

Wakefield Pathways School

Poplar Avenue, Townville, Castleford, West Yorkshire WF10 3QJ

Inspection dates 8–9 June 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher set a clear vision for the school's improvement. She has been tenacious in pursuing this and has successfully led the many changes required to raise the quality of provision for pupils' learning and personal development from inadequate to good.
- Through rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching, the headteacher identified the improvements needed. Both training for all staff and targeted support for individuals have been effective in securing good teaching.
- Pupils make good progress towards their very challenging targets because teaching meets their individual needs well. Teachers assess pupils' progress accurately and plan lessons that enable pupils to develop their skills and understanding in small steps.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning because teachers deliver the range of curriculum subjects through engaging topics. The attractive classroom environments support learning well, and pupils are proud to see their work displayed.
- The management of pupils' behaviour is good. Staff have a thorough understanding of pupils' individual needs and help them to regulate their own behaviours. The school has good systems to support pupils in making the right choices.
- Children in the Reception class make good progress because activities and resources are closely tailored to their learning and social needs.
- The interim executive board (IEB) has kept a sharp watch on the school's progress and challenged the headteacher robustly to ensure that improvement is secure.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although the quality of teaching is good overall, on occasion there are inconsistencies that reduce the impact on pupils' learning.
- Middle leaders do not have the full range of skills needed to take complete responsibility for driving developments in their subjects.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is never less than good and much is outstanding.
- Extend the skills of middle leaders so that they can use the full range of information available, including information about pupils' progress, to drive improvements in their subjects as effectively as possible.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has been resolute in fulfilling her aims to ensure that the school meets pupils' both social and academic needs so that they are as well equipped as possible for the next stage of their life. She has not wavered in her high expectations and has shown determination on the journey from inadequate to good.
- The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's performance, drawn from detailed monitoring of classroom practice and regular reviews of pupils' progress towards their very challenging targets. Consequently, planning for developments has been realistic and appropriately staged.
- Performance management is used effectively to drive improvements in teaching and learning. The school's thorough system for regularly monitoring the quality and impact of teaching has resulted in considerable improvements. The headteacher's fine-tuned analysis of strengths and weaknesses leads to relevant training for all staff and accurately targeted coaching for individual teachers.
- The headteacher has successfully developed leadership at other levels in a short period and this has extended the school's capacity for improvement markedly. Middle leaders benefit from their membership of the leadership team; this has given them an understanding of the school's strategic direction. They have clear roles which they have embraced with drive and enthusiasm. They welcome their responsibilities and the accountability which goes with these. The developments they are leading have resulted in improvements to teaching, the curriculum and pupils' progress. However, there are some areas, such as the use of the school's assessment information to drive improvement in their subjects, where the skills of middle leaders are not fully developed.
- The curriculum has improved and, although it is work-in-progress, is much richer than at the time of the previous inspection. There is a much greater emphasis on learning, with therapeutic provision for pupils who need this in order to learn as well as they can. This has had a very positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- Learning is designed around topics which help pupils to make connections that assist their understanding. Attractive learning environments, which offer a range of sensory experiences, both support and celebrate pupils' learning, providing constant reminders of what is being learned and opportunities to reinforce this. Occasional themed days that focus intensively on particular curriculum areas, such as writing, mathematics and science, have proved successful. For instance, pupils enjoyed working with a poet to create their own poems and planting sunflowers and measuring their growth.
- The establishment of continuous provision is enhancing pupils' progress because learning time is extended for individuals. This is in place fully in the Reception class and key stage 1 and developing in key stage 2. Pupils are able to learn independently, make choices, practise their basic skills and benefit from sensory experiences. This has a positive impact on their behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- The range of activities offered at lunchtime builds well on continuous provision. Good use is made of the well-equipped outdoor spaces to offer a broad range of activities such as art, bubbles and adventure play for pupils to choose from.
- The physical education and sports funding for primary schools is used well to extend the range of experiences for pupils. Coaches provide regular specialised sessions in dance, rugby and basketball. Pupils learn to swim at the local pool and have the opportunity to go bowling. Year 6 pupils try outward bound activities, such as canoeing, during their three-day residential visit. All this ensures provision for pupils' physical development is good.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively so that there is no difference between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and others. Additional staffing helps with the management of some pupils' behaviour so that they are better placed to learn, which in turn has a positive impact on the learning of their classmates. It reflects the school's drive for equality of opportunity. Pupil premium funding is also used to good effect to ensure that contacts with parents can be sustained where support is needed with pupils' welfare and attendance.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. At the end of each day, pupils reflect on their learning; in the Reception class, children enjoy doing this while looking at video clips of their activities. Weekly assemblies focusing on the achievement ladder and tree in the school hall help to extend pupils' engagement with others and their sense of belonging through class awards, as well as individual recognition. Pupils experience their own community through visits to the local church, sports centre, library and shops. Through topics, they encounter key aspects of British values, for instance through

