

South Kirkby Academy

Stockingate, South Kirkby, Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF9 3DP

Inspection dates

4–5 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- There is variability in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Work is not consistently pitched at the right level for pupils' abilities and teachers' explanations of learning points are not always clear.
- Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in the wider curriculum, especially science, are often superficial.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not make consistently good progress because teachers' planning and teaching assistants' use of resources are variable in effectiveness.
- Pupils' absence and persistent absence rates are worse than the national averages for similar schools and have been so for some years.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress over time. This is especially the case in writing, mathematics and science.
- The teaching of the necessary skills to help pupils research and understand new knowledge is not well established.
- Teachers and teaching assistants do not consistently model accurate written English.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher leads the school with a determination and a conviction that pupils who attend the school have an entitlement to high aspirations. She is well supported by the trust.
- The headteacher has recently rebuilt the senior leadership team. New systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are having a positive effect.
- Teaching is improving. There is some very good practice. Often, pupils learn very well.
- Leaders have been effective in improving the quality of the teaching of reading. The least able readers on entry to the school are able to quickly catch up. Pupils' outcomes in reading are improving rapidly.
- Pupils behave well. They are courteous, considerate and welcoming to visitors. They are proud of their school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good, by ensuring that:
 - teachers explain learning points with clarity and check pupils' understanding before moving on to the next stage of the lesson, so that any misconceptions are cleared up
 - teachers' planning meets the needs of the least able pupils and pupils with SEND
 - teaching assistants have the necessary training to enable them to support pupils with SEND effectively
 - across the curriculum, pupils are taught the skills necessary for carrying out effective research
 - teachers and teaching assistants consistently use accurate written English, so that correct spelling is modelled at all times
 - the teaching of science enables pupils to gain knowledge, skills and understanding in greater depth.
- Further reduce the rate of persistent absence and improve the overall rate of attendance.
- Improve pupils' progress in writing and mathematics so that it is at least in line with the national averages and matches recent improvements in pupils' reading progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the school converted to an academy, the headteacher has assiduously built a new senior leadership team. As a result, although pupils' progress and attainment are typically below the national averages, pupils' outcomes are strengthening. Reading in particular is much improved as a consequence of leaders' actions. Teaching is still variable in quality but improving. Persistent absence is reducing and the rate of fixed-term exclusions is falling quickly.
- Morale among staff is very high. They have committed to the headteacher's vision of high aspirations and ambition for the pupils who attend the school. Central to the staff's optimism and positive outlook has been the judicious use of continuing professional development. Consequently, the skills of staff to fulfil their roles effectively are strengthening. There is a palpable sense of a 'team' at work.
- The trust has been instrumental in supporting and challenging leaders to improve the school. Trust leaders are honest in their evaluation of the school's recent and current performance. They acted swiftly to provide support to the school. This has included support for raising the standard of teaching, especially reading, writing and mathematics. As a result of trust leaders' actions, although some variability in the quality of teaching remains, it is improving.
- Leaders are effective in preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. Pupils describe a school community which is welcoming and supportive of differences and diversities. Pupils are taught about various faiths, cultures and religions, for instance. As a result of leaders' curriculum for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils' respect for others is strong.
- Additional funding for the pupil premium and the sport premium is used well. Leaders have talked to pupils about the kind of sporting activities they would like to do, which has led to a wide range of opportunities. These include, for instance, table tennis, swimming, biathlon and the use of personal data devices to record the number of steps while on the 'walking bus' to and from school. Leaders' records show an increased participation this year in physical activity.
- Leaders have implemented the recommendations of two external pupil premium reviews to further improve the effectiveness of this funding. In particular, funding has been used to improve standards of reading, as evidenced in pupils' outcomes in 2017/18. In addition, leaders have used funding to enhance classroom environments, which inspectors saw being used to good effect. Funding has also been used to open up the school to its community, such as 'Inspire Mornings' where parents and carers read with their children in school.
- Leaders' use of special educational needs funding has been effective in improving the outcomes of pupils with SEND. Although this is the case, progress for pupils with SEND remains variable due to inconsistencies in levels of staff training and teachers' planning. Leaders have already identified these as 'next steps' and, in partnership with the local authority, work is already underway to address them.
- The curriculum is a broad and balanced one, with a range of subjects taught. These

