

Cowlersley Primary School

Main Avenue, Cowlersley, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD4 5US

Inspection dates

23–24 January 2019

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

- Over time, leaders and governors have not ensured that the quality of education is good. As a result, pupil achievement over the last three years has been too low.
- There has been a legacy of poor teaching, which means that although current teaching is improving, the quality of teaching is not consistently good.
- Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. However, some pupils' knowledge of fundamental British values is limited.
- In the early years, sometimes, the types of activities and the questions asked by adults do not provide enough level of challenge for children, especially in writing.
- Despite improvements in the teaching of reading comprehension, pupils do not always have the skills to infer meaning from the text.
- A lack of focus in the teaching of phonics, spelling and vocabulary in the past has led to gaps in pupils' knowledge. This hinders progress in their written work.
- Middle leaders are beginning to have a better understanding of how to lead improvements in their subjects, however they are not yet evaluating the impact of their actions.
- A small minority of pupils demonstrate challenging behaviour. Some staff and leaders do not monitor this effectively.
- Pupils' attendance has risen and is now closer to the national average. However, the number of pupils who regularly miss school is high.

The school has the following strengths

- New leaders are quickly reversing the historic decline in pupils' achievement. They are bringing back much-welcome stability to the school.
- Recent improvements in the quality of teaching are beginning to show early signs of improved outcomes for pupils.
- Improvements to the teaching of reading and writing are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils say they feel safe in school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
 - continue to develop inference and understanding of vocabulary when teaching reading
 - ensure pupils apply their phonics to ensure correct spelling
 - give pupils more opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English
 - continue to identify gaps in learning and ensure these are addressed.

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders check that systems put in place to improve pupils' attendance are effective in order to reduce the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school
 - subject leaders have the skills, knowledge and support to be able to improve the quality of teaching in their own subjects.

- Improve the early years provision by ensuring that:
 - leadership is in place to drive the improvements
 - teachers develop meaningful opportunities for outdoor learning and mark-making
 - teachers develop learning by asking questions that challenge children.

- Improve the school's approach to managing behaviour by ensuring that:
 - leaders manage extreme behaviour using planned interventions or support
 - leaders closely analyse incidents of behaviour to ensure patterns and triggers are identified
 - staff foster an appreciation of British values and respect for difference.

- Improve the school's curriculum by ensuring that learning is well thought out and develops pupils' knowledge skills and understanding.

- Reduce the number of exclusions and persistent absentees further.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, there have been considerable changes in staffing, including at a senior level. A period of instability led to a decline in standards in 2018. The appointment of the executive headteacher has brought about much-needed stability, and staff morale is improving. She is supported well by the newly appointed head of school. Governors and staff share her drive to improve standards in the school quickly and raise expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Leaders' honest and accurate evaluation has identified the key priorities for improvement. Leaders' detailed action plan shows that appropriate strategies are in place to bring about much-needed change. Despite early signs of improvement, it is too soon to measure the impact of the actions on outcomes for pupils. However, evidence in books does show that staff now have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- In the past, support from the multi-academy trust was not effective enough to address inadequate outcomes effectively. However, recent combined efforts of senior leaders, governors and the Share Multi-Academy Trust are having a positive impact on school improvement. Inspection evidence confirms that standards are rising after a period of decline; teaching is improving well across the school; pupils who had previously underachieved are beginning to catch up on lost ground and attendance rates are rising.
- Subject leaders are beginning to lead improvements in their subjects. However, not all subject leaders have a clear grasp of how well pupils are currently doing. This is due to a lack of evaluation of the impact of their work. This is limiting their ability to bring about the changes needed in some subjects. The headteacher has quickly put in place training to support the development of subject leadership. There are early signs that leaders of reading and mathematics are beginning to make a difference to pupils' outcomes in their subject areas.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) ensures that those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly. These pupils generally receive appropriate help and support.
- Leaders are beginning to use additional funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. As a result, the differences in the progress made by this group of pupils and other pupils nationally is beginning to diminish.
- The leader responsible for the physical education (PE) and sport premium has only recently taken full responsibility for this area. Although her plans to develop pupils' health and physical activity are at an early stage of development, the use of the funding has already led to pupils' increased participation in a wider range of sporting activities such as yoga, softball and high-intensity interval training (HIIT). The leader ensures teachers receive training and support to improve their understanding of how to teach these PE skills. Consequently, pupils' health and physical activity is starting to improve across the school.

