

Sowerby Community Primary School

Topcliffe Road, Sowerby, Thirsk, North Yorkshire, YO7 1RX

Inspection dates 9–10 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The dedicated headteacher has a strong vision for a caring, inclusive school. She has a drive for continual improvement and has created an effective team of skilled leaders.
- Governors provide committed service to the school underlined by regular visits and frequent communication with staff. They use their detailed knowledge, skills and experience to improve teaching and raise achievement.
- The headteacher provides excellent pastoral care and unwavering support for the well-being of pupils and their families. Staff are quick to follow her example so that pupils feel extremely safe.
- Children are always polite and their behaviour is good.
- Teaching is effective staff know individual pupils well and plan effectively to support their different abilities.
- Early years provision is good and has considerably improved since the last inspection. Children have a successful start in the Reception class and make good progress. They make the most of exciting learning opportunities indoors and in the inspiring outdoor environment.
- Progress through Key Stages 1 and 2 is good. Attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not consistently make it clear to pupils how to improve. Opportunities are not provided for pupils to respond to advice.
- Pupils do not always make rapid progress in spelling, grammar, punctuation nor in the presentation of their work.
- Leaders do not always make the best use of information about pupils' progress when checking on the achievement of different groups of pupils and evaluating teachers' performance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and several members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body. They also spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including the school development plan, the school's data relating to pupils' progress and the school's safeguarding documentation.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, in assembly, during lunchtimes and in the playground. They listened to pupils from Year 6 and Year 2 reading.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in classrooms and in small groups led by teaching assistants. Two sessions were jointly observed by inspectors and senior leaders. Inspectors observed the feedback given to teachers following lesson observations led by senior leaders.
- Inspectors talked to several parents about their views of the school and studied the 26 responses from the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- Twenty-one staff questionnaires were analysed.

Inspection team

Anne Humble, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alison Thomson	Additional Inspector
Grame Clarke	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sowerby Community Primary School is an average sized primary school.
- Almost of pupils are of White British heritage. A very small minority speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with a disability or who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- There is a lower than average proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and eligible for support through the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The size of year groups varies considerably, as does the range of ability within each group.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There is one Reception class in the early years and children attend on a full-time basis.
- The school has an Inclusion Quality Mark and a Gold Kitemark for sport.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and increase pupils' progress even further by:
 - focussing on spelling, grammar, punctuation and presentation of work throughout lessons and when marking pupils' work
 - embedding the current marking policy so that it is consistently used by all teachers to give direct and precise pointers for improvement and ensuring pupils have opportunities to act upon the advice given.
- Improve leadership and management so that any potential underachievement for groups of pupils is promptly addressed by:
 - focussing upon the learning and progress made by groups of pupils when giving feedback to teachers about their performance
 - streamlining the data collected about pupils' progress in order to gain a succinct overview of the progress made by groups of pupils and using this information more frequently to raise standards even further.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The industrious headteacher promotes a strong drive for the school's continued improvement. Evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate and actions are in place to resolve any weaker aspects. Staff all support changes and the headteacher has forged a cohesive team, ensuring the school is well placed to move forward.
- Senior and middle leaders carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. Together, they evaluate the quality of teaching by observing teaching, analysing data, scrutinising the work in pupils' books and coaching staff to improve. They create highly-detailed plans for improvement in their subjects. Their success has led to a rise in pupils' standards.
- Leaders ensure good achievement for pupils and are ambitious to increase standards even further. They follow school procedures scrupulously to collect and collate detailed information from assessments and know individual pupils' needs particularly well. However, the recording systems do not always provide succinct and easily accessible information about the progress made by different groups. This hampers leaders' ability to focus sharply on further improving the progress made by groups of pupils. Similarly, the weaker aspects in writing skills were not identified promptly enough to bring about improvement in the 2014 tests.
- The headteacher and senior leaders foster a culture which promotes improvements to teaching. Staff are keen to reflect upon how to make their teaching the best it can be. Leaders make effective use of information from their evaluations to support teachers' development through training matched closely to their needs. The identified weakness in marking has led to a new policy but as yet, this is not consistently applied by all staff.
- The performance of all staff is managed well, including that of support staff. Staff have challenging targets linked to the progress made by pupils in their learning or behaviour. However, there is not always a sharp enough target for teachers linked to narrowing gaps in achievement for different groups of pupils. There is a clear link between teachers' performance and their salary progression.
- The exciting and well-planned curriculum has recently been reviewed in the light of the new National Curriculum and prepares children well for life in modern Britain. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic about learning through imaginative topics, which effectively support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They learn to cooperate together in many subjects, understanding and empathy for others is fostered and pupils' creativity flourishes. This is evidenced in an immaculate display of the First World War Remembrance project linked to poppies, which proudly takes prominence in the main entrance hall. Parents commented, 'There's something magical that they put into the children here that makes them such well-rounded individuals.'
- Leaders consistently promote equality of opportunity. Each child is valued and nurtured as an individual and the excellent care provided by staff is appreciated by the pupils who are respectful and courteous in return. Good behaviour is celebrated and underpinned by the strong trusting relationships within the school.
- The primary school sports funding is used most effectively to encourage pupils to have a love of physical activity and an interest in different sports. Swimming is a major focus of the school's curriculum and the vast majority of pupils are very competent swimmers by the time they leave the school. Teachers have observed specialist coaching and so improved their teaching. The school's use of video to improve pupils' sports performance is recognised locally as an example of excellence. A wide range of activities is now offered after school to widen pupils' sporting experiences.
- The pupil premium is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils in the school. This is particularly successful in teaching reading, where pupils receive additional support from highly-skilled teaching assistants in groups and individually. As a result, the school is narrowing the gap in attainment between these pupils and others nationally.
- Staff forge valuable links with parents, helping them to support their children's learning at home. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and specifically appreciate the way the headteacher allocates time to the whole family's well-being, as exemplified in this quote, 'The headteacher is lovely and every single teacher is too. The school is caring and friendly, making sure everything goes well for the family.'
- The school receives 'light touch' support from the local authority and praises the training received. This support has helped to improve the teaching of phonics (matching letters and the sounds they make) and English.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to their roles within school and are kept extremely well informed. They have wide-ranging skills and expertise from their own professional backgrounds that are utilised exceptionally