include subjects beyond the typical, such as Mandarin, as a means to challenge pupils and to open up their horizons beyond their immediate vicinity. Leaders have also put in place numerous extra-curricular opportunities to augment the work taking place in classrooms, such as theme days in science and history. At times, especially in science, the depth of pupils' subject knowledge is not very deep. However, leaders are currently reviewing their curriculum with a view to introducing a new one in September 2019.

Governance of the school

- Governors share leaders' high aspirations for what pupils should achieve. They take opportunities to reassert these high expectations, such as in governors' meetings. They ask pertinent questions of leaders and hold them to account for pupils' progress, attendance and safety.
- Governors have a clear line of sight across the school's strengths and, crucially, where it is not as strong. They have an accurate understanding of the priorities facing the school. Governors have ensured that they have accessed appropriate training to help them be effective in scrutinising the school performance information presented by leaders.
- Governors have a sound understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. A number of governors, for instance, have completed appropriate training in 'safer recruitment' to support leaders in making staff appointments to school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders responsible for safeguarding work as a team, with appropriate training for their roles completed and then refreshed regularly. Leaders' systems for monitoring pupils' safety and then acting when required are strong. Leaders have a secure understanding of when it is appropriate to contact external agencies for additional support. Their records demonstrate a tenacity and a persistence in securing the right help for pupils and families when it is needed.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture at the school. For example, leaders have established relationships with appropriate external agencies, such as the police and the local authority's children's services, so that there is a two-way flow of safeguarding information.
- Leaders' processes for checking the suitability of adults to work in the school are secure and meet legal requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Across different subjects and years, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable. There is some very effective teaching which challenges pupils at the right level, but there is an inconsistency in the extent to which teachers' planning helps pupils to learn well.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to the headteacher's ethos of high

aspirations. They all want their pupils to do well. Much of the time, their subject knowledge is secure and enables pupils to be engaged in their learning. At times, however, teachers' subject knowledge is less secure and new knowledge or skills are taught incorrectly. As a result, pupils' understanding is sometimes limited and uncertain.

- Often, teachers are effective in setting tasks which present an appropriate level of challenge for pupils. Sometimes, however, tasks are pitched at the wrong level, either too hard for some or too easy. When tasks are too hard, pupils are left behind in their understanding. In part, this is because the necessary 'building blocks' of understanding have not been securely established at an earlier stage. When tasks are too easy, pupils are not stretched to think more deeply about the topic in hand.
- Typically, teachers make effective use of questions to check on pupils' understanding. At its strongest, teachers' use of questions moves pupils on to new learning. Occasionally, however, when pupils' answers show that their understanding is still uncertain, the teacher moves on. As a result, some pupils are left with misconceptions in their learning.
- Across the curriculum, particularly in history, geography and religious studies, teachers provide pupils with opportunities to conduct independent research. Typically, however, pupils are not taught the skills required to make research an effective means of learning. As a result, pupils' research frequently amounts to chunks of copied text, with pupils often not understanding what they have written.
- The teaching of pupils with SEND is variable. At times, these pupils are effectively supported in their learning by teachers' careful planning of tasks and skilled use of appropriate resources. Elsewhere, however, teachers' planning is less effective. On occasions, pupils with SEND are set tasks which are simplistic and not matched to their needs. At such times, the guidance and support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants is minimal. Sometimes, resources to support pupils with SEND and the least able pupils are not effectively used. This is because teaching assistants have not had the necessary training to use the resources properly.
- Sometimes, teachers' use of written English is inaccurate. Inspectors saw a number of instances, across teachers and years, of incorrect spellings of subject terminology and basic words.
- The teaching of reading has improved strongly since the end of the academic year of 2016/17, when pupils' progress in reading was well below the national average. Teachers have made effective use of phonics strategies to help the weakest readers catch up. A consistent, systematic process is in place to ensure that pupils read regularly in school. Effective checks on pupils' reading ability mean that they choose appropriately challenging books from the school's book-band scheme.
- Leaders have introduced systems so that there is a consistency across years and classes in the programmes of learning which are taught. This is especially evident in mathematics, where all teachers follow the same scheme. In writing, teachers' planning is 'joined-up', so that pupils follow an agreed programme of learning across years and classes. This enables leaders to more accurately monitor the progress pupils make. It is also effective in enabling leaders to check on standards of teaching across the school as they have a consistent baseline from which to measure teachers'

