

Ryecroft Academy

Stonebridge Grove, Farnley, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS12 5AW

Inspection dates

17–18 May 2017

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

- Leaders and managers acknowledge that due to frequent changes of leaders and teaching staff the school has not improved at a fast enough rate.
- Leadership roles are not firmly embedded and this is slowing down leaders' positive impact on improvement.
- The planned curriculum is not always as engaging as it could be. Pupils do not learn enough about things that interest and inspire them. Consequently, pupils are not as eager to learn as they should be.
- Some teachers do not consistently apply the school's behaviour policy. As a result, in some lessons learning is disrupted by low-level misbehaviour.
- Pupils' progress and standards, although rapidly improving, are still below the progress and standards achieved by other pupils of the same age nationally.
- Parents are not as well informed or involved in the life of the school as they could be.
- Too many teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Some teachers do not take into account pupils' previous levels of attainment or what they know now, to plan suitable learning in lessons.
- Although pupils' rates of attendance have improved they are still below those of other pupils nationally.
- Teachers do not teach phonics to younger children sufficiently well.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers, including governors, have a very accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Leaders and managers have rigorous systems of monitoring which have helped identify weaknesses.
- The GORSE Academies Trust has ensured that the school is well supported through this period of improvement and rapid change.
- The early years environment is engaging and so children are inspired to learn here.
- Pupils take on responsibilities enthusiastically and carry them out proudly and well.
- Pupils feel safe and are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe in different circumstances.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management to ensure that:
 - all middle and senior leaders have clearly defined roles and responsibilities that they and other staff are aware of
 - more is done to improve rates of attendance
 - the curriculum takes into account the needs and interests of pupils so that they become more enthusiastic about learning
 - parents are better informed about, and involved in, the life of the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better to allow pupils to learn at a faster rate and reach at least average standards by ensuring that:
 - teachers take into account pupils' starting points and assessments of learning made during lessons to plan their teaching, so that expectations are higher and more realistically based on what pupils can achieve
 - activities in lessons are planned so that they are relevant, interesting and valuable to pupils
 - the behaviour policy is more consistently implemented
 - appropriate staff have the necessary skills to teach phonics proficiently.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Parents and carers are not as involved in, or knowledgeable about, what is happening in school as they could be. The new leadership has made some positive changes already, such as senior leaders and teachers being available for parents every morning. However, parents' concerns, for example about behaviour and pupils' progress, have not yet been allayed.
- Rapid change in leadership positions has meant that roles and responsibilities for some leaders are still not clearly defined. This has slowed improvement and caused concern for staff and parents. Newer leaders are still developing the effectiveness of their role.
- Although pupils have the opportunity to take part in a number of extra-curricular activities, the content of the subjects they study is not planned well enough to appeal to pupils' interests. Therefore, pupils are not as engaged and enthusiastic about learning as they could be.
- Senior leaders are currently undertaking a review of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to ensure that the funding to support this group of pupils is used effectively. The current special educational needs coordinator is being supported by experienced and qualified staff from the GORSE Academies Trust. The provision for these pupils is improving rapidly now that their needs are being better met.
- Pupils are being prepared positively for life in modern Britain. A new personal, social and health education plan of work has already been introduced. Through lessons, visitors to the school and excellent assemblies, pupils learn to consider how they can be good British citizens.
- Prior to joining the GORSE Academies Trust, the predecessor school, Ryecroft School, was inadequate. Leaders and managers have brought about improvements to ensure that the new Ryecroft Academy is no longer inadequate.
- Senior leaders have a thorough system of monitoring and they promote good professional development to improve the quality of teaching. Although this has been effective, inconsistencies in leadership mean that improvements are not as fast as they could be.
- All leaders have a very accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses which is founded on rigorous and thorough self-evaluation. They have identified weaknesses and brought about improvement.
- Leaders have ensured that pupil premium and sports funding is now well spent and allocated effectively. A thorough analysis of this spending ensures that it is targeted effectively.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not been afraid to challenge weaknesses and bring about change. While at times causing temporary problems, a more stable future for the school is planned for. Governors recognise, along with senior leaders, that improvements have

not been as rapid as they could have been.

- A skills audit is once again being undertaken by the governing body so that valuable skills that new governors have are effectively used to help school improvement.
- Governors are extremely knowledgeable and well informed about what is happening in school. This has helped them to challenge and support school leaders appropriately.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The culture of keeping pupils safe is strong in the school.
- Two staff are trained as designated safeguarding leaders and one takes responsibility for the pastoral needs of pupils. All staff and pupils questioned can name these people and know they can speak to them if they have any concerns.
- The director of operations and pastoral support engages well with parents and carers and other stakeholders to ensure that pupils are supported and safe.
- Senior leaders make appropriate checks on all adults prior to employment. Staff are well trained and know their personal responsibilities with regard to child protection.
- Authorised staff keep appropriate and confidential records of all incidents to ensure that pupils' needs are well met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The standard of teaching is improving, as is the rate of pupils' progress. However, senior leaders are aware that the quality of teaching is not yet good enough for pupils to make the accelerated progress that they need to make to catch up with other pupils nationally.
- Teachers do not ensure that enough activities are valuable learning experiences. For example, pupils were interested in writing instructions but were disappointed when not given the opportunity to test whether their instructions would really work.
- Most teachers assess what pupils know during the lesson but not enough adapt their teaching accordingly. Nor do they take into account pupils' prior attainment when setting work which means some, particularly the most able pupils, complete work that they already know and can do. Consequently, expectations are sometimes too low.
- Not all teachers use the behaviour policy to manage behaviour effectively. At times, the focus is on sanctions and negative behaviour and not as the school's policy states on positive rewards for good behaviour.
- Teachers have established good relationships with pupils which enable pupils to confidently ask questions and learn from their mistakes.
- Teachers use the school's marking policy consistently well. Pupils are aware of what the colours and comments mean when their work is marked and all those asked knew exactly what they had to do to try and improve their work.
- Senior leaders have established an assessment system which teachers use consistently across all year groups. There is a clear set of criteria so that pupils' progress can be

carefully reviewed at the half-termly pupil progress meetings. Consequently, those pupils who do not make the progress they are capable of are identified early.