- Leaders have plans in place to improve the wider curriculum, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and emotional development. Pupils have opportunities to enhance their learning through enrichment activities such as trips and visits. However, the implementation of these plans is at a very early stage so the impact of them on pupils' development is yet to be seen. The weaknesses in the teaching of the wider curriculum mean that pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is not fully developed.

Governance of the school

- Until recently, the trust board did not hold school leaders to account for the achievement of pupils. Following a restructure of governance and the trust board, the governing body is becoming more effective and is now better able to hold leaders to account. They now have an improved understanding of the need to take appropriate action promptly when necessary. Governors can now demonstrate they have the capacity to support school leaders on their journey to good.
- Under the new leadership of the school, the governors have gained a more comprehensive understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas for further improvement. They share leaders' high expectations and are proud to be part of the school and are committed to embedding the drive for higher standards.
- Governors are aware of how the additional funding the school receives is used. They ask questions to check that the funding is improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- Governors check that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Records of behaviour logs are detailed. However, leaders responsible for the management of behaviour do not monitor incidents well enough and therefore can not identify patterns or triggers to extreme behaviour.
- All staff know their responsibilities in respect of safeguarding. Processes are clear and any concerns are followed up immediately. There is extensive and ongoing safeguarding training for all staff.
- The staff have been trained to keep children safe and are aware of the school's arrangements for reporting concerns. For example, staff have undertaken first-aid training, including paediatric first aid for early years children. Leaders, staff and governors are vigilant in protecting children from radicalisation, extremism and child exploitation.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. Leaders and staff plan regular learning experiences for pupils, so that they are alert to danger and know how to respond. Pupils speak with confidence about how to keep safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Recent actions, taken by new school leaders, are improving the quality of teaching, learning and provision. However, this has taken too long and has contributed to some slow progress and disruptive behaviour of pupils over time.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good enough across the school. Where it is strong, teachers use effective questioning to check what pupils know and use this information to provide further support or challenge to move pupils' learning forward quickly. Where learning is not as effective, opportunities are missed to address misconceptions in learning.
- Since September 2018, there has been a focus on developing reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers now have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils have more opportunities to write at length; handwriting and presentation is stronger, and pupils are beginning to develop fluency in mathematics.
- The quality of the teaching of reading is starting to improve. Leaders have provided staff with training to help them to teach reading effectively. For example, staff now use more challenging whole-class texts. This enables pupils to have access to a range of challenging and inspirational books. However, due to wide gaps in some pupils' knowledge, pupils are unable to understand more complex vocabulary and have difficulty inferring meaning from texts.
- Staff training and support from the trust is beginning to address the inconsistencies in teaching. For example, more recently, pupils have enjoyed more opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge and develop their reasoning skills.
- Pupils' books, across the wider curriculum, show that there is a lack of progression in the sequence of learning and lessons do not build on prior knowledge.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are effective in promoting positive relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils generally show interest in learning, including their homework, and show pride in their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Although most pupils say they feel safe, some pupils say that there is an issue with behaviour in the playground. Pupils say that behaviour deteriorates during playtimes and lunch time.
- Pupils comment that there are regularly incidents of prejudicial name-calling using words such as 'gay', although they did say they did not know what it meant. Pupils say that teachers immediately address this inappropriate use of language. However, name-calling still persists.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) needs development. The wider curriculum does not provide for pupils to develop fully a deep understanding