the Queen's 90th birthday celebrations, as well as looking further afield, including at world faiths. This wider perspective is reinforced through fundraising linked to national campaigns such as Children in Need.

- The local authority has provided a range of effective support for the school, initially providing expertise in safeguarding and checking on this repeatedly. Regular reviews have provided sharp evaluations of the school's progress and helped to keep the school on track.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The IEB is ambitious for the school; members have met frequently and been assiduous in checking on the school's progress. They have challenged the headteacher rigorously to ensure that the school is on track and supported her in implementing the improvements needed. They have worked effectively alongside the local authority in conducting termly reviews of the school's progress and, when they have had particular concerns, have requested evaluations of specific aspects of the school's work.
 - The chair of the IEB worked with the business manager to establish a thorough, manageable system for regular checking on the safety of the premises. Through these processes, together with frequent visits to see the school at work, members have come to know the school very well. As a result, the IEB has made a strong contribution to the school's improvement.
 - The chair of the IEB has been working with the governing body of Kingsland School to prepare for the amalgamation and ensure that the transition is managed smoothly and equitably.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection so leaders and staff are now keenly aware of how to keep pupils safe. They are well trained to recognise and act upon any signs of harm or risk to children. They take prompt action to address any concerns and work effectively with other agencies to ensure pupils' welfare. Risk assessments for classrooms, activities and pupils are in place. Staff are alert to risks for individuals whether these are medical or, for example, the likelihood of swallowing dangerous items. Leaders and governors conduct rigorous checks on the suitability of staff to work with children before allowing them to take up their posts. A system for regular, detailed checks on health and safety throughout the school has been effective in minimising risks and ensuring that any repairs are carried out promptly. All staff have received appropriate training on preventing radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching is good overall and some teaching has an outstanding impact on learning. There are occasional variations when the impact of teaching is weaker, largely because more recently appointed teachers are developing their knowledge of pupils' needs. The headteacher is supporting this well so the quality of teaching is improving strongly.
- Lessons are carefully planned so that tasks match the needs of individual pupils. Practical equipment and activities provide the concrete support pupils require to develop their understanding. For example, in a key stage 2 science lesson, pupils applied the scientific method of predicting, testing and recording their results as they placed a range of objects in water to see which would float or sink.
- Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. They know pupils well and are skilful at smoothly reengaging them with learning if they are struggling to maintain their attention. They model activities clearly so pupils can participate as independently as possible.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils have risen and there is a good level of challenge for the most able, for example to write independently, drawing on their own experiences.
- A number of successful strategies have been put in place to improve pupils' literacy and communication skills. Every classroom has a reading tree, designed to reflect the book pupils are currently reading together, for instance 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Key words are displayed and attractive decorations help to capture pupils' interest. Pupils read with an adult each day and their progress is carefully noted. The school has increased its reading resources better to meet pupils' needs and invested in an online service so that parents can read books at the right level with their children at home.
- Pupils' skills in reading are supported by daily phonics (letters and the sounds they make) sessions taught in groups where pupils are of similar abilities. Quick-fire activities and games engage pupils well with letters and sounds so they make good progress. Good use is made of mirrors so that pupils can see how they make the sounds.
- Pupils' communication and recall of a topic are improved by teachers' use of call and response songs which reiterate some key elements of the topic. Pupils enjoy repetition of the songs.

