

Kirkstall Valley Primary School

Argie Road, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS4 2QZ

Inspection dates

13–14 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- There has been considerable turbulence in staffing over the last two years. This has led to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching received by pupils over time.
- Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are too low, leading to them setting work that is not well matched to pupils' abilities.
- Until recently, leaders have not ensured that assessment information was used well enough by all staff to plan learning from pupils' starting points. This has led to pupils making uneven progress through school, with the most progress being made in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Some middle leaders are new to their roles and have been unable to have an impact on the quality of teaching.
- Some teachers do not do enough to check on pupils' understanding or to challenge pupils in their learning. Consequently, there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills, particularly in key stage 2.
- In some classes, the teaching of phonics has not been sufficiently effective, so some low-prior-attaining pupils are unable to use phonic strategies well enough, particularly in writing.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation and handwriting are inconsistent.
- Leadership in early years, although improving, has not been strong enough over time. Some activities provided for children lack challenge and too little thought has been given to what children will learn when working independently.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher, supported by an experienced associate headteacher, has worked with urgency to raise teachers' expectations.
- Staffing is now stable and the quality of teaching in some classes is improving because of the clear direction, support and coaching provided by the acting headteacher.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Leaders and teachers ensure that pupils learn through a broad range of interesting subjects and experiences. The wider curriculum is a strength of the school.
- Leaders are successfully promoting pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding. The school is calm and orderly, and pupils' behaviour is good.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, so that it is consistently good or better, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics, to ensure good progress for all groups of pupils by ensuring that:
 - teachers inspire pupils to excel by insisting on higher expectations and greater challenge
 - work set for pupils is appropriately challenging for all abilities, including the least and most-able
 - assessment is used skilfully to plan sequences of learning, address pupils' misconceptions and strengthen their understanding
 - teachers systematically check pupils' understanding through well-chosen questions and provide them with precise feedback that enables them to rapidly improve their learning
 - pupils' phonic knowledge is secure
 - more opportunities are provided to develop handwriting and improve sustained writing in literacy lessons as well as in other curriculum areas
 - opportunities are given for pupils to use and apply mathematics in different subjects.
- Improve the impact and effectiveness of leadership, at all levels, making sure that:
 - capacity among senior leaders is developed to share the workload, embed new procedures and bring about consistency
 - the skills of middle leaders continue to improve so that they can work alongside teachers to secure essential improvements in teaching
 - sequences of learning enable pupils to make secure progress through the curriculum from year to year.
- Improve teaching in the early years, by:
 - ensuring that all staff have the knowledge and skills to secure children's rapid progress across all areas of learning, but particularly in early reading, phonics, writing and number
 - carrying out accurate assessments which clearly identify what children can do and what the next steps are in their learning
 - ensuring that all activities, both indoors and outdoors, are precisely planned with a clear focus on learning across the whole curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The acting headteacher, well supported by the associate headteacher, has demonstrated effective leadership in a very short time. She has identified weaknesses and has taken appropriate actions to improve the quality of teaching. Working together, both leaders have introduced new systems for checking on pupils' progress and are robustly holding teachers to account. However, some teaching remains less effective despite ongoing support for individual teachers.
- Middle leaders are checking on pupils' progress but, due to changes in leadership roles and in staffing, have been unable to provide the regular challenge and support needed over time to ensure that pupils receive the precise teaching that would enable them to make swift progress in all classes.
- There have been several leaders for special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities over a short period of time. The current SEN coordinator does not hold the SEN qualification. She has ensured that staff have received specialist training to support individual pupils. However, she has been unable to check whether this support is effectively delivered in classrooms.
- The acting headteacher has the full backing of governors, staff and parents. She has steered the school calmly through a period of uncertainty and put into place many processes that are beginning to restore good-quality teaching and to better reward pupils' learning and good behaviour. Staff appreciate the training and guidance they have received under her leadership.
- The leader for mathematics has effectively supported staff to adopt new methods of teaching. She has ensured that staff have been appropriately trained and regularly checks pupils' progress in mathematics.
- Leaders have ensured that pupil premium funding is now spent effectively on providing additional resources and staffing to support disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils throughout school are currently making progress broadly in line with other pupils in school and nationally because of the additional support they receive.
- The primary school sports funding has been used wisely to purchase new teaching resources and to procure coaches to bolster the teaching of sport in school. Teachers run a range of popular extra-curricular and sports clubs to provide opportunities for greater participation in healthy activities. These include street dance, gymnastics and netball. Nursery children are taking part in regular 'cosmic yoga' sessions which help develop their concentration and pupils, throughout the rest of school, enjoy starting their day with exercises to get them ready for learning.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum provides a broad range of subjects and experiences for pupils to motivate and interest them in their learning. Pupils enthused about a recent visit to a local museum, for example, and told inspectors they love history, geography and art.
- Through assemblies and lessons, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well by leaders and staff, and pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain is good. Pupils have visited mosques and churches to begin to

