adapt the curriculum. This enables pupils with SEND to achieve success. Reading support plans are not helpful or precise enough. Staff are not confident in planning the smaller steps which pupils need to work through.

In the early years, children get off to a good start. Consistent staffing has had a positive impact. Staff establish routines quickly. This helps children to settle in and behave well. Staff interactions with children are used effectively. Attention is paid to supporting children's language development.

Leaders have engaged well with parents and the local community. Leaders are on hand to welcome pupils and parents arriving at school each morning. This allows any concerns to be dealt with quickly. Parents welcome this. They have noticed the improvements in pupils' behaviour. Pupils' attendance is improving more slowly though.

Leaders are committed to supporting pupils' personal development. Pupils are proud to take responsibilities such as house captain or sports ambassador. Pupils' success and achievement, both in and out of school, are celebrated for all to see.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have ensured that staff have appropriate training. Staff are alert to signs of abuse or neglect. They know how to report any concerns. Leaders respond swiftly and record these appropriately.

Leaders are quick to identify pupils who may be vulnerable. They work effectively with external agencies to provide support for families. Leaders are not afraid to challenge these agencies to get the best support to keep pupils safe.

Leaders are aware of the safeguarding risks in the locality. Visits from the police provide important messages to help pupils keep themselves safe.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum leadership in some subjects is in the early stages of development. For example, in history the curriculum has not been sequenced across each key stage so that pupils' knowledge builds effectively over time. Leaders should define clear end points for each unit of work so that teachers know what subject-specific knowledge and understanding pupils need to secure. This will allow pupils to achieve well across a broader range of subjects.
- Leaders have provided some training on teaching phonics but this is not part of a systematic and structured approach. Consequently, staff who provide extra support for the weakest readers lack the expertise to do so effectively. Similarly, pupils who are new to English are not benefiting from a consistent and systematic approach. Leaders need to make sure that all staff who teach phonics receive the training they need. They should check the impact of the support for pupils who are struggling to read to make sure that it is effective in helping them to quickly catch up.
- Many of the books which pupils read in the early stages of learning to read are not precisely matched to the sounds they know. Leaders should make sure that pupils practise reading books which contain the sounds they have been taught and the common exception words they have been exposed to. This will allow them to read with accuracy so they become more confident and fluent in their reading at a much earlier stage.
- Reading support plans, for pupils with SEND, are not precise enough. They contain long-term targets which staff are unsure how to break down into smaller steps. This leads to a lack of consistency of approach. Some of the extra support pupils receive does not match the targets in their support plans. Leaders should make sure that targets are precise and build on what pupils know and can do. They should ensure that staff who provide support to the most vulnerable readers have the expertise to do so well. They should check the impact of support for pupils and seek external support when necessary.

### How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141102
<b>Local authority</b>	Sheffield
<b>Inspection number</b>	10110601
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	338
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	John Barton
<b>Principal</b>	Rebecca Scutt (executive principal) Lindsay Jones (principal)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.lowedgesacademy.org">www.lowedgesacademy.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7–8 June 2017

## Information about this school

- Since the last inspection there have been some changes to leadership positions. The principal was promoted to a new executive principal role in September 2019. At the same time, an internal member of staff became the principal.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We held meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders and three representatives of the local governing body (including the chair, chief executive officer and a trustee).
- Reading, mathematics, physical education and history were considered closely in order to evaluate the quality of education. In each of these subjects, inspection activities included: lesson visits; discussions with staff and pupils; meetings with subject leaders; and work scrutiny. The lead inspector also listened to pupils read.
- A range of documentation was considered. This included the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement and information relating to the attendance and behaviour of pupils.

- The 25 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into consideration. The six responses to the staff survey and the two responses to the pupil survey were also considered.
- We spoke to parents informally at the start of the school day.
- Many of the inspection activities gave us the opportunity to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in the school. Additionally, we asked staff about the impact of the safeguarding training they have received. Child protection records and the single central record were also scrutinised.

### **Inspection team**

Kirsty Godfrey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Fiona Dixon

Ofsted Inspector

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