

Ackworth Howard CofE Voluntary Controlled Junior and Infant School

Station Road, Low Ackworth, Pontefract WF7 7HH

Inspection dates	11–12 May 2016
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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school's Christian ethos permeates the life of the school, as reflected in the values of 'Compassion, Forgiveness, Friendship and Trust'.
- The school has improved markedly since the previous inspection due to the hard work and commitment of leaders, staff and governors.
- Standards have risen and pupils' behaviour has improved. Teaching is typically good now and it is sometimes even better.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, in writing and in mathematics.
- Governors are highly skilled. They provide insightful and effective challenge and support.
- Most pupils behave well and work very hard.
- The school's leadership has been significantly strengthened by its growing collaborative practice with schools from the teaching school alliance and by the support and guidance of a national leader of education.
- The quality of teaching has improved because of strong leadership of teaching and learning.
- Attendance rates are high. Pupils say they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Their physical and emotional well-being is given high priority.
- The majority of parents are very supportive of the school. Parents typically comment that 'there is a lovely community feel to the school. The staff are very positive and friendly.'

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Provision in the early years requires improvement. In particular, too little is expected of the most-able children in the early years.
- Procedures for checking how well pupils are doing lack rigour. This makes it difficult for leaders and staff to ensure all pupils are doing as well as they can and that all work is well presented.
- Some pupils could make even better progress because occasionally teachers do not check pupils' learning carefully enough in lessons.
- In some lessons a few of the most-able pupils could achieve more; sometimes, in other classes, pupils with special educational needs are not well catered for.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding, by ensuring all teachers and teaching assistants:
 - have much higher expectations of children’s achievements in the early years, particularly of the most-able children
 - regularly check pupils’ learning in lessons and adjust their work accordingly to help them do even better
 - ensure the quality of the support provided for pupils with special educational needs always matches that of the very best in the school
 - ensure the quality and presentation of pupils’ work always matches that of the very best in the school.
- Refine systems for checking pupil progress so leaders, staff and governors can quickly identify any pupil, including those with special educational needs, who could do even better and take swift action to ensure their learning improves.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The school provides a nurturing and harmonious community. It fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
- Most parents who made their views known to an inspector say they would recommend the school to other parents. A typical comment was: 'when I leave my child at the school gate I feel confident they are being well looked after and taught very well'.
- Leaders successfully engage and motivate staff. Staff responses to the inspection questionnaire about the school are extremely positive. Many members of staff commented that the school had improved significantly as a result of strong leadership and that everyone has 'a shared vision of what a good school is now'.
- Although the substantive headteacher was not at school during the two days of the inspection, many pupils, parents and staff alike expressed great appreciation of her leadership.
- The acting executive headteacher has been warmly welcomed by staff and parents and is very skilfully helping to accelerate the pace and direction of school improvement.
- The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils are gaining an understanding of democratic processes, when they vote for their own school councillors. The school also has links with magistrates, who visit the school to teach pupils about the importance of upholding British law, and the curriculum helps develop empathy and understanding for those of other faiths and cultures.
- The management of the school is efficient. The school has continued to run smoothly on a day-to-day basis during the unavoidable temporary absence of senior leaders. This has been due to the hard work and commitment of the staff team and the governing body. Everyone has rallied round and ensured that any potential impact on pupils is minimised.
- The executive headteacher has a good understanding of the school's effectiveness. She is clear about what needs to be done to improve further. She has quickly gained the confidence of the staff team. All are focused on ensuring discrimination is not tolerated and that every pupil has an equal opportunity to succeed.
- Subject leaders have grown in confidence since the previous inspection. The good impact of their work can be seen in the more consistent teaching of mathematics, reading and writing and the rising standards in every subject.
- The school keeps a careful check on how well each pupil is doing. Leaders have implemented new assessment procedures to check that pupils are working at least at age-related expectations. However, leaders acknowledge the need to refine their procedures even further, so they can more readily identify if any pupil could do even better. A scrutiny of pupils' workbooks, discussions with pupils in every class and observations of learning during the inspection show that in some classes a few of the most-able pupils do not make enough progress. In other classes some of the lower-attaining pupils, such as those with special educational needs, are not well supported. The school's current assessment system is detailed but it does not enable school leaders to pick up on such pupils quickly enough.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong and this has resulted in a greater degree of consistency in teaching from class to class. Staff are very reflective of their own practice and keen to improve. Nevertheless, from their evaluations of teaching and learning, senior leaders know where to focus training and professional development so that teaching continues to improve.
- Performance management procedures are more regular now and staff are held accountable for the progress pupils in their class make.
- The school has actively sought guidance and support from a national leader in education, as well as from the local authority, the diocese and the schools within a teaching school alliance. The training, coaching and support provided have significantly improved the leadership and teaching skills of many members of staff. The local authority has kept a check on the school's effectiveness and has offered some appropriate guidance and support.
- Pupil premium funding is used very well. The school carefully diagnoses the individual needs of each pupil and provides appropriate support. The impact of the funding is carefully evaluated.
- Last year the physical education (PE) and sport premium was used to bring a range of sports coaches into school to help upskill staff. Consequently, this year staff are now teaching PE with greater confidence. Pupils enjoy a wider range of sports now, such as rugby and volleyball.

