

Hall Cliffe Primary School

7 Wrenthorpe Lane, Wrenthorpe, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 0QB

Inspection dates

26–28 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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher sets about bringing her vision to life with energy and determination. She strives to provide a safe place, where pupils can develop and achieve well.
- Staff are committed to do their best for pupils. Teachers use information about pupils' prior learning to plan lessons. Pupils engage positively and make strong progress from their starting points.
- Occasionally, staff miss opportunities to stretch pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding. Pupils do not practise writing skills in longer passages frequently, to demonstrate their understanding across a wider range of subjects.
- Some pupils need more help to acquire phonics skills to improve their reading further.
- Pupils achieve well in a wide range of unit awards, for example, how to prepare a simple meal.
- Pupils attend well. Overall, they learn to manage themselves well. When they need extra help to do so, staff are skilled in helping pupils regain their composure.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance make sure that all the independent school standards are met consistently.
- Leaders monitor the school's performance very carefully. They ensure that the curriculum provides a wide range of learning experiences, that prepare pupils well for the next steps in their education. They check the effect of teaching on pupils' progress regularly.
- Leaders have a very largely accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for further development. However, their evaluation of the proportion of pupils who make exceptional progress is overgenerous.
- Staff are well trained in safeguarding. They keep a sharp eye out for risks to pupils. Pupils feel safe.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - pupils regularly complete more complex tasks, such as explaining or comparing and contrasting ideas, so that they can show how they have connected different aspects of learning and demonstrate their understanding
 - pupils write longer passages in a wide range of subject areas to build their writing skills for different purposes
 - all pupils acquire effective phonics skills to support their reading.
- Improve the quality leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that checks on pupils' progress are more precise and accurate, so that information gathered can be used more effectively support and challenge pupils to make very strong progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- With members of the Witherslack Group, the headteacher ensures that all the independent school standards are consistently met. Her first priority is to maintain a safe place, where pupils can re-engage with learning, develop skills to manage themselves well and achieve highly.
- Staff are committed to do the best they can for their pupils. They successfully help pupils find a new interest in their learning, working with therapists to address pupils' learning difficulties. As a consequence, pupils like coming to school and learn to manage themselves better as they settle into school. They trust staff to help them when they are struggling.
- Leaders and members of the Witherslack Group keep a close eye on all aspects of the school's performance. They ensure that all the necessary safeguarding and health and safety requirements are fit for purpose, so that, with staff, they can focus on fostering pupils' well-being and achievement.
- Leaders carry out regular checks on the effectiveness of the curriculum in enabling pupils to gain a wide range of knowledge and experiences. These prepare them well for the next steps in their education and for preparation as young adults in modern Britain. Pupils respond positively, engaging in activities such as the nearby forest school, where they develop their interpersonal skills and apply some of their core subject learning, for example, in English, mathematics and science.
- Leaders check pupils' progress regularly from their starting points. They set challenging targets for progress, especially in English, science and mathematics, based on the pupils' baseline assessments on entry to the school.
- Leaders support and challenge staff to foster strong, effective learning for the pupils, through regular meetings with teachers which focus on the pupils' progress. As a result, the vast majority of pupils make strong progress, especially in science and English and close gaps in their learning as they head towards achieving age-related expectations. However, the exceptional progress over time, reported by the school in their evaluations, is overgenerous. This limits teachers' ability to support and challenge pupils to make very strong progress.
- Leaders ensure that the programme for pupils' personal, health, social and economic is well considered and meets pupils' needs. The vast majority of pupils have disrupted histories of education. The programme supports them well in developing their self-awareness and self-confidence. As a result, pupils learn to use a range of strategies to regulate their own behaviours and, when they need extra help, respond to staff positively. They learn about the society they live in and are accepting of those from different family backgrounds or religious beliefs. However, pupils have relatively few opportunities to meet with people from different cultural backgrounds.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum includes personalised support from the therapy team, so that pupils have suitable additional support, sometimes for communications skills and at other times to help them manage themselves well. The combined effect of this layered approach to each pupil's curriculum supports them well.