practice.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They are eager to tell visitors about it and they wear their uniform proudly. In lessons, pupils are typically eager volunteers to answer teachers' questions.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils are educated effectively about how to keep themselves safe. They are knowledgeable, for example, about the risks of being online. External visitors, such as the police, hold assemblies to provide pupils with useful information. Pupils understand about bullying but say that it is rare in school and it would be sorted out quickly if it happened. All of the pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe in school.
- There is a broad range of ways in which leaders support pupils' emotional and physical well-being. Recent assemblies, for example, have focused on 'mental health first aid' and how to cope with stress. Pupils learn about first aid as part of the 'forest school' scheme and they participate in regular health and fitness activities as part of their physical education programme. Pupils are eager to do well and respond positively to teachers' guidance about how to improve their work. Typically, they can explain what they need to do to make their work more successful.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Throughout the inspection, standards of pupil behaviour were high for the very large majority of the time. In lessons and around the school site, pupils conduct themselves with strong levels of self-discipline. They are unfailingly polite and courteous to visitors. As a visitor, it is typical to be welcomed into the classroom by a 'learning ambassador', with a handshake and an explanation of what is currently taking place in the lesson.
- The rate of fixed-term exclusion has reduced substantially over time. The number of exclusions and the number of pupils involved, during the current academic year, are markedly lower than the previous two years. The rate of repeat fixed-term exclusion has similarly reduced substantially. At the same time, following the introduction of a new behaviour management system, the number of behaviour instances has fallen by a substantial margin.
- Very occasionally, there is a small amount of chattiness in class while the teacher is speaking, but this is typically dealt with by staff in line with the school's behaviour management system. Inspectors saw no 'naughty' behaviour during the inspection.
- While still worse than the national average, the rate of pupils' persistent absence has reduced by a notable margin compared with the same time last year. This is the result of leaders' concerted efforts to bring about better attendance at school for the

persistent non-attenders.

- The overall rate of pupils' absence exceeds the national average. However, the school has received a substantial number of 'in-year' transfers over the previous two years, often with particularly complex attendance needs. Additionally, the task of improving the rate of attendance is made harder by the number of term-time holidays taken by parents. Leaders have taken effective action to stabilise the rate of absence and prevent it from declining further. There is no complacency among leaders, however. They have a very clear understanding that despite their context, attendance needs to improve.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over time, pupils' progress has typically been below the national averages at the end of key stage 2, as has their attainment. While the progress of current pupils remains variable, there are signs of strengthening outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2017/18, pupils' progress in writing and mathematics was significantly below the national averages. It was also significantly below the national average in mathematics in 2016/17. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics combined at the end of key stage 2 in 2017/18 was below the national averages at both the expected and higher standards.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 in 2017/18 was significantly below the national averages in reading and mathematics. Progress for disadvantaged pupils has been significantly below the national averages in reading for the last three years and in mathematics for the last two years. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment was below the national averages in 2017/18 in reading and mathematics.
- Despite attainment being below average over time, there is strong improvement in pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress in reading in 2017/18 improved from 2016/17 and was in line with the national average. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND improved markedly in 2017/18 compared to the previous year.
- Current pupils make variable progress across a range of subjects and years. In reading, pupils make strong progress from their starting points as the result of leaders' actions to improve the teaching of reading. For example, pupils who join the school at the start of key stage 2 with the lowest scores in the key stage 1 phonics screening check quickly make up lost ground in their reading.
- At other times, progress is more variable. In English and mathematics, pupils generally make strong progress from their starting points. Sometimes, however, their progress is limited because they have gaps in their understanding which are not spotted or dealt with by teachers. As a result, some pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are not deep enough to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable.
- In the wider curriculum, pupils' progress is also inconsistent. In science, across all years, typically pupils do not make strong progress. To a large extent, this is because of the infrequency of science teaching. At times, especially in Year 6, pupils receive one lesson of science a month, which has led to pupils' superficial grasp of scientific