- The curriculum is particularly effective in developing pupils' basic reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Pupils also enjoy a range of clubs, such as the cookery, needlework, computing and kick boxing club. Governors regularly check that the disadvantaged pupils too are given the chance to attend, trying to ensure that these pupils do not miss out.
- The school is working hard to improve communication with parents, particularly during the more unsettled period over this past term. For example, the school website is very informative. The school ensures information is kept up to date and readily accessible to parents and pupils. Although parents expressed some concerns about the school's communication with parents, many agreed that it was improving again now.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors form a strong team. They add significantly to the effectiveness of leadership and management, as they bring a wide range of skills and experiences in areas such as education, finance and computing. Many governors also have strong links with the diocese and the community.
 - Governors have played a key role in the improvements made since the previous inspection, particularly during the senior leadership absence. Governors are well informed and they have the necessary skills both to support the school and also to hold school leaders to account.
 - Governors are very knowledgeable about pupil outcomes and the quality of teaching. They help ensure performance management arrangements lead to improved provision and outcomes. They actively access additional training where necessary. In addition, some governors have the specialist knowledge and skills required to train others in key areas, such as the accurate analysis of published performance data.
 - Governors are fully aware of the school's strengths and improvement priorities. They increasingly question the impact of the actions leaders take to improve pupils' achievements. They do not just accept what they are told by senior leaders, but regularly visit the school and look at pupils' work.
 - Governors regularly check the impact that additional funding has on pupils' outcomes and carefully evaluate whether any new developments will provide value for money, when making big funding decisions.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure staff receive up-to-date training. Staff adhere to the school's policies and procedures and these are checked regularly by governors.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- The school's own records, observations during the inspection and a scrutiny of workbooks from every class show that, although there are still pockets of less effective teaching, most of the teaching is now typically good and ensures pupils make increasingly good progress with their learning. An increasing proportion of teaching is even better and this is enabling pupils in some classes to make rapid progress at times.
- Pupils say they find their work interesting. For example, pupils in key stage 1 were really inspired in their work around the theme of Jack and the Beanstalk. They were enthralled as they listened to the beginning of a story featuring the giant's castle. They used a computer-generated programme to 'look through a keyhole' at sections of the giant's castle and this motivated them to write their own detailed descriptions of what they thought the giant's castle was like.
- Teachers largely demonstrate good subject knowledge across the curriculum. Most lessons have a clear focus and pupils' work is often adapted to different levels of difficulty.
- The teaching of reading has improved. Pupils were involved in designing bespoke reading areas in each classroom. This is helping to raise the profile of reading in school and helping to foster a love of reading. During the inspection pupils enjoyed sharing their favourite books with each other.
- More regular opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing and more effective teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling are helping improve the quality and content of pupils' writing. Year 6 pupils were inspired to produce some high-quality humorous stories based on a local myth, following a visit by an author. The phraseology and imaginative vocabulary they used very successfully captures the reader's interest.
- The promotion of reasoning in mathematics is starting to bear fruit and deepen pupils' understanding. Many pupils are enjoying more opportunities to complete mathematics investigations. These get pupils thinking hard as they practise and apply what they are learning in problem-solving activities. For example,

pupils in Year 2 worked hard to find out how many different two-digit numbers they could make when they placed six beads on a 'tens and units' grid. They were then challenged to explain how they could be sure that they had found all the possible answers to the problem.

