

# Inspection of a good school: Ackworth Mill Dam School

Mill Gate, Ackworth, Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF7 7PH

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Inspection dates:

19 and 20 January 2022

## **Outcome**

Ackworth Mill Dam School continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The pupils at Ackworth Mill Dam spoke very positively about their school. They summed up their school in three words: 'fun, safe, well-organised'. Leaders have high expectations of pupils. The curriculum is ambitious. Pupils respond well to the challenges they are given.

Pupils feel safe in school. They said that if they have any problems, they can tell staff about them and that any issues are sorted out. Pupils particularly like the wide extra-curricular programme that the school offers, and are looking forward to its full return.

Pupils behave well. When pupils do not behave as they should, staff act calmly and confidently to manage behaviour. Pupils were clear that bullying is a rare event, but they said that when it does happen, staff deal with it well.

Parents were also positive about the school. The vast majority of those who completed the survey for this inspection would recommend the school to other parents. One parent said, 'I cannot recommend Mill Dam enough, the teachers keep me well informed of the progress my children make.' The parents who the inspector met with were just as positive.

The school has grown in recent years, which has required new buildings. Children in Nursery and Reception have recently moved into a new building. This has allowed staff to enhance the learning environment and curriculum.

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

Leaders have made reading a key priority. There is a well-organised programme to teach phonics. This starts in Nursery. Leaders support teachers to develop their expertise. Teachers read to pupils every day. There are initiatives to encourage good reading habits throughout the school. Younger pupils take home books to practise their reading. These books match their reading ability. They also take home storybooks for parents to read to

them. These are not organised as efficiently as they might be. This can mean that some pupils try to read books when they do not yet know all the sounds they would need.

The school has made improvements to the teaching of mathematics. The curriculum is carefully planned. Teachers encourage pupils to fully explain how they work things out. This develops deep understanding. Most pupils said that they enjoy mathematics and are confident about using their mathematical knowledge. Pupils' knowledge of times tables in key stage 2 is secure.

Pupils have enjoyed the topics that they have studied in history, and talked confidently about work they have done recently. The curriculum in history covers a wide range of topics. However, pupils do not recall the knowledge from previous topics well. For instance, when pupils were asked to explain why historical events happened, they had few examples to choose from and little knowledge.

The school has grown in recent years, which has required new buildings. Nursery and Reception children have recently moved into a new building. This has allowed leaders to revise the experience of children, and to develop a new curriculum in these new facilities. Leaders, alongside trust partners, intend to further develop the leadership of this unit. Their plans include further refinements of the curriculum, and the sharing of good practice across Nursery and Reception phases.

Leaders put a great deal of emphasis on pupils' personal development. Leaders have worked hard to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on extra-curricular activities. Programmes in sport and music have been maintained. Years 5 and 6 go swimming this year. This change ensures that no year groups miss out on this opportunity.

Pupils behave well. There is little disruption to learning. This is testament to how well the school is led by the headteacher. Staff are very positive about the support they receive, and have access to professional development provided by the school and the trust. The trust supports the work of the school well. Trust leaders and school governors have a good knowledge of the school. Governors provide good challenge for leaders.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that retaining knowledge in subjects in the wider curriculum, such as history, and developing leadership of the early years may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at this school. All of the correct employment checks are made. Leaders are tireless in their efforts to get extra support for pupils and their families, should this be needed. Staff receive regular training, and understand their safeguarding responsibilities. There is a full programme in place to teach pupils how to remain safe. This includes any risks that they may face online. Governors and the trust oversee this aspect of the school's work well.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Teachers do not ensure that pupils remember key knowledge in foundation subject topics. This means that pupils struggle to use their developing knowledge and understanding to make connections in their learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to review and recall key knowledge, to enable them to develop a deeper understanding of important subject concepts such as cause in history.
- Leaders know that the leadership of the early years is in its infancy. They have made this aspect of school a priority. In order to continue these positive developments, leaders and trust partners must further the skills of leaders in this new unit.

## **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 second section 8 inspection since we judged Ackworth Mill Dam Junior and Infant School to be good in November 2012.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144563
<b>Local authority</b>	Wakefield
<b>Inspection number</b>	10200632
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	219
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Steve Johnson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Samantha Thompson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.milldamschool.org">www.milldamschool.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Ackworth Mill Dam School converted to become an academy in 2017. When its predecessor school, Ackworth Mill Dam Junior and Infant School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged good overall.

## 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 leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders and members of staff. The inspector met with the chair of the local governing body and two governors. He met with the trust chief executive officer, and the trust standards officer.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, and at breaktime and lunchtime. He gathered pupils' views from formal and informal discussions.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plan and safeguarding information.

- The inspector met parents and took account of 31 responses to Ofsted's parent questionnaire, Parent View. The inspector looked in depth at the following subjects: reading, mathematics and history. In doing this, he visited all classes in the school and reviewed pupils' work. The inspector spoke to pupils about their work and listened to them read.

### **Inspection team**

Andrew Cummings, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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