

Waterthorpe Infant School

Thorpe Drive, Waterthorpe, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S20 7JU

Inspection dates

21 to 22 March 2019

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	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders and governors know their school well. Their precise identification of strengths and weaknesses over time means that pupils get the support they need and make good progress overall.
- An emphasis on children's basic skills development in early years means that children make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their lower-than-typical starting points.
- High expectations of what most-able pupils can achieve results in the proportion of pupils reaching higher standards by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics being at least similar to, and sometimes better than, the national average.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are very well supported. Consequently, they make strong progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils eagerly take part in a wide range of activities to support their learning and well-being. However, the quality of learning across the curriculum varies and needs further development.
- Middle leaders have good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject but currently have limited opportunities to share, direct and check improvement across the school.
- The staff team's work to involve parents in learning and celebrations is a strength. A wide range of family learning sessions help parents to understand and support the progress their children make, for example in reading.
- Pupils enjoy school, behave well and delight in engaging with adults about their learning.
- Adults' concerted attention to instil a joy in reading from the moment children start school is strikingly apparent in Nursery. Children eagerly follow the great example adults set of sharing books and comics, retelling stories with expression, finding out new information and talking about stories and characters.
- Pupils' outcomes in phonics have improved. However, their progress is not as strong as it could be, because the teaching of phonics is not consistently good. Children do not have phonetically decodable reading books when they start to read, so they do not get off to a strong start in reading with fluency and accuracy. This is particularly the case for lower-ability and disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders have made good strides in improving pupils' attendance. However, a slightly higher-than-average proportion of pupils are still persistently absent from school. This means that they miss out on the good experiences on offer and this negatively affects their progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress that pupils make in phonics, particularly those of lower-ability and those who are disadvantaged, so that they quickly learn to read with fluency and accuracy by:
 - ensuring that all staff receive training so that they model sounds accurately and use a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics
 - making sure that the early books that children read are phonetically decodable and matched to what they have just learned in phonics.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the curriculum is planned to build pupils' knowledge and skills across subjects over their time in school and that middle leaders check on the quality of pupils' learning in their subjects
 - frequently checking the quality of teaching and learning in phonics in all groups, including how well pupils apply phonics skills when reading and writing
 - giving middle leaders the opportunity to develop and share their expertise with other staff across school, particularly in mathematics and wider curriculum subjects, so that all staff members are supported in helping pupils to make strong progress.
- Continue to work with parents to improve pupils' attendance, particularly those who are persistently absent.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The long-serving headteacher has an excellent understanding of where strengths and weaknesses in the school lie. Her evaluations of teaching, pupils' progress and the quality of education the school provides as a whole are astute. These evaluations quickly raise governors' and staff members' awareness and understanding of any areas that need improvement. Leaders' ambition to give pupils an enjoyable experience is reflected in pupils' pleasure at talking about their learning and pupils' trust in the adults in school.
- The headteachers have put effective systems in place to check on the progress of actions to address school improvement priorities. They know which pupils have made at least good progress and how well those that receive further support are catching up.
- Pupils with SEND receive a good quality of education. The SEND leader has a very good understanding of pupils' needs. She knows exactly where pupils require support and the effect that the support they receive has on their academic progress and well-being.
- About half of pupils in receipt of the additional pupil premium are also identified with SEND. Leaders use much of the funding effectively to provide pupils with additional support in the classroom and to deliver family learning opportunities. Although the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching expected standards is still not as high as other pupils in the school, the progress they make is strong, and this helps them to get closer to age-related expectations. Leaders are due to review the effect of the pupil premium funding and have identified that there is further work to do for these pupils to improve their achievement in early reading and phonics.
- Leaders work closely with the local authority and the Westfield family of schools to share good ideas for improvement. Leaders highlight the positive support commissioned by Learn Sheffield and explain how this has supported the school's journey of improvement, for example through the 'School Readiness Project' and in reading comprehension strategies.
- There is a clear culture of leaders embracing opportunities to be involved in projects or activities that they believe will benefit their children. This gives some opportunities for professional development of staff.
- Leaders know how important it is to involve families in their children's learning. Their dedication over the last two years to provide a wealth of opportunities for parents to be involved in learning, celebrations and activities has had a positive effect on areas including pupils' attendance and their engagement in books and reading.
- Leaders rightly focused attention on improving reading has had a positive effect on pupils' and their families' enjoyment of reading. The ambition to use the pleasure of non-fiction and fiction texts to excite children in all areas of the curriculum shines through, in Nursery in particular.
- An earlier start to phonics teaching is ensuring that more children use sounds effectively when they start to read and write. Leaders make frequent checks on pupils' assessment and know which phase pupils are working in. However, the direction in

teaching, and in the books chosen for pupils to read, has not been precise enough to help all pupils to learn to read with confidence and fluency.