- Pupils' mathematical skills are developed effectively. Although there are occasional opportunities for pupils to apply their skills, for instance through measuring ingredients when following recipes, these are more limited than other aspects of mathematics teaching.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff know pupils very well and have their welfare at heart. They are alert to pupils' risky behaviours. All staff are trained in basic first aid and some have more specialised training so they can respond rapidly to pupils' particular medical needs.
- Pupils learn about risks and how to stay safe. Some pupils were able to explain to inspectors how to stay safe online. In food technology, pupils grasped the routine which kept them away from the hot oven. The pupils who were spoken to say that they feel safe in school and are confident of help from adults when they need it. Their view was echoed by the parents who were spoken to during the inspection.
- A range of physical therapies are provided for those pupils who can benefit from them. In addition, some experiences such as electronic music-making are provided to help meet pupils' sensory needs.
- Recent improvements to lunchtime arrangements make a positive contribution to pupils' social development because pupils have to share play equipment and take turns. Pupils can choose for themselves from a good range of activities such as art, bubbles and football. When playing football, pupils have to follow the rules, enforced by one of their peers as the referee – armed with a whistle and red and yellow cards!
- Pupils experience democracy at work through the school council. Members seek their views and recently organised a vote to decide where to go for the end-of-year outing. Some pupils are coming to terms with the impact of a vote which did not go the way they wanted.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved because they are more engaged by learning through topics and because tasks are much more closely matched to their abilities than they were in the past. There has been a substantial reduction in the use of restraint and no pupils have been excluded this year. Better behaviour is contributing positively to pupils' improved progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved significantly. They are proud to see their names on the achievement ladder displayed in the hall and enjoy going to the headteacher's office to receive stickers for their good work.
- The management of pupils' behaviour has improved. Pupils understand the school's traffic light system which is used firmly and consistently across the school. This is helping to keep individuals on track and reduce interruptions to the learning of the whole class. Pupils have an increasing grasp of the cause and consequences of their behaviour. Teaching assistants are skilled at managing pupils' behaviour, recognising triggers and responding promptly so that time lost to learning has reduced. They effectively manage the transitions between formal and informal times and the breaks pupils take because of their sensory needs.
- Attendance has improved and, although below the national average for mainstream primary schools, is a little above the national average for special schools. The parent support adviser follows up absences promptly through telephone calls and home visits and works with other agencies when this would benefit pupils. Consequently, the number of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased. Persistent absence is largely the result of medical needs.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Overall, pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science. The headteacher set very challenging targets aimed at accelerating pupils' progress and most pupils are exceeding these because teaching has improved and topics capture their interest.
- The headteacher has effectively established a system that provides accurate assessments of pupils' progress. Pupils' work is annotated efficiently to record their progress and any barriers they experienced

are noted so these can be dealt with. This supports teachers' daily planning well and contributes effectively to assessments of pupils' progress over time.

- Teachers review pupils' progress regularly and focused support is put in place if learning has slowed. Accurate assessments have helped to identify the most able pupils so teachers now stretch them to achieve more highly. There is no gap between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and others.
- A range of communication methods are successfully used effectively to promote pupils' achievement. Over time, staff have increased their skills in communicating by signing and the range of signs they employ.
- Pupils are encouraged to enjoy books. The refurbished library is an attractive, cosy place to read. A limited number of books are on display. These are linked to the topics classes are working on, so that pupils are not overwhelmed by choice.
- Thorough preparations for the transition of Year 6 pupils to secondary education are well under way.

