

Featherstone Girnhill Infant School

Hardwick Road, Featherstone, Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF7 5JB

Inspection dates

8–9 May 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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have a strong vision for the school. They have high expectations of what the school and its pupils can achieve.
- Senior and middle leaders monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment regularly. They identify strengths and weaknesses and provide effective support and challenge.
- Leaders make effective use of pupil premium funding to provide support for disadvantaged pupils. These pupils make good progress.
- Governors know the school well and use this knowledge well to hold leaders to account for their actions.
- The curriculum offers pupils a wide range of experiences and gives them opportunities to study a wide range of subjects.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school.
- Teachers and teaching assistants demonstrate good subject knowledge. Lessons are well structured and resources are well organised.
- The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are quickly identified and effective support is provided.
- Pupils are well behaved in school and show a very good understanding of the school's rules.
- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is exemplary. Pupils show respect for adults and their peers and are developing an excellent understanding of the values that the school promotes.
- Phonics lessons are well structured and pupils are able to apply their developing knowledge in reading and writing. However, the most able pupils are not provided with enough challenge. The books that pupils take home are not always well matched to their phonics knowledge.
- Children make good progress in the early years from typically low starting points. However, the proportion reaching and exceeding a good level of development remains below average.
- Attendance has dramatically improved over this academic year and is now average overall. However, absence for boys and the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent are still too high.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the rate of children's progress in the early years so that a greater proportion reach and exceed a good level of development.
- Continue to develop effective strategies to improve attendance so that:
 - the attendance of boys improves to at least the national average
 - the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent continues to reduce.
- Strengthen the teaching of phonics by:
 - providing more challenge for the most able pupils
 - ensuring that books that pupils take home to practise their skills are closely matched to their phonics knowledge.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have a strong vision for the school which is communicated clearly to all stakeholders. They are ambitious for the school and its pupils and have embedded a culture of high expectation.
- Leaders have carried out thorough self-evaluation and have used their findings to identify sensible development priorities. Leaders check regularly that their actions are having a positive impact on school improvement.
- The school has received a considerable amount of effective support from the trust over the past two years. The trust has supported leaders effectively to bring about improvements in teaching and learning.
- School leaders and the trust regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Middle leaders are becoming increasingly involved in this work and monitor the subjects they lead at least once each term, with support from senior leaders. Strengths and areas for improvement in teaching are identified and shared with teachers and teaching assistants. Support is then put in place and improvements are checked in the next round of monitoring.
- New and experienced staff say that they feel there is an appropriate balance of support and challenge from the trust and school leaders. They value the opportunities they have for professional development.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils are able to develop skills, knowledge and understanding in a wide range of subjects. They have lots of opportunities to practise and apply their English and mathematics skills in a wide range of contexts.
- Pupils are provided with a wide range of experiences, including trips and visitors to school, which effectively promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school actively promotes values such as honesty, respect and responsibility.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding well to support disadvantaged pupils. They have identified the barriers to learning that many of these pupils have and are using effective strategies to provide support. For example, the employment of a speech therapist to work in school is having a positive impact on a number of pupils.
- Pupils with SEND are also well supported. The special educational needs coordinator is experienced and well trained. Pupils' needs are quickly identified. Staff have been supported to develop more effective learning plans for these pupils. An effective system to check progress has been implemented. Clear reports are given to governors that account for the spending of funding and its impact.
- The primary school physical education (PE) and sport premium has been used well to improve the quality and range of experiences that pupils have. For example, funding has been used to improve the PE curriculum, provide equipment and to increase the opportunities pupils have to take part in competitive sport.

Governance of the school

- Members of the local governing board receive lots of information from school leaders about all aspects of the school's work. They gain other information from published data and from termly governor days in school. On these days, they have opportunities to visit lessons and to discuss learning and school life with pupils and staff.
- Despite being very new to the role, the chair of the governing body knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. For example, she spoke knowledgeably about how the school uses pupil premium funding and the impact it has on pupils.
- Minutes of local governing board meetings show how school leaders are held to account for their actions through challenging questioning.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Appropriate checks are made to make sure that all adults in school are suitable to work with children. Accurate and up-to-date records of these checks are maintained.
- All policies and procedures are fit for purpose. Adults are well trained and receive regular updates. Staff are vigilant and report all concerns, no matter how small. Records are clear and show that actions are taken in a timely manner, involving external agencies when appropriate. As a result, there is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school.
- Parents and carers are confident that their children are safe and well cared for in school. Pupils say they feel safe and know that there are adults in school that will help them if they ever need any kind of support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and teaching assistants have good subject knowledge and give very clear explanations. As a result, pupils understand the tasks they are asked to complete and have very positive attitudes to learning.
- A lot of effective work is done on developing pupils' vocabulary. Teachers carefully check that pupils understand the meaning of the words that they are asked to read and write in phonics lessons. Teachers consistently use the correct terms in mathematics and insist that pupils do the same.
- Classroom resources are well organised. Pupils are encouraged to refer to displays and to independently select appropriate resources to support their learning. For example, word mats and grapheme cards were chosen by some pupils to help them with their writing.
- Teachers are using successful strategies to teach writing that motivate pupils to write at length for different purposes. Pupils are given lots of opportunities to discuss what they are going to write before they begin. For example, during the inspection, pupils were writing a diary as if they were Samuel Pepys.