well to support the school and challenge leaders appropriately. They have strong links with subject leaders and make regular visits to monitor the effectiveness of the school's performance, including the quality of teaching.

- Governors scrutinise data perceptively to monitor pupils' progress and hold teachers to account. They manage finances well, are knowledgeable about performance management and carefully check that teachers' salary increases link to their performance. Governors have a good grasp of how the pupil premium funding is used to support eligible pupils to achieve as well as other pupils in the school.
- Governors have ensured that safeguarding has continually improved and that safeguarding procedures meet requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behave well in classrooms and their conduct around school is impressive. They walk quietly and sensibly to access all areas, open doors for one another and stand aside to let adults pass. Pupils are friendly and polite towards others. They display good manners in the dining room and when working in their classrooms, frequently demonstrating their ability to wait patiently and take turns.
- Teachers set high expectations for pupils to pay attention and listen well. They use praise effectively to celebrate exceptional conduct and apply the behaviour policies consistently. As a result, low-level disruption is rare.
- Pupils usually concentrate carefully in lessons and attend closely to the instructions and guidance provided by adults. In some classrooms, behaviour is very good and leads to rapid progress when pupils are fully inspired and challenged. This was particularly evident in a Year 1 class where pupils cooperated extremely well to use their knowledge of fractions to solve problems logically.
- Pupils enjoy learning and like coming to school. Consequently, attendance is consistently above the national average. Staff work closely with parents if their family circumstances lead to pupils' absence from school and quickly offer support that helps to reinstates regular attendance.
- Parents and pupils agree that behaviour is good. The vast majority of staff say that behaviour is good and well managed. Pupils are keen to learn and usually try their best. At times, teachers do not expect or promote the very best of standards in handwriting, so pupils do not take as much pride in their presentation as they should.
- There have been no exclusions or racist incidents for several years. The school has a calm, harmonious atmosphere and in the playground, children play well together. Older pupils apply to work as playground leaders to support pupils who find it difficult to make friends and they maturely demonstrate their responsibility in this role.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- The headteacher provides most effective leadership of pupils' welfare and ensures pupils feel extremely safe in school. Staff follow her example to look after pupils in an exemplary manner.
- Parents overwhelmingly agree that their children are well looked after and feel safe in school. Pupils echo this, explaining that they are kept very safe and secure, not just because of the physical features of the environment but also because of caring staff.
- Record keeping is meticulous so that any incident is swiftly and thoroughly investigated with steps put in place to prevent any future recurrence. All staff receive regular training to maintain the school's stringent focus on safety. They receive regular training, for example, in child protection, first aid and the administration of medication.
- Pupils clearly explain how to keep themselves safe inside and outside school. They have produced e-safety posters to promote the awareness of safety when using the internet and have designed road signs that are used locally to calm and slow down traffic around the school.
- Bullying is uncommon in the school; pupils are confident that teachers would deal with it effectively if it happened, as they do with any misbehaviour. Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take. They show empathy for others and know how racist and homophobic bullying can cause harm, but they confidently explain that it does not happen at their school.
- Governors use their expertise to provide exceptional support and pupils' safety is paramount in the life of the school and their work in this area is excellent.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers know all of their pupils extremely well and relationships are positive leading to a good ethos for learning.
- Teachers make sure that pupils know what they are expected to achieve within the time available and regularly check pupils' understanding with good questioning to draw out their knowledge and also help to resolve any misconceptions. Examples of excellent work are used as demonstration to other pupils so that they know what is expected and how to improve their own work.
- Work is clearly targeted at the right level to meet pupils' needs. This was evident in a mathematics lesson. Due to careful planning, higher ability pupils tackled a challenging mathematics puzzle applying excellent determination and those pupils with special educational needs concentrated very well to complete easier counting tasks pitched perfectly to their ability.
- Reading is taught well so pupils achieve above average standards by the time they leave the school. The teaching of phonics is particularly strong in Key Stage 1 where leaders hold demonstration lessons for other staff in the school and from the wider local area.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Teachers have good subject knowledge and share this well with pupils. They use questions effectively and insist on pupils explaining their methods of calculations. As a result, pupils learn from each other and gain an insight into how to apply their skills to solve problems.
- Although aspects of writing are taught well and pupils gain in confidence to write imaginatively and in different styles their basic skills are not taught as thoroughly. Teachers do not always insist on the very highest standards of presentation and accuracy in grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Good quality marking is evident in pupils' books. Teachers spend a lot of time regularly pointing out pupils' strengths and areas for improvement. However, this does not lead to outstanding progress as yet because pupils are not in the habit of responding to the advice teachers give to them, and at times the advice given is not precise enough. Pupils do not have time to respond to their teachers' pointers for improvement.
- A rich curriculum excites pupils' learning across all subjects and teachers use their secure subject knowledge imaginatively to enthuse pupils. Displays around the school exemplify the interesting learning that takes place, especially in the visual and performing arts. This is particularly effective in the 'Spirited Arts' project which promotes pupils' understanding of many cultures by exploring and producing artwork. Older pupils thoroughly enjoy rehearsing the school production of 'The Snow Queen', singing proudly and with vigour