- Marking is now more consistent and follows the school's policy. Most work is well marked and provides pupils with good advice about how to improve their work. Pupils also obtain further guidance through the use of computers and other IT equipment. For example, Year 5 pupils have taken their own video clips, which demonstrate the school's approach to key mathematical processes and clarify key aspects of English grammar and punctuation. Pupils access these video clips independently on computerised tablets if they are in need of a quick reminder.
- Many teaching assistants are very skilled and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning, motivating pupils to do their very best. However, occasionally teaching assistants are not so clear about how they can help pupils improve their work.
- Staff generally plan work effectively using the assessment information about pupils' achievements to help ensure they challenge them appropriately. Additional support is provided for those who fall behind or are less confident in their learning. Some of the support provided is highly effective. However, at times the additional support is not matched well enough to pupils' needs.
- Expectations of what the most-able pupils can do is now typically much higher than at the time of the previous inspection. Many pupils are provided with activities where they have to think very hard and grapple with how they can solve more complex problems. This is helping to bring their learning on apace. For example, pupils in Year 1 worked very hard in an activity that tested their knowledge of positional language, as well as different shapes. They rose to the challenge to identify the location of particular shapes on a grid. They confidently and correctly used positional language to identify if each shape was on the top, middle or bottom row, and whether the shape was the first, second or third item on the left or right. Nevertheless, leaders are aware that a few of the school's most-able pupils in some classes are not given enough challenge and so do not make the progress they are capable of.
- Teachers and teaching assistants regularly question pupils to consolidate their learning. For example, they ask pupils to explain how they have worked something out or what they can do to improve their work.
- Most teachers know their pupils well and plan effectively to meet pupils' needs. However, occasionally some teachers do not regularly check pupils' learning through a lesson carefully enough and do not adapt activities sufficiently to meet pupils' changing needs. As a result, the most-able pupils find their work too easy at times, and other pupils start to fall behind with their learning because their work is too difficult.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school provides a harmonious learning environment, where pupils show respect and care for each other.
- Behaviour management processes are clear and effective. Pupils respond well to the reward systems, which celebrate their academic achievements as well as their positive personal and social skills. For example, pupils are rewarded for having 'exemplary manners' at dinner times and they enjoy being the 'star of the week' as a reward for making better progress with their work.
- Pupils say that incidents of bullying and the use of derogatory language are rare, but they are aware of the different forms of bullying can take. The school keeps a sharp check on pupils' well-being to help to ensure that no trends develop. Pupils who spoke to an inspector are confident they would find an adult in school to talk to if they had any worries or concerns. One group of pupils agreed that 'adults in school are very protective of us'.
- Pupils are taught well about how they can keep themselves safe. For example, they know about the potential dangers of using the internet and about key aspects of road safety and personal safety.
- Relationships are strong. Many members of staff are very supportive of pupils who may have specific emotional needs.
- Almost every parent who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, say their children are happy and safe at school. Parents typically described the school as 'welcoming' and referred to the staff as 'very approachable'. However, a few parents expressed some concerns regarding the quality of care and support provided for pupils with special educational needs.