- Leaders keep a close eye out for any signs of concerns about pupils' welfare. They ensure that staff are well trained. Staff know how to let safeguarding leaders know, if they have a concern about a pupil. Pupils attend well because they like coming to school. This helps keep them safe. They appreciate the help that staff give them.
- With very few exceptions, parents and carers, in their free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and in a small number of telephone calls, said how highly they valued the support and help the school provides. They feel confident in discussing any concerns with staff. One parent said that the school's work with their child has made 'a massive difference to our family life'.

Governance

- Members of the Witherslack Group responsible for governance know the school well. Through frequent visits and focused review of a wide range of aspects of the school, they ensure that:
 - safeguarding pupils is kept as the school's first priority
 - all of the independent school standards and associated requirements are met consistently
 - the curriculum is broad and balanced, enabling pupils to gain a wide range of knowledge and skills
 - teaching is effective in helping pupils acquire the knowledge and skills they need to go on to, and be successful in, the next stage of their education. However, when governors check pupils' progress, they are too generous in their evaluation of the proportion who are said to be making exceptional progress in core subjects
 - arrangements to ensure that pupils attend well are effective
 - pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are actively fostered through the curriculum
 - the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils are fit for purpose.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders are well trained. They know how to deal with concerns about pupils' well-being and do so effectively. They work carefully with other teams and agencies to ensure that pupils get the help they need when they face difficulties. Leaders keep abreast of emerging issues in the community and ensure that staff training is up to date. Staff are knowledgeable about the risks that pupils face. They use their very strong, positive relationships to keep a close eye out for any concerns there may be about a pupil. They know how to refer concerns to safeguarding leaders promptly.
- Pupils learn about risks to their well-being. For example, they learn about the dangers of alcohol and drug misuse, and the dangers they might face when they use digital technologies. Pupils learn about healthy and positive relationships. Their good attendance helps keep them safe. Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for in school.
- Members of the Witherslack Group and leaders ensure that they adhere strictly to safer recruitment procedures to ensure that only suitable adults work with children. They

ensure that they have a well-considered safeguarding policy, which is published on the school's website. In planning the curriculum, leaders ensure that appropriate risk assessments are carried out for activities on site and for visits and trips out of school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff know their pupils very well. They have good knowledge of pupils' starting points when they begin at the school through a series of baseline assessments. They use this and knowledge of pupils' current learning to plan lessons well. Activities engage pupils. As a result, pupils are ready to learn and apply themselves to their learning.
- Occasionally, staff miss opportunities to challenge pupils well enough, so that they complete more challenging work when they are ready to move on. For example, pupils are not always challenged to use their knowledge to think about how the various elements of their learning connect together, by giving explanations or drawing conclusions.
- Staff are skilled at using questioning to check if pupils have understood or need further support and explanation. However, the effective use of questioning to move pupils' thinking forward is less consistent.
- Staff support pupils' writing skills effectively. Pupils broaden their knowledge of vocabulary well and write with increasing accuracy and correct grammar. However, pupils do not practise and reapply their skills by writing longer passages often in other subjects.
- Pupils' learning in science is particularly strong. They acquire a broad range of knowledge and put it into practice by reapplying it, for example in their design technology work.
- Staff are adept at improving pupils' mathematics quickly, in particular in their number skills. Through classroom activity and weekly visits out of school, pupils build their fluency by reapplying their knowledge in real-life situations.
- Staff do not, however, consistently identify when pupils have not gained secure knowledge of phonics to support their reading.
- Classroom support staff are used effectively. They too know pupils well. They engage pupils in their learning activities and are quick to spot if a pupil is struggling or has misunderstood. Some pupils are unwilling to engage in lessons, when they are distressed or frustrated. Teachers and classroom support staff are skilled in helping pupils overcome their frustrations, so that they can re-engage in their learning.
- Staff use the outcomes of assessments to personalise learning. They work effectively with the therapy team to make use of agreed strategies for learning and behaviour management to help pupils make strong progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils come to enjoy school after a period of settling in. Many have previously had disrupted periods in their education. They enjoy each other's company, get on with staff and very largely apply themselves well to their learning.

