

Inspection of a good school: Sowerby Primary Academy

Topcliffe Road, Sowerby, Sowerby Primary Academy, Thirsk, North Yorkshire YO7 1RX

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 June 2022

Outcome

Sowerby Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. Teachers encourage pupils to have high aspirations. Teachers inspire pupils by naming classes after renowned scientists and mathematicians. Pupils aspire to great things for themselves. Pupils' behaviour is good and bullying is very rare. Pupils know and follow the simple rules of being ready, respectful and safe.

Pupils appreciate how adults look after them and sort out disputes when needed. Pupils have the chance to take a full part in school life. They spoke with enthusiasm about the recent event to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Pupils celebrated the occasion through music and dance performances on the outdoor stage.

Pupils show respect for others. They learn about differences in race, religion and gender, and they value equality.

Teachers are alert to pupils' moods and feelings. Pupils receive help when they are worried, anxious or upset. The home-school link worker is an important member of the staff team. Pupils work hard and teachers expect them to always try their best. This effort carries through to sports events, including the recent sports day. Leaders encourage pupils to value good sporting behaviour as much as winning.

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

Leaders have worked hard to develop a curriculum that is largely well planned and sequenced. In the majority of subjects, leaders have mapped out the essential knowledge and skills that pupils need to remember. This knowledge prepares pupils well for their next steps. In subjects such as history and mathematics, key threads run through learning. Leaders are continuing to refine the curriculum in the minority of subjects where plans are less developed.

Teachers use questions well to check what pupils have remembered over time. Pupils can make connections to other things they have learned. Teachers use assessment well to spot misconceptions or gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Leaders have a clear rationale behind their phonics programme. Pupils who have previously struggled are quickly catching up. Training for teachers and teaching assistants has been thorough. Teachers deliver a simple and consistent approach to teaching phonics. They quickly spot any gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge. Children in Reception class use their knowledge of phonics to read new words. Pupils' phonics knowledge helps them with spelling. Teachers make sure that the books pupils use to practise their reading match their phonics ability. This work is helping younger pupils to become fluent and confident readers. Carefully chosen class novels provide pupils with access to a diverse range of literary texts. Older pupils enjoy completing book recommendations and reviews.

Any disruption to learning is rare. Pupils live out the school values, displaying resilience by never giving up in lessons. Pupils succeed because the work planned by teachers moves learning on. This includes work for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) provides guidance that helps staff to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers make adaptations to lessons to support pupils with SEND. This helps pupils with SEND to be fully integrated in lessons and in wider parts of school life.

Leaders make sure that opportunities to support pupils' broader development are varied and well planned. The wider curriculum, alongside assemblies, promotes pupils' understanding of themes such as health and equality. Pupils understand their feelings and how to deal with them. They are well supported when moving to another class or school. Leaders provide trips to widen pupils' horizons. Older pupils recently enjoyed a residential stay and other pupils visited a nature reserve. Pupils enjoy after-school clubs, such as the popular school choir.

Staff speak positively about leaders' consideration for their well-being, including ensuring that workload is manageable. They appreciate being able to work together to plan lessons. Staff morale is positive. Leaders take particular care to support new members of staff. One teacher noted, 'Even in tough times, the school is a good place to be.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well-trained to look out for any concerns about a pupils' welfare. Leaders deliver weekly safeguarding briefings to staff. Leaders meticulously record and follow-up any concerns over pupils' welfare. A local governor and the designated safeguarding officer from the trust carry out checks on safeguarding practice. External expertise from the trust provides additional focus on safeguarding. Leaders work well with external partners, such as the local police, to promote pupils' safety. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They have lessons on 'stranger danger' and online safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some parts of the school's curriculum are not yet sufficiently well planned. In a minority of subjects, key ideas are not mapped out with enough clarity. As a result, pupils' learning is less secure and they are less able to build their understanding over time. Leaders should further refine curriculum planning so that the knowledge and skills that pupils need to acquire are clearly mapped out in all subjects. This will enhance pupils' learning across the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Sowerby Community Primary School, to be good in December 2014.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	145369
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10227618
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	293
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Brear
Headteacher	Keeley Ungerechts
Website	www.sowerbyacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school converted to become an academy on 31 January 2018.
- The school is part of the Elevate Multi-Academy Trust.
- The headteacher is the executive headteacher of this school and of Alanbrooke Primary Academy. Both schools share the same local governing body.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, the school administrator and staff with responsibility for pupils' welfare. The inspector met the trust school improvement director. He also held a telephone conversation with the safeguarding lead from the local governing body and met another governor on site.

- Deep dives were carried out in reading, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector met with leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and teaching assistants, spoke to pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to a range of pupils read from different year groups.
- The inspector looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about other curriculum subjects.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lesson visits and at breaktime. He spoke to pupils about their views of behaviour. A group of pupils gave the inspector a tour of the school.
- The inspector looked at the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks and spoke to leaders, teachers and pupils about safeguarding.
- The views of the 49 parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, were considered. This included 48 written comments.
- The inspector met with staff to discuss their well-being and workload. He considered the 12 responses and comments from Ofsted's survey for staff.

Inspection team

Phil Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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