of British values and SMSC. Pupils' understanding of values, such as respect or valuing differences in others, is at times lacking.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Attendance has improved for all pupils, especially for disadvantaged pupils, because the school has started a breakfast club to encourage pupils to start school on time. Although rates of absence are broadly average, rates of persistent absence are high. Leaders have not acted swiftly enough to address this.
- Pupils are polite and thoughtful when communicating with visitors. They are also respectful to adults they meet throughout the school day.
- Behaviour records are maintained, but are not robust enough. Analysis of any patterns around behaviour incidents is not sharply evaluated and subsequent follow-up actions are unclear. Leaders accept that recording needs to improve and are committed to ensuring this.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes, at the end of key stage 2, declined significantly in 2018 so that the proportion of pupils that attained the expected standard was significantly below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In key stage 1, although attainment has improved over time, there are still too few pupils meeting expected standards. Pupils' work, and school progress and attainment information, suggest that more pupils should reach expected standards at the end of key stage 1 this year in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The stronger phonics teaching is leading to more positive outcomes. In 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was close to national average.
- Pupils' work in their books shows that, since September 2018, pupils are making stronger progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes the most able and disadvantaged pupils. Support is available for all pupils who need it, with higher expectations for all pupils.
- However, due to a legacy of underachievement and low expectations, gaps in pupils learning remain. This is evident in pupils' writing, where spelling errors are common and vocabulary use is limited. Teachers are aware of this and work is taking place to ensure pupils catch up rapidly.
- Progress of disadvantaged pupils is beginning to accelerate and is now similar to that of their peers, but not yet in line with other pupils nationally.
- Work in pupils' books demonstrates that pupils learn about subjects such as geography, history and science. However, while curriculum plans are in place, there is no progression to pupils' learning.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Most children start school with skills and abilities that are below those expected for their age, particularly in language and communication. There is some good practice that is raising standards, but this is not yet consistent or sustained enough across the early years. As a result, the teaching requires improvement.
- Development of early years provision has stalled due to the lack of leader. Senior leaders are working closely with support from the trust. However, due to lack of time and capacity, improvements are not as quick as they could be. Leaders are aware of this and appointing a leader for early years is a priority.
- There are signs of improvement, which are reflected in the rise in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. Assessments are regular and help to monitor how well each individual child is doing, as well as providing parents with evidence of their children's progress and development.
- Teachers in the early years identify children's barriers to learning and ensure that children benefit from bespoke support. For example, some children who are new to English benefit from tailored support with their speech and language. Teachers and adults know the children's starting points well. They are now taking these into account when planning suitable activities for the children. However, opportunities to write and aspects of the environment, including the outside, are not yet fully adapted to reflect particular needs of different children. This reduces the overall impact of the learning.
- Relationships between adults and children are positive. Children behave well in the early years. Children benefit from clear and well-established routines and a calm, bright learning environment. They enjoy a range of activities to develop their motor skills as well as opportunities to develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics. However, opportunities are missed to encourage children to mark-make independently.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective. Staff have had appropriate safeguarding training. They are aware of the procedures that are in place to report any welfare concerns they have about a child.
- The school is beginning to work successfully with parents, although leaders recognise this is something they would like to continue to develop.
- The outdoor area has started to develop opportunities to enrich children's learning, however, the day to day continuous learning provision, sometimes, does not offer sufficiently challenging learning opportunities. This means that, sometimes, children do not experience the same quality of learning opportunities as in the classroom. Senior leaders have plans in place to address this issue.

School details

Unique reference number	142574
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10059025

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	161
Appropriate authority	Share Academy Trust
CEO	John McNally
Head of School	Nicola Crossley
Telephone number	01484508170
Website	www.cowlersleyprimaryschool.org.uk
Email address	head@cowlersleyprimaryschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The head of school took up post in January 2019. The executive headteacher was appointed in September 2018.
- The school joined Share Academy Trust in February 2016.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEND is above average, as is the proportion of disadvantaged pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language, is average.
- Share Academy Trust delegates responsibility for some aspects of governance to a local governing board.
- The school operates a breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning. A number of these visits were carried out jointly with the head of school and executive headteacher.
- Discussions were held with school leaders, staff, members of the governing board including the chair of governors and the chair of the trust board and the CEO of Share Academy Trust.
- Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation of its own performance, its improvement plan, a number of key school policies and minutes of governing body meetings.
- They also considered a range of documentation, including that relating to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils throughout the inspection to seek their views and considered their 19 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey. They also listened to a selection of them read and reviewed a sample of their work.
- The inspection appraised the views of staff through their 4 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents throughout the inspection and took account of 1 free-text comment in responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Eve Morris, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mary Lanovy-Taylor

Ofsted Inspector

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