- Middle leaders have clear expectations of the progress pupils make in their subject in their own classes. For example, the new leader for mathematics has strong subject knowledge. She leads by example in the classroom, ensuring pupils apply the mathematical skills they have learned to practical and problem-solving activities. Leaders are yet to ensure that pupils are equally challenged in applying their mathematical skills across the classes.
- Middle leaders currently have limited opportunities to check the quality of teaching and learning and the progress pupils make in their subject. Senior leaders have identified a programme of middle leadership training that is due to start next term. This will support middle leaders in becoming more involved in monitoring and evaluating pupils' learning across school in their subjects.
- A range of engaging activities, visits and extra-curricular activities are in place to widen pupils' experiences across the curriculum. Strong messages become embedded. For example, pupils can talk confidently about their learning in religious education (RE) and show a good awareness of different faiths and beliefs. However, pupils' knowledge in subjects and through different topics varies widely. This is because activities in topics are planned and taught in isolation each year. Pupils do not build on their knowledge and skills over their time in school, so find it hard to recall their learning, particularly in history and geography.
- The primary school physical education and sport funding is used effectively to provide pupils with a wide range of different activities in and out of school, including karate, dance and sensory skills sessions. The leader checks, and has seen improvement in, pupils' participation in school activities and at sports festivals.
- Leaders' expectations of good behaviour and their promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development support pupils in starting to gain a good sense of how to be a good citizen and think of others as well as themselves.

Governance of the school

- The governing body shows dedication to the school and its role in improvement. It is well led by a pro-active chair who is very open to looking at ways that governance can be further improved.
- Governors receive timely and detailed information from leaders and records of visits from the local authority that give them a clear view of the success of actions being taken for improvement.
- Governors know the school well. For example, they know that, after recent direction, children are now developing a love of reading as soon as they start school. They know that teaching and learning in phonics still needs further improvement.
- In terms of safeguarding, governors are confident that school leaders have effective systems in place to ensure pupils are safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that recruitment processes for new staff, and checks on their suitability to work with children, are efficient and effective.
- During the inspection, a considerable number of students were working in school. They had received relevant information that ensured they too are vigilant about keeping pupils safe.
- Procedures for recording information about the checks on staff and for reporting concerns and actions have recently been upgraded and are fit for purpose. Leaders have very recently updated the policy for safeguarding in light of the changes to the statutory guidance, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' September 2018. All staff have read this document and leaders are in the process of checking that all staff understand the important changes included.
- Leaders check that the school site is safe. They put risk assessments in place and manage safety well, for example at times of the day when parents need access to school through the playground.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and, that if they did not, they would tell an adult. Parents agree that they are confident in the school's work to keep children safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Close attention to ensuring that pupils develop good basic skills and to addressing their generally lower-than-typical starting points has resulted in the majority of pupils making good progress over their time in school. Where pupils' attainment at the expected standard has not been as strong, leaders and staff members have shared reasons why and put actions in place for improvement.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics overall. A new programme to improve pupils' speed and fluency in number calculations and teachers' use of models, imagery and resources help pupils to become confident mathematicians.
- Teachers and teaching assistants know that they need to continue to ensure that pupils are challenged to apply their learning and deepen their understanding in mathematics. A good example of this was seen during the inspection. Year 1 pupils, who had learned how to use a ruler accurately in the mathematics session, were seen later in the day making caterpillars from different resources, measuring them accurately and recording the information. They used appropriate mathematical vocabulary.
- Leaders' clear direction in writing over the last two years has resulted in higher proportions of pupils reaching expected standards than seen nationally. Current pupils' work in writing shows that they have frequent opportunities to write at length. They use their phonics knowledge to write new words. Teachers' actions to address variations in the quality of pupils' handwriting are evidenced positively in most pupils' recorded work.
- Realising pupils' outcomes in phonics and reading needed improvement, leaders have taken action to start teaching children phonics as soon as they start school. Pupils' progress in phonics has improved over the last two years. However, teaching in

phonics is not consistent. This is because it has been a considerable time since staff received training in phonics, and changes in staff have meant that not all staff have had training. Consequently, although all staff take opportunities, at prescribed times of the day and through short activities across the day, to develop pupils' phonics knowledge, adults' direction is not precisely focused on what pupils need to learn next. Some pupils, particularly those with lower starting points or those who are disadvantaged are not catching up quickly enough.