- Pupils who responded to the inspection questionnaire about the school, and those who spoke to an inspector, were overwhelmingly positive about the level of care provided.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils who spoke to an inspector say they are happy at school and enjoy coming to school.
- Pupils work well in groups together. They are very polite and readily open doors for visitors, for example.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in and around school. During the inspection, lessons were not disrupted by inappropriate behaviour at all.
- Pupils are thoughtful and reflective. There are many areas and displays which encourage prayer and reflection throughout school.
- Attendance is consistently above the national average. Pupils are punctual to lessons.
- Learning attitudes in the classroom are largely very positive. Most pupils are confident and most work very hard. Pupils say they like it when they have the opportunity to choose which learning activity to complete. As some pupils explained: 'We find it good because we can challenge ourselves.' Nevertheless, a few pupils sit back a little in lessons and let others do all the hard work.
- Some pupils take great pride over the presentation of their work. However, this is not always the case. Occasionally pupils' work is not quite as well presented and a few fail to complete their work to the best of their ability. For example, a few pupils do not always take enough care with their handwriting and do not use a ruler to underline headings.
- Pupils too play their part in helping others feel safe and happy. They are proud to carry out roles of responsibility in school and feel they make a difference to school life. For example, worship leaders help lead assemblies to reinforce the school's values. They show younger pupils how to conduct themselves in assembly and helped establish a prayer tree outdoors. School councillors canvassed pupils' opinions on school meals and the menus for school meals have subsequently been changed.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' outcomes have improved since the previous inspection. Significant improvements in teaching are resulting in faster rates of progress across most year groups.
- Standards have risen markedly. In 2015 standards in every subject were above average at the end of key stages 1 and 2.
- The most-able pupils are largely well challenged in lessons. In 2015 over half of the pupils in Year 6 achieved the higher levels in reading, in writing and in mathematics. This was much better than the national picture. Work in Year 2 and Year 6 books indicates most are set to reach their age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics and some are doing even better.
- Many disadvantaged pupils are doing particularly well. Indeed, in 2015 over half of the disadvantaged pupils at the end of school made better than expected progress and most of these pupils attained above-average results. A scrutiny of pupils' workbooks shows that in most year groups the progress disadvantaged pupils make is typically in line with or above that of other pupils in school.
- Many pupils who have special educational needs or disability are starting to make faster rates of progress from their starting points, as are pupils whose standard of work is below that which is typical for their age. However, their rate of progress can vary somewhat from class to class. Some pupils benefit from highly skilled support, sharply targeted at each individual's learning and emotional needs. As a result, these pupils flourish. However, not all staff have high enough expectations of the pupils in their care and they sometimes fail to check pupils' level of understanding well enough.
- Standards in reading have risen significantly since the previous inspection. Pupils read widely and often, with fluency and comprehension. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2015 was above average. Pupils' improving knowledge of the sounds that letters make is helping them to enjoy reading from an early age.
- Pupils make good progress in writing. They are encouraged to plan their writing carefully and have regular opportunities to write at length. Pupils' writing is typically well structured and grammatically correct. On the whole their written work across the curriculum is of the same standard as in discrete English lessons.
- Pupils are doing much better in mathematics than at the time of the previous inspection, because the teaching of mathematics has improved.

- The work in pupils' books and the school's own performance information shows most pupils are now making better progress. Achievement across many subjects of the curriculum is good and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- The provision in the early years requires improvement because most children make steady rather than good progress. This is because expectations of what children can achieve are not always high enough. Although the proportion of children reaching a good level of development rose a little in 2015, there is still room for improvement as many children have the potential to do much better.
- Too little is expected of the most-able children, in particular. Sometimes they are given work that is much too easy.
- The leadership of the early years has been variable since the previous inspection, as a result of staffing changes. Nevertheless, senior leaders have a clear view of the early years' effectiveness and are fully aware of the aspects in need of further improvement.
- Staff in the setting are committed and hard-working and are working tirelessly to improve provision and outcomes for the children. Despite having only been in the class for half a term, the new Reception teacher has already enhanced much of the learning environment and this is motivating children to learn.
- Children often enter the early years with skills that are typical for their age. Due to some improvements in provision, some children are now starting to make better progress from these starting points.
- The early years provides a caring environment. Leaders ensure children are safe. Relationships are positive. Children largely behave well. They generally listen well to instructions from adults and they learn and play well with each other. Children understand the classroom rules and are keen to show what they have done. This helps prepare them for the changeover into key stage 1.
- Learning activities are being increasingly adapted to meet children's own interests. During the inspection children enjoyed finding items outdoors that were taller than their 'beanstalks' and designing and building their own castle. Several children also enjoyed writing independently and sharing books together.
- It is difficult to compare the standards attained by disadvantaged children from year to year as the number of children varies significantly. However, senior leaders ensure that the use of additional funding enables disadvantaged children to do just as well as other children in the setting, relative to their individual starting points.
- Partnerships with parents, providers and other agencies are developing well. The school is acting upon the guidance and support provided by a specialist consultant and this is helping to improve the quality of the learning activities.

School details

Unique reference number	130977
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10011978

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lucy O'Brien
Headteacher	Lisa Metcalfe
Telephone number	01977 722 275
Website	www.ackworthhowardschool.co.uk
Email address	headteacher@howard.wakefield.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 February 2014

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who have been eligible for free school meals in the last six years and children in the care of the local authority.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is smaller than that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is broadly average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- At the time of the inspection the school was led on a temporary basis by an executive headteacher from a local school, due to the unforeseen temporary absence of the substantive headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of subjects and heard pupils read. Some of the observations were conducted jointly with the executive headteacher.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, in the playground and around school.
- Discussions were held with pupils, senior leaders, staff, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- A number of documents were examined. They included the school's view of its own performance, records of the checks made on teaching and learning, the school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents through informal discussion with parents, analysis of the school's own questionnaire to parents and the 61 responses to Parent View.
- The 77 responses from pupils and the 15 responses from staff to the inspection questionnaires about the school were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

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