understand different faiths. Pupils are proud of their multicultural school and learn from their peers as well as from their teachers about the diverse cultures represented in the community in which they live.

- Parents who spoke to inspectors thought Kirkstall Valley 'very inclusive' and said their children were happy at school. Parents responding to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, reinforced this view. Ninety per cent were content with all aspects of the school's work. Ninety-four per cent thought the school well led and managed and would recommend the school to other parents.

Governance of the school

- Governors have worked effectively with the local authority and developed trust with school leaders. They have sought the expert opinion of school improvement partners to validate their own views of the school.
- Working in tandem with the local authority, governors have taken difficult decisions to ensure that leadership has remained effective during a turbulent time.
- Governors execute their responsibilities well. They have an accurate understanding of the effectiveness of the school. Minutes of their meetings show that governors:
 - regularly check safeguarding to assure themselves pupils are safe
 - have asked challenging questions to understand the reasons behind irregularities in performance
 - ensure that the pupil premium and sports funding are spent appropriately.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff use online systems well to record concerns, to track incidents and to observe patterns in pupils' behaviour.
- The commitment of the whole staff to the happiness and security of pupils is a strength. All safeguarding policies meet statutory requirements and good procedures ensure that pupils are safe. Leaders have ensured that all staff and governors have been trained to identify potential signs of abuse and to report any concerns without delay.
- All reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that the site is safe and secure and levels of staff supervision during pupils' social times are high. Leaders have ensured that all aspects of the school's work are appropriately assessed for risk and staff understand the reasons for vigilant application of agreed procedures. For example, pupils are routinely escorted to the playground to minimise the risks posed by steps, slopes and changes of surfaces.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There has been a lack of consistency in the quality of teaching which has led to varied rates of progress across classes and subjects. While many teachers have high expectations of what pupils will learn, this is not the same in all classes.

- Some teachers plan activities that lack challenge, particularly for the most able pupils. This is because assessment has not been accurate or used sufficiently well to plan learning that is well matched to pupils' ages and abilities.
- Teachers plan for learning in reading through a variety of means. Pupils take part in regular group and whole-class reading lessons. Some teachers are successfully using whole-class learning to develop pupils' grammatical skills. However, in some classes teachers are not taking enough care to ensure that the texts they provide are correctly matched to pupils' reading skills, hindering pupils' progress as they work through resources that are too easy.
- Pupils' books show the teaching of writing is variable. Teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation and handwriting are not consistent, leading to many pupils producing too little work and some producing work of a poor quality. Too few pupils are regularly demonstrating their ability to write at a standard expected for their age. This is because, over time, some teachers have not sufficiently planned to develop pupils' letter formation, spelling or mastery of vocabulary.
- Overall, improvement in the teaching of mathematics has been more rapid than in reading and writing so that the majority of pupils, in all year groups, are largely on track to achieve standards expected for their age. Teachers are planning effectively to help pupils acquire reasoning skills and to apply those skills to new concepts. However, in some classes, weaknesses still exist, particularly where pupils have repeated learning unnecessarily, and pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Although there are still some areas of weakness, teaching is improving due to teachers' willingness to engage in professional development, to adapt and to strengthen practice. Teachers have developed strong relationships with their pupils, characterised by kindness and mutual respect.
- Teachers have taken care to ensure that pupils learn about subjects other than English and mathematics through a relevant and lively curriculum. Work in pupils' books shows they are taking part in regular science lessons, learning how to carry out investigations and to record these using scientific vocabulary. Teachers have accompanied pupils on educational trips to museums, galleries, the cinema and to other cities to broaden the experiences of pupils and to make learning meaningful.
- Although a few parents who replied to Parent View thought their children did not receive appropriate homework for their age, this was not the view of pupils who spoke to inspectors. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to present their homework in creative ways, for example when looking at different countries during international week. Inspectors found regular homework was effectively supporting the learning of basic knowledge and pupils are benefiting from the additional practice in key skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff embody the school vision to be 'a small school with a big heart' and much work has taken place to help pupils to settle and feel happy in school.

