

Inspection of Skelmanthorpe Academy

Elm Street, Skelmanthorpe, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD8 9DZ

Inspection dates: 28–29 January 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Parents think Skelmanthorpe Academy is a real community school where pupils thrive. The school is a nurturing place for pupils to learn. They feel safe and, as pupils told us, 'really cared for'. Teachers work hard to make sure that pupils enjoy what they learn. Parents say that their children 'come home buzzing with enthusiasm'.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The school's new 'behaviour pathway' has been a real hit with pupils. As a result, they are keen to do well and their high levels of attendance reflect this. The anti-bullying ambassadors take their responsibility seriously. Pupils do not feel that bullying is a problem at school but understand that it is not tolerated. They are confident that if it did occur, it would be sorted out.

The school curriculum for mathematics, reading, science and geography has recently been reviewed. This has helped pupils learn and remember more, particularly in mathematics and science. Pupils still have gaps in their geography knowledge. The school's emphasis on reading has made a real difference to pupils' enjoyment of reading. Pupils are keen to take part in the school's reading challenge. The phonics curriculum is not always well delivered. Pupils do not always get the chance to practise new learning.

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

Leaders know the school well and are always looking for ways to make it even better. In the past, there has been a lot of staff change. New leaders are contributing to an enthusiastic and motivated staff team. The trust has provided a lot of support and training, which has been effective. Staff appreciate this input. It has been carefully balanced with consideration of their workload. Some subject leaders need the opportunity to check on the quality of education in their subjects. They would then be able to improve their subjects more effectively.

Children get off to a good start in the school's nursery. Children quickly adapt to the routines and learn to be independent. The spacious room is full of interesting activities to help children learn. They also enjoy learning outside. The story of 'Stick Man' by Julia Donaldson inspired them to make stick men of their own, using materials they collected from the local wood. In the Reception class, children also enjoy learning outside. The appearance of dinosaur eggs in the excavation area caused a lot of excitement. Children used their early writing skills to put up 'warning notices' to make sure they weren't damaged.

A new approach to the school's curriculum in phonics has recently been modified. Not all staff have received the training they need to deliver phonics effectively. Staff are clear about the phonics that pupils need to learn and where they need to get to. Teachers sometimes try to pack too much into a phonics session. As a result, pupils do not get sufficient time to practise what they have been taught.

Leaders have been successful in prioritising 'reading for enjoyment'. Throughout the school pupils have a real love of reading. Teachers choose reading books to help younger readers practise their phonics. Older pupils read to a high standard and confidently talk about their favourite authors.

The school's curriculum in many subjects has been well thought through. It is particularly strong in mathematics and science. In these subjects, lessons carefully build on what pupils have learned before and what they need to learn next. Pupils are enthusiastic about science and carrying out experiments. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 applied their scientific knowledge to make predictions to find out which fizzy drink contains the most gas. Pupils in Years 4 and 5, who were doing a study on space, were inspired by visiting the national space centre. They designed and created their own 'Mars Rover' in design and technology.

Pupils all say that they enjoy learning mathematics. They show resilience in tackling tricky problems. Every lesson begins with a 'nothing new' session to remind pupils what they already know. This helps them get ready for the day's lesson. Those pupils who still struggle get extra help to catch up.

The newly appointed subject leader has planned the curriculum for geography. This is to make sure that pupils know more and remember more. It is too early to say how well this is working. Due to past weaknesses in teaching, some classes still have gaps in their geographical understanding.

The school provides well for disadvantaged pupils. Parents talk about how well pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported. Teachers make sure that plans set out clear learning steps so that these pupils have what they need to learn.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff work well with parents and carers, and other agencies. This helps to protect pupils and keep them free from harm. Governors check that they meet their statutory duties for the safer recruitment of staff. Staff are well trained and they understand their responsibilities for safeguarding pupils.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in school, online and in the local community. When they share their worries with staff, they are confident they will be followed up effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have introduced whole-school plans and resources for teaching wider curriculum subjects. For some subjects, including geography, plans are not yet fully established. Pupils in key stage 2 have misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge. This is now being addressed. Leaders should ensure that these changes are securely embedded and teachers are implementing them effectively.
- Some subject leaders are new to post and come with varying levels of expertise. Leaders have supported subject leaders to set out the curriculum intent in their subjects. Subject leaders should check the quality of education in their subjects. This will help them evaluate the impact of changes and identify further areas for improvement.
- Pupils' achievement in phonics has shown little improvement over time. The teaching of phonics has recently been reviewed and the school has adopted a new approach. Not all support staff have received up-to-date training. The content of the programme is suitably ambitious and appropriately sequenced. Activities are not sharply focused on securing pupils' understanding. Pupils have insufficient time in these sessions to apply and practise new learning. Leaders should ensure that all staff are suitably trained to deliver a phonics programme.

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 are the school and you are 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

Unique reference number	143230
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10121646
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	188
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gillian Hamer
Headteacher	Sarah Senior
Website	www.skelmanthorpeacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Skelmanthorpe Academy converted to become an academy on 1 March 2017. When its predecessor school, Skelmanthorpe First and Nursery School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement overall.
- Skelmanthorpe Academy is part of the Learning Accord Academy Trust.
- Since the school opened, there has been a reduction in staffing, including staff in leadership positions.
- The school has a nursery which children attend in the mornings.

Information about this inspection

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

- We met with the headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff. As lead inspector, I met with trust representatives, including the chief executive officer. I also met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- We looked in depth at the following subjects: reading, mathematics, science and geography. In doing so, we visited classes across all year groups and reviewed

pupils' work. We spoke to pupils about their learning and listened to them read. We also met with teachers.

- We met with those responsible for safeguarding. We looked at a range of documentation linked to safeguarding, including: child protection policies and procedures; absence data; information about how pupils' behaviour is managed; and information about how more vulnerable pupils are supported. We talked to pupils during the inspection and asked them about how safe they feel.
- We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at playtimes and lunchtimes. We gathered pupils' views about the school through formal and informal discussions. We considered the 24 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and 14 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- We scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding documents.
- We gathered the views of parents at the start of the day. We considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's parent questionnaire, Parent View, and the 10 free-text responses.

Inspection team

Karen Heath, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Fiona Dixon

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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