- In addition, a minority of pupils do not have reading books linked to their phonics learning. This means that the books they read contain words that are not decodable and/or matched to their stage of reading. Therefore, they cannot read with fluency, accuracy or understanding because there is too much challenging text and they struggle to get a grasp of what they are reading about.
- Pupils' experiences across the curriculum differ between subjects. They can speak confidently and with understanding about their learning in subjects such as physical education and RE. Older pupils can remember some interesting facts about their learning in their minibests topic, such as the difference between spiders and insects and where different minibests might be found. However, in other subjects, pupils find it difficult to recall any learning and do not have recorded work to fall back on to prompt their conversations.
- The majority of SEND pupils make good progress from their starting points because of leaders' precise identification of their needs, effective teaching and strong partnerships with other agencies and specialists.
- Teachers and teaching assistants plan carefully to diminish gaps in disadvantaged pupils' learning. The majority of disadvantaged pupils are catching up in writing and mathematics. Their progress in reading and phonics is not as strong, but it is improving.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and happy learners. They are keen to share their work with adults and each other. During the inspection, pupils engaged in delightful conversations with the inspectors, telling them about their work, showing interest in their visit and asking eagerly if they wanted to read together.
- Pupils are unanimous in their view that the staff in school are always there for them. They describe how adults help them when they find their work hard, or if they are unhappy.
- Work in assemblies and lessons helps pupils understand the importance of respect and tolerance and acceptance of people's differences.
- There is an eagerness among the pupils to take responsibility in the school. They speak enthusiastically about their roles in assembly, in the classroom and on the playground.
- The small group of pupils who attend the breakfast club happily take part in well-

planned activities. This session gives them a positive start to the day.

- Healthy lifestyles and healthy eating are constantly promoted. Pupils are learning to make good choices in relation to health and well-being. Frequent activities, such as the daily mile and scooter Friday, support this.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The behaviour policy is applied consistently by staff, so pupils know what is expected of them and generally behave well. Pupils say that they know the rules, but not everyone always remembers to follow them. However, they say that as soon as adults step in with reminders, behaviour is good again.
- Leaders are constantly focused on improving pupils' attendance. They keep a careful track of individuals' attendance and try to work closely with families to make improvements where they are needed. Recent work with parents and other agencies has resulted in some improvements in attendance overall, which is now closer to the national average. School leaders know that for a small proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school, poor attendance has a markedly negative effect on the progress they make.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' outcomes have shown variation over the past few years. Leaders' precise analysis of pupils' progress means that where pupils' starting points are lower than typical, or where performance wanes, leaders quickly identify gaps in learning and take action to secure improvement. As a result, the majority of pupils make good progress over their time in school in English and mathematics.
- Actions taken by leaders, teachers and teaching assistants to improve writing have resulted in a higher-than-average proportion of pupils reaching expected standards by the end of Year 2.
- Overall, pupils make good progress in mathematics. In 2018, the proportion of Year 2 pupils reaching the expected standard was higher than the national average, with a similar proportion to national reaching higher standards. Current pupils' work shows a similar picture.
- Pupils with SEND make strong progress from their starting points because of the SEND leaders' careful analysis and understanding of their needs, and the very effective support teachers and teaching assistants put in place.
- Disadvantaged pupils generally make good progress from their starting points.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the Year 1 phonics standard was considerably below the national average in 2016 and 2017. This improved in 2018. However, pupils' current work, school assessment information and hearing them read confirm that pupils with lower starting points, including those who are disadvantaged, struggle to read with fluency and accuracy.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading in Year 2 has been

stubbornly just below the national average. Leaders' direction in supporting the most able pupils has resulted in a greater proportion than the national average reaching higher standards. Current work to improve pupils' understanding of what they read and to widen their experiences and understanding of a wide range of books has had a positive effect on pupils' views of reading and the progress of the middle- and higher-ability pupils.