- Staff and pupils have received external awards for effective teaching and learning about healthy lifestyles and for their work done to understand social, emotional and mental health issues. Pupils spoke eloquently about half-termly 'mind mate' days, where staff run activities designed to help them reflect on their own emotions and the feelings of others.
- Leaders are taking every opportunity to educate pupils about the wider world through assemblies and events run in school. For example, pupils have listened to talks on fire safety and parents and pupils have been invited to the after-school health fair. Pupils regularly support charitable events and, in March this year, every pupil ran a mile, raising almost £2,000 in sponsorship for a national charity.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school is calm and orderly and the vast majority of pupils concentrate and listen carefully to their teachers. Pupils understand the rewards and sanctions system and feel their teachers are fair.
- The acting headteacher quickly amended the school's response to a few pupils' more problematic behaviour and there have been no fixed-term exclusions since January. The learning mentor is providing effective support to enable these pupils to reflect on their behaviour and disruptive behaviours have reduced by almost half as a result.
- A small percentage of parents expressed concern over bullying. Pupils themselves said bullying doesn't happen often, but when it does staff 'sort it out'. School records show that under the tenure of the acting headteacher, bullying is very rare and that incidents of pupils demonstrating more extreme behaviour are decreasing.
- Pupils' attendance has improved this year and persistent absence has fallen. This is because of the steadfast work of the acting headteacher and learning mentor to maintain frequent contact with parents and to support them in getting their children to school regularly and on time. A very few pupils who have needed hospital care are understandably absent. However, overall, attendance is broadly in line with national averages.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 was in the top 40% of schools for reading, writing and mathematics. However, in 2017 the progress of pupils dropped considerably and attainment fell below the minimum expectations laid down by the government. Middle-prior-attaining pupils and those who were disadvantaged made less progress than other pupils. In 2017, only 44% of pupils attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined, leaving them poorly prepared for secondary education.
- Teacher assessments, and information gleaned from tests, show that more Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve standards expected for their age this summer, and between a fifth and a third of pupils are on track to attain higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Overall, school information shows that pupils who are disadvantaged are now making similar progress to other pupils in school and nationally.