- Teaching assistants support pupils' learning well. They play an important part in keeping less-able and less-enthusiastic pupils engaged in learning and therefore help them to make steady progress.
- Teachers have promoted the school's focus on improving standards in writing well. Their expectations of skills in writing are high across all subjects and pupils are rising to these expectations.
- The needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are now met more accurately both within the classroom and through extra targeted support. Their progress is improving as a result.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement because pupils do not consistently demonstrate the ability and maturity to be responsible for their own behaviour.
- Middle leaders have developed a new strategic plan for teaching personal and social education. Although already being delivered across the school, the inconsistency in the quality of teaching means that it is not yet as effective as it could be in supporting pupils' personal development.
- Many pupils take on roles of responsibility and do so enthusiastically. Other pupils willingly accept the authority that these pupils have.
- Pupils tell visitors that they do turn to the director of operations and pastoral support when they need to and have confidence that she will be able to help them.
- Pupils are very well taught about how to keep safe while using the internet, particularly with regard to social media sites. Pupils are also knowledgeable about how to keep safe in a range of other situations such as evacuating safely from a building and crossing the road.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement as too often pupils struggle to concentrate and engage in learning and this slows their progress.
- Although there have been some improvements in rates of attendance, pupils' attendance still lags behind that of other pupils nationally.
- Pupils know what bullying is and they are confident that the school deals with this sort of behaviour appropriately. Parents do not yet have the same confidence as their children.
- When management of behaviour by adults is good, such as in assemblies and in the dinner hall, pupils respond well.

- Some pupils are proud to admit that their own behaviour has improved rapidly more recently.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The progress pupils make and standards they reach, across all subjects, including English and mathematics, is not in line with that of other pupils of the same age nationally and therefore outcomes require improvement. This is partly due to a legacy of underachievement caused by previous poor-quality teaching.
- Most-able pupils too often start lessons completing the same work as all other pupils. Therefore, they waste time completing work that does not challenge them and they do not make the progress or reach the standards they are capable of.
- The progress that pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics is variable across all year groups. Many pupils struggle to read fluently because phonics is not as well taught as it should be. The phonics programme is currently being changed and there are plans in place for staff to be trained in delivering it.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is rapidly improving as weaknesses are identified and pupils are beginning to make better progress than they previously made.
- Those pupils who are in receipt of support paid for by the pupil premium funding are now making better progress. This is because the funding is now better targeted to meet their needs. Consequently, the difference in the standards they reach, although still low, compared to other pupils nationally, is diminishing.
- Pupils' work in books demonstrates that the school's recent focus on improving writing skills is having a positive impact on the standard of work that is being produced. Pupils have lots of opportunities to practise writing skills across all subjects and teachers' expectations in this subject are rising.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children start in the early years with skills and a level of understanding often below those typical of children of their age. This is particularly the case in communication and language skills.
- Children make good progress in some areas of learning, including in communication and language. However, in some areas, such as reading and writing, progress is slower and therefore the provision requires improvement.
- Teachers do not teach phonics to these young children as well as they should. Too often, children do not learn well because work is not at a level appropriate to their needs. Senior leaders are in the process of introducing a new phonics scheme and it is the intention that staff will be trained to deliver the new programme.
- Leadership in the early years, as with the rest of the school, has been unsettled and this has led to improvement not being as fast as it needed to be.
- Children learn in an environment, particularly inside, that engages them and they

concentrate for considerable lengths of time on some activities.

- Although some children find it difficult to share, with the encouragement of adults they are learning to do this well. They play agreeably together and behave well.
- The progress that children are making in all areas of learning is rapidly improving and they are becoming better prepared for learning in Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	140824
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	10025823

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	269
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Mark Roper
Principal	Helen Townsley
Telephone number	0113 2632433
Website	www.ryecroft.leeds.sch.uk
Email address	beverley.ormondroyd@ryecroft.leeds.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Ryecroft Academy is part of the GORSE Academies Trust, which it joined in May 2014. The GORSE Academies Trust is an education trust of eight secondary and primary academies.
- The school is an average-sized primary school with nearly all pupils being of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receiving support is well above the national average, as is the proportion who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish. The school also meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited lessons in a range of subjects in all classes. A great many of these lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior leaders and middle leaders, members of the GORSE Academies Trust and the representatives of the governing body. Inspectors also spoke to most of the teaching staff.
- The inspectors spoke to pupils informally in lessons about their work as well as at various times and places around school during the two days of the inspection. They also had more formal meetings with pupils in small groups and some inspectors listened to pupils read. Thirty-three responses to the Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire were also considered.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work in books along with the school's information on achievement to ascertain the progress that pupils are making.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the school's improvement plan. Attendance and behaviour records as well as information relating to the school's work to keep pupils safe were also considered.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents during the two days of the inspection. The 42 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. The eight staff responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Jo Sharpe, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mary Lanovy-Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Heaton	Ofsted Inspector

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