terminology and principles. Although classroom-based science lessons have been supplemented by science-based activities outside the classroom, these have not been effective in enabling pupils to make good progress.

- Pupils' progress across all years in history, geography and religious studies is variable. At times, pupils make strong gains in their learning as the result of effective teaching. Often, however, progress is limited because of the tasks set.
- Pupils with SEND make variable progress. Leaders have taken action to improve the attainment of pupils with SEND over time, but this is inconsistent. At times, pupils with SEND do not make the progress of which they are capable because teachers' planning to meet pupils' needs and the support pupils receive are not effective.

School details

Unique reference number	143381
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10087625

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Not applicable
Number of pupils on the school roll	242
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	Not applicable
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Sue Nunns
Headteacher	Samantha Travis
Telephone number	01977 643 187
Website	www.skacademy.org.uk/
Email address	headteacher@skacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Waterton Academy Trust, which it joined on 1 September 2016. Responsibility for governance of the school rests with the trustees of the trust, with some delegated authority placed with the Academy Standards Committee (ASC). The ASC is a joint local governing body in partnership with another trust school, Ackworth Mill Dam School.
- The school is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Since the school converted to academy status, the senior leadership team has changed substantially. The deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2017, as were the leader for literacy and the special educational needs coordinator. The assistant

headteacher role was changed to a revised set of responsibilities in September 2017.

- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is in the highest 20% of schools nationally.
- The proportions of pupils with an education, health and care plan and those in receipt of support for their SEND are in the highest 20% of schools nationally.
- The school serves a community which is in the highest 20% of schools nationally for deprivation.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a range of lessons across subjects and years, sometimes accompanied by the school's senior leaders. During these visits, inspectors talked to pupils and looked at work in their books.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work across several subjects, with different year groups and pupil abilities represented.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher. An inspector met with a group of governors. An inspector met the chief executive officer and a senior school improvement officer of the trust.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders with responsibility for: attendance; behaviour; provision for pupils with SEND; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; pupils' personal development and welfare; the pupil premium and sports premium funding; the curriculum; reading; pupils' progress and safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, drawn from across year groups. Inspectors also spoke informally with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with several members of staff including: middle leaders, administrative staff, teachers at different career points and teaching support staff.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, on corridors, in social spaces such as the dining room, the field, and at the start of the day when pupils were arriving at school.
- A wide range of documentation was examined. This included: leaders' self-evaluation and plans; minutes of governors' meetings and the headteacher's reports to governors; attendance, behaviour and exclusion information; records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching; logs and analysis of incidents of bullying and pupils' progress information. Leaders' recruitment vetting checks were scrutinised, along with safeguarding files. A review of the school carried out by the trust was also considered.
- Inspectors took into account the 17 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, together with 17 free-text parental comments. Also considered were the 12 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff. An inspector spoke with parents at 'drop-off' time at the start of the day.

Inspection team

Steve Shaw, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Natasha Greenough

Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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