Early years provision

is good

- Children join the Reception class at various times during the year. Their starting points, including their interests, sensory and welfare needs, are carefully assessed so that they settle well into school life.
- Children make good progress from their starting points because the teacher sets tailored individual targets for the very small steps in learning they need to take during each activity throughout the day. Detailed plans are shared with teaching assistants so that they understand their roles in supporting children to reach these targets. Regular assessments, captured in learning journeys, keep track of pupils' progress efficiently.
- Good routines are in place to help children develop their communication and social skills. For instance, daily circle time increases their awareness of one another, encourages eye-contact and greetings, and models turn-taking. Adults use a range of communication methods to suit children's individual needs, including signing and electronic aids.
- Communication and language are promoted well through listening to and talking about stories and songs. Staff work hard to increase children's engagement with stories and language through props which provide a range of concrete, sensory experiences. For example, several children enjoyed sharing a songbook about pirates, enhanced by sea-blue fabric, treasure, the skull and crossbones flag and a pirate hat.
- Daily phonics teaching introduces children to initial sounds through a series of activities, pictures and stories. There are good opportunities for children to engage in mark-making using a variety of materials and equipment that are well suited to their sensory needs and motor skills.
- Children are at the early stages of developing their understanding of number through counting with adults. Adults model language about size and the position of objects clearly and through play encourage children's understanding of, for example, 'on my head'.
- Children engage in a range of interesting and stimulating activities indoors and outdoors. Staff know children well and respond to their interests to promote their learning. They are alert to their sensory needs, devising experiences that build these in well. For example, some children thoroughly enjoyed making a den out of boxes and textured fabric lengths, and were able to share the space for some time, so developing their social awareness.
- Children know how the behaviour traffic light system works and are anxious not to move from the green light. There are clear consequences for inappropriate behaviour, with brisk time-outs away from the class, followed by rapid restorations to the green light. The teacher gives firm instructions, including through signing, for instance when an activity has finished, and is skilled at preventing inappropriate behaviours escalating.
- Adults ensure that children are safe and well cared for. Daily checks are carried out to make sure the environment is safe for children.
- The teacher keeps in regular contact with parents through home-school books and phone calls. She devises a stimulating themed environment – the seaside this term – when parents are invited to 'Stay and Play' and increase their understanding of how their child learns. These sessions are also an opportunity for parents to see their child's progress in their learning journal and share some of their successes at home.

School details

Unique reference number	133340
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10013054

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	57
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Jon Hairsine
Headteacher	Dawn Coombes
Telephone number	01977 723085
Website	www.pathways.wakefield.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@pathways.wakefield.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 November 2014

Information about this school

- Wakefield Pathways is a small primary school for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. Some pupils have additional needs including severe and specific learning disabilities, physical disabilities and sensory impairments. All have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- There are more than twice as many boys as girls on roll.
- The majority of pupils are White British. Other pupils are from a range of heritages including Eastern European. A small number have English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is above average.
- The school's website meets current requirements.
- The school is due to amalgamate with Kingsland School in September 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes, sometimes with the headteacher and assistant headteacher. Inspectors also made short visits to classrooms to evaluate the range of provision for different groups of pupils and to consider the quality of the curriculum. They also reviewed the work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. They attended a meeting of the school council and talked to pupils about the decisions taken by the council.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, the business manager, the IEB, a local authority adviser and the school's improvement adviser. Inspectors spoke informally to parents as they dropped their children off at the beginning of the school day. There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted online parent questionnaire, Parent View, to be taken into account.
- Inspectors analysed a range of information, including the school's evaluation of its own performance; the minutes of IEB meetings; information on the quality of teaching in the school's monitoring records; and information on pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. They also looked at documents relating to safeguarding (protecting children and making sure they are safe). Information on the school's website was taken into account.

Inspection team

Jane Austin, lead inspector
Stephen Helm

Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

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