- Pupils' progress at the end of key stage 1 was slightly below national averages in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016, but in 2017 outcomes fell in reading and writing because middle-prior-attaining pupils had not made enough progress. A higher proportion of pupils are on track to reach expected standards this year.
- Outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check were above national figures until 2017, when they fell below averages seen nationally. This year, proportions of pupils on track to achieve the phonics check are broadly in line with last year's national average.
- The school's assessment information shows that this year, pupils made the most progress in Year 2 and Year 6. However, progress across other year groups has been erratic. Current information and work in pupils' books show that pupils are beginning to make steady progress across all year groups. However, low-prior-attaining pupils are struggling to complete tasks to an acceptable standard, particularly in reading and writing and their progress in writing remains inconsistent.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making secure progress in acquiring social and emotional skills but are working at standards below other pupils in reading and mathematics. Several key stage 2 pupils who have SEN are unable to use their phonics effectively and are consequently working at standards well below those expected for their age in writing.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The leader for early years has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, but has had limited impact on improving early years beyond her own classroom because she has only recently been recruited to the school on a permanent basis.
- Only half of the children attending the Reception class have attended Nursery and half come from a range of pre-schools. Some children have not attended any pre-school setting prior to starting school. Around 60% of children arrive into Reception with skills and abilities below those typical for their age.
- Teachers have not been consistent in the use of assessment information to plan the next steps in children's learning. Children make uneven progress across early years because not all activities are planned with sufficient care and some learning is not well matched to the age and level of concentration of some children. This year, below-average proportions of children will enter Year 1 ready for the demands of school.
- The contribution to learning made by additional adults in early years is varied. Teaching assistants do not fully understand their role in developing children's knowledge and understanding and are not exploiting opportunities to boost children's confidence or use of language.
- The more formal teaching of phonics is effective in helping children to hear sounds in the environment and to learn the sounds that letters make. However, some staff are missing opportunities to accelerate this learning when children are learning independently.
- Children arrive into the Nursery with skills and abilities generally below those typically seen. Effective teaching in the Nursery helps children to make a good start. Children

settle swiftly and learn routines quickly because of the sensitive support they receive from all adults in the class.

- Nursery staff ensure that opportunities for learning are exploited fully. For example, during 'tidy up time' the teacher was observed effectively reinforcing mathematical language, encouraging children to find the 'frog under the red chair'. Staff frequently use songs and rhymes to help children to hear sounds and patterns in words.
- Leaders have designed an inviting and vibrant outdoor area where children can develop their gross motor skills and engage in messy play. Resources have been thoughtfully placed to develop children's understanding. For example, children were choosing to play with model minibeasts, carefully placed to reinforce learning through last term's 'living and growing' topic.
- Staff in early years effectively involve parents in their children's education. Parents contribute to children's records when they enter Reception and value the opportunity to view photographs of their children's endeavours via the online recording system, accessible from their homes. Parents attend monthly 'stay and play' sessions that enable them to learn alongside their children.
- Leaders have ensured that the setting is secure and that safe levels of supervision are maintained. Staff effectively manage risks for children and ensure that the statutory welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	107887
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	10047428

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sam Clarke
Acting Headteacher	Hayley Wild
Telephone number	0113 8878982
Website	www.kirkstallvalley.leeds.sch.uk
Email address	info@kirkstallvalley.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 January 2014

Information about this school

- Kirkstall Valley School is an average-sized primary school.
- The substantive headteacher left the school in March 2018 and the assistant headteacher became the acting headteacher. In January 2018, an associate headteacher was appointed by the local authority to provide additional support to leaders. A new substantive headteacher has been recruited to take up post in September 2018.
- Just under half of the staff have changed during the last two years. Two teachers were new to the school at Easter 2018.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is average.

- Almost 50% of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Fifty per cent of pupils are from other minority ethnic groups, the largest of which is Asian or Asian British Pakistani and 30% speak English as an additional language.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics.
- Children in the Reception class attend full time and children in the Nursery attend part time.

Information about this inspection

- Together with the acting headteacher and associate headteacher, inspectors looked at pupils' progress data, information about the performance of teachers, documents relating to behaviour and safety and documents relating to safeguarding.
- The inspectors, accompanied by the acting headteacher, observed pupils' learning in all classes.
- Inspectors listened to Year 1 and Year 2 pupils read, and observed pupils learning in small groups. They spoke with pupils in a meeting, in lessons and at social times.
- Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, associate headteacher, middle leaders and four members of the governing body. A meeting was also held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the opinion of 50 parents through Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents) and took account of 17 online responses returned by members of staff.

Inspection team

Lesley Butcher, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Helen Hussey

Ofsted Inspector

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