- Leaders are in the early stages of curriculum development. Pupils carry out different tasks in different subjects, but the progress they make in different subjects is not consistently strong.

Early years provision

Good

- Children make good progress in early years from their lower-than-typical starting points. The early years team's well-organised transition arrangements and its ambition to quickly engage families in the life of the school help children to settle quickly and happily to learning.
- The high level of care given to planning resources and activities that will support children in taking their next steps in learning results in children delighting in, and being engrossed in, learning across the curriculum.
- A strong emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills is evident in the way children readily and independently apply their new skills to activities in the classroom and outdoor areas. For example, during the inspection, a group of boys counted the ducks in the water tray, checking each other's answers. Other children were incidentally counting the number of children in an area or how many dough shapes they had cut out.
- Children make excellent progress in their language development. Throughout the inspection, inspectors noted the high proportion of children who have additional speech and language needs. Adults constantly model good-quality vocabulary choices and encourage children to talk at length about their activities. The children follow the excellent examples set when working with each other and adults in the classroom. For example, one boy, after counting the ducks in the water tray, explained to one of the inspectors that, 'I counted this one, but it isn't really a duck. It is a goose. This one is plastic, but if it was real these wings would be made of feathers.'
- Adults' high expectations have a positive effect on children's behaviour. Children love the learning on offer because adults make it exciting and interesting. Adults constantly engage children in kind and friendly conversations about their learning and, in return, children respond quickly and positively to their direction. They want to please the adults who care for them and who they care about.
- The early years team do not miss any opportunity to engage children in the joy that books can bring. Areas of learning inside and outdoors contain high-quality story and information books. Children say that they love books! Some children already understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction texts. They choose to 'read' stories to other children and adults, following the adults' lead in how to engage the listener and add expression to their story telling.
- Recent work to ensure that teaching in phonics starts earlier is having a positive effect

on children's progress in reading. In early years, phonics teaching is mostly well delivered, engages children and helps them to sound out new words when they are reading and writing. However, children's early reading books are not phonetically decodable, so they cannot apply the skills they have learned successfully in phonics lessons when they are reading. Lower-ability and disadvantaged children, in particular, struggle to decode the challenging text in the books they are given. They try to use other cues, such as the pictures, or say the words that they think will make sense in the sentence.

- Leaders have planned learning so that children receive direction in basic skills development each morning. Children have to write a special code to access the independent, but well-planned activities in the afternoon. Everyone is eager to write the special code each day. This is one example of how the staff team motivates children to practise their writing skills frequently.
- The early years team has effective procedures for keeping children safe. The team teaches children how to work and play safely. It has a good understanding of children who may be vulnerable and ensures that the welfare needs of all children are met.

School details

Unique reference number	107064
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10008217

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	Nursery and infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire Knott
Headteacher	Helen Stokes and Michelle Appleby
Telephone number	0114 248 4943
Website	www.waterthorpe.createprimary.net
Email address	headteacher@waterthorpe.sheffield.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 to 11 November 2010

Information about this school

- Recent changes have taken place in the senior leadership of the school. The headship is now shared between the long-serving headteacher and the previous key stage 1 leader, in a four- and one-day split.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized school of its type.
- The school runs a breakfast club. There is a privately run after-school club on the school site.
- The early years consists of a Nursery and two Reception classes.
- The proportion of pupils receiving identified support for SEND is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of the additional pupil premium funding is just above the national average.

- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of subjects in all classes. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteachers.
- Inspectors spoke to a considerable proportion of pupils during the inspection. They spoke about their learning and the school. They spoke to pupils in lessons, in meetings and in informal discussions at breaktime and lunchtime. They observed behaviour in lessons and at less structured times of the day.
- Inspectors met regularly with the headteachers. Meetings were also held with the acting early years leader, middle leaders, administrative staff and other staff. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and spoke to a representative from the local authority on the telephone.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including leaders' evaluation of school performance, school development planning, and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors also reviewed the minutes of meetings of the local governing body and information relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- One of the inspectors spoke to parents before school. The 40 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were also considered.

Inspection team

Kate Rowley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lynda Florence

Ofsted Inspector

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