- Pupils build positive relationships with each other and staff. They trust staff to help them, when they are worried or distressed. They say they feel safe in school.
- Pupils learn from staff to use a variety of strategies so that, over time, they become more skilled at regulating their own behaviours. Their positive attitudes contribute to the strong progress they make.
- Pupils show that they understand that others in wider society need help. They are keen to participate in a number of charitable activities. In school, pupils take responsibility for themselves by choosing suitable break and lunchtime activities that entertain them and keep them calm. Pupils also take on responsibilities, such as digital leaders or school ambassadors.
- Pupils understand that bullying is wrong and hurtful. Pupils say that sometimes pupils get angry but that bullying is rare. They are confident that staff will always listen to them and help them, if it should occur. Pupils have a good understanding of the risks they might face when they use digital technologies.
- Pupils learn that others have different backgrounds to their own. They are open and accepting of other's differences, for example, those with other religious beliefs or none or who come from different family backgrounds. Pupils learn about other religions and cultures, but have relatively few opportunities to meet others from different communities.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. They learn to recognise for themselves signs of anger and distress. They use the strategies staff and the therapy team teach them increasingly well, so that they manage themselves better. When they need extra support to do so, pupils respond well and return to lessons shortly afterwards.
- Some pupils use inappropriate language frequently. Staff deal with this by using a range of responses. Over time, pupils reduce their use of bad language and learn to be more resilient when they face difficulties.
- Pupils engage enthusiastically in a wide range of supervised activities at break and lunchtime, from energetic play outside in the activity areas, to playing chess or watching a film quietly. Their choices reflect their growing self-awareness.
- Pupils' books show a clear and sustained willingness to adopt positive behaviours for learning. This builds their confidence as learners.
- Pupils attend school well. Many pupils have considerably improved their attendance since beginning at the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- A very large majority of pupils, both girls and boys, make strong progress in English, mathematics and science, taking into account their starting points on admission to the school. Progress in other subjects is also strong.
- Many pupils make particularly strong progress in core subjects when they first come to the school and settle into routines for learning. For most, however, after this initial period,

progress settles to a steadier, strong rate, which pupils sustain over time. A smaller proportion of pupils succeed in maintaining rapid progress in aspects of their learning than is indicated in the school's records.

- Pupils make strong progress in their writing skills. They increase the breadth of their vocabulary quickly and make effective use of subject specific terms. They also improve their accuracy in grammar, spelling and punctuation. As a result, they begin to fill the gaps in their knowledge and skills. However, staff miss some opportunities for pupils to reapply the same skills in different contexts in other subjects they cover in their topics, such as their work on Mayan culture.
- Pupils are encouraged to read and some do so with enjoyment. However, some pupils have not mastered important aspects of phonics knowledge and need further support to sustain the early steps of progress they make when they first start at the school.
- Pupils achieve very well in a wide range of unit awards, for example, in life skills-related areas such as preparing a meal. Pupils are proud of these achievements and are motivated by their successes. Staff are effective in challenging pupils to meet the success criteria for such units according to their abilities. These awards build pupils' resilience in learning and helps them value their education. They gather a wide range of knowledge, which they can reapply in real life, and where they can put some of their knowledge and skills from core subjects, for example mathematics, into practice.

School details

Unique reference number	142674
DfE registration number	384/6004
Inspection number	10093654

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	34
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Witherslack Group
Chair	Kevin Dyson
Headteacher	Claire Traynor
Annual fees (day pupils)	£55,793 to £84,863
Telephone number	01924 614 490
Website	www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/hallcliffe-primary
Email address	hall-cliffe-primary@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January – 2 February 2017

Information about this school

- Hall Cliffe Primary School is an independent special school providing day education for boys and girls and for up to 34 pupils. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. All 34 pupils currently on roll are aged between five and 11 years.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils have a range of learning difficulties including speech, language and communication difficulties, attention deficit disorder, social and emotional difficulties, and autistic spectrum disorder.
- The school offers therapeutic approaches to educating pupils as an integral part of their personalised curriculum.

- Pupils attending the school are placed there by a number of regional local authorities.
- The school was last inspected in February 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning during lessons. They observed pupils as they moved around the school at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a representative sample of pupils' work across the range of subjects they study.
- The inspectors held meetings with staff, school leaders and representatives of the Witherslack Group.
- Inspectors talked with pupils at several points throughout the inspection to gather their views. The responses made by parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and those of staff were considered. Inspectors spoke with a small number of parents.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documents, including those about the school's safeguarding arrangements, attendance and behaviour, and records of pupils' progress.

Inspection team

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