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils begin Year 1 with skills that are broadly average for their age. Evidence from pupils' work demonstrates that pupils in Key Stage 1 currently make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is now improving and is above average overall.
- Effective teaching of phonics has helped to raise pupils' attainment in the screening check in Year 1, which is now broadly in line with the national average.
- Progress overall is good in Key Stage 2. The results of the 2014 tests showed the attainment of pupils in Year 6 was above average in reading, writing and mathematics, exemplifying the good progress made by this group of pupils. Current data shows pupils have sustained these standards.
- Although attainment in writing is above average, the results in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling tests, show that pupils' attainment was below other pupils nationally at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014. This has been a focus for improvement and early indications are that pupils are applying these skills more accurately in their writing, but this is not yet consistent in all classes.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, which has been consistently above the national average for the past three years. Pupils read confidently for pleasure and research.
- In mathematics, many pupils are now working above national expectations, because of the improvements made to the quality of teaching in this subject. Pupils apply their skills well to solve problems and many are enthusiastic about learning mathematics and say that it is their favourite subject.
- Pupils who have disabilities and those with special educational needs make good progress because their needs are fully met by structured support from teachers and teaching assistants. They achieve particularly well in mathematics where they reach standards above those attained nationally by pupils who have special educational needs.

- In previous years, the most able pupils did not always reach the standards expected of them at the end of Key Stage 2 in mathematics and writing. Current work in pupils' books and other inspection evidence shows that the most able pupils are set challenging work and make good progress.
- In 2014, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 was too small for an analysis of the test results at the end of Year 6 to be reliable. Across the school currently, disadvantaged pupils are making good progress from their different starting points. Evidence of this is provided in the school's own tracking data and corroborated by the work in pupils' books. School is closing any gaps in attainment for this group of pupils

The early years provision

is good

- The early years team have addressed all the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. Children start school with a range of different skills and knowledge and overall attainment is below that typical for their age. A minority of children have special educational needs and are supported well through education and health care plans. The majority of children have achieved a good level of development over the past two years and are well prepared for their transition to Year 1. Their progress and attainment is good and improving over time and some children make progress better than this.
- Teaching is good. Teachers plan effectively to meet the needs of all of the children in their care. Exciting and stimulating activities inside and outdoors engage children in learning and are particularly effective when working with small groups of children in guided reading and phonics. Staff are highly trained in teaching young children. They use their knowledge very well to support different groups of children, matching activities carefully to different needs and abilities. Staff provide exciting equipment, such as the 'mud kitchen' that allows the exploration of capacity outdoors and 'magic wands' that are used to practise writing letters in the air.
- Staff offer lots of opportunities for parents to become involved in their children's learning. They run sessions regularly to allow parents to visit and see how well their children learn. Such as the 'Dough Gym Stay and Play' where parents watched how to use dough at home to help children develop their finger strength and fine motor skills. Parents frequently add comments about their children's learning in their children's journals.
- Leadership and management of the early years are good. The leader supports teaching staff well and they form a strong, cohesive team. The leader regularly observes teaching and provides detailed feedback and good suggestions to improve teaching. Staff have implemented previous suggestions made by their team leader and coaching has helped to improve the teaching of phonics in this phase.
- Assessments are regularly made and recorded in children's individual learning journeys. These are moderated within the team and with staff from local schools and nurseries. Excellent partnerships are evident between the staff and out-of-school clubs attended by the early years children. Information from these clubs is included in children's Reception records to give a fuller picture of each child's educational experiences. Transition arrangements are strong and underpinned by the sharing of detailed knowledge about the children before they start Year 1.
- Behaviour and safety of children is outstanding. Staff give regular reminders to advise children how to keep themselves safe and their conduct in the classroom is exceptional. This was seen when children very sensibly tidied away their toys to prepare for the next teaching session, taking on responsibilities maturely with very little support needed from adults

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	121341
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	449174

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	266
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Valentine
Headteacher	Jean Yendall
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2010
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