- Teachers and teaching assistants constantly check the work of pupils. They use their findings to offer specific praise so that pupils know exactly what they are doing well and to offer support where there are errors or misconceptions.
- In mathematics, pupils of all abilities have opportunities to develop fluency and problem-solving and reasoning skills. Pupils are encouraged to use apparatus and pictures to support their understanding before they move on to using more abstract methods. They have lots of opportunities to apply their skills in different contexts, for example measuring carefully and calculating widths when making pop-up cards.
- Phonics lessons are well structured, with pupils having opportunities to practise familiar sounds and to learn new ones. Pupils are encouraged to consider the position of sounds in words to help them with their spelling choices. While the most able pupils are given challenging tasks, there are times when this challenge only comes after completing work that is too easy. This hampers their progress in learning to read.
- A recent strategy to promote reading at home is already having an impact. More pupils are reading with adults at home and those that were already doing this are reading more frequently. However, many of the books that pupils take home are not well matched to their phonics knowledge.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils with SEND usually work alongside their peers but are given help by the way the task is presented, through the use of additional resources or by teacher or teaching assistant support.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are very self-assured in the school environment. They speak confidently in front of an audience in class and in assembly.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They are eager to please and most try very hard with the tasks they are given.
- Pupils have an impressive age-appropriate understanding of how to stay safe in different situations. They could talk enthusiastically about work they have done on road and online safety.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of what bullying is and the effect it can have. They say that there are no bullies in their school. They could describe the work that they have done on anti-bullying and could explain how to react if it was to occur.
- Parents who responded to a recent school survey and who made their views known to inspectors say that they have no concerns about bullying. They appreciate the support that the school gives to parents, pupils and families. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'This is not just a school, it's part of the family.'
- Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. They could describe the activities that they take part in to make sure that they get enough exercise. They could also talk at length about eating a range of different foods, including fruit and vegetables.

- Pupils have an extensive range of opportunities to take on additional responsibilities. They take turns to carry out a range of classroom monitor roles. Some act as picture news ambassadors and some are democratically elected to act on the school council.
- The support given to vulnerable pupils is a considerable strength of the school. The school is proactive in its work with groups and individuals to provide very high-quality pastoral support. Some initiatives have multiple benefits. For example, some pupils are invited to Early Birds before school each morning, where pupils have breakfast, have opportunities to socialise and are taught phonics.
- The school's ethos promotes understanding and tolerance of difference extremely well. The whole school works on a different value each month. Pupils were able to explain that this month's value, love, was introduced in an assembly with guest speakers. They have begun work on love for their families, places and things.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff have high expectations and pupils generally respond well to the clear boundaries that the school sets. The school's record of poor behaviour shows that incidents are extremely rare and are resolved quickly.
- Pupils are well supervised and behave well in lessons and as they move around school. At breaktimes, pupils play cooperatively and invent their own games.
- Attendance, over time, has been below the national average. In response to this, the school has introduced a wealth of strategies to bring about improvement. These include additional learning mentor time to work with families and rewards from Sam the dog. As a result, overall attendance over this academic year has risen to above the national average for last year. However, the attendance of boys is still below the average for boys nationally.
- Although the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has decreased dramatically over this academic year, it remains too high.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- When children start school in the early years, many have low starting points. Although children make good progress through the early years, by the time they start Year 1 they have not yet fully caught up. However, good teaching in key stage 1 ensures that pupils continue to make good progress, and so, by the end of Year 2, standards of attainment are in line with the national averages in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Pupils are well prepared for learning in junior school.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in mathematics. In 2018, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards improved considerably and were both above average. This represents strong progress from pupils' starting points. Pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills are well developed. They apply them effectively in different contexts. School data shows that pupils' attainment currently in Year 2 is similar to that in 2018.

- In writing, pupils make good progress. At the end of Year 2 in 2018, standards of attainment in writing were broadly average. Pupils can write at length and do so across the curriculum. Their written work is of a good standard.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above average. However, in 2018, this fell to below average. Swift and effective actions have been taken to support the pupils that failed reach the expected standard so that they catch up. Inspection evidence indicates that most of these pupils are now on track to meet the expected standard in Year 2. However, in both the early years and in key stage 1, the achievement of the most able in phonics is sometimes held back because learning does not move forward at a quick enough pace. Sometimes, for most-able pupils, work lacks challenge. The books pupils read are not always well matched to their phonics knowledge.
- From their starting points, disadvantaged pupils achieve well overall. In 2018, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standards in reading and mathematics was above that of other pupils nationally. However, the proportion doing so in writing was below that of other pupils nationally. School data indicates pupils' achievement in writing is improving, with a greater proportion of pupils currently working at the expected standards.
- Pupils with SEND are well supported and, therefore, most are making good progress from their starting points.
- The broad and balanced curriculum is ensuring that pupils are able to develop age-appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding across a wide range of subjects. The topic-based approach is used well to encourage pupils to make links between different areas of learning.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have a clear vision and intent for the early years. Self-evaluation has been used well to identify priorities for improvement and there is a clear action plan in place which is having a positive impact on the quality of provision.
- The environment across the early years is stimulating and interesting. Resources are organised in an attractive and accessible way that promotes children's curiosity. Water play engages the Nursery children and offers them many ways to explore movement. The pirate theme effectively engaged children in Reception and provided lots of opportunities for learning.
- Staff know the children well and plan activities to meet children's needs. There is a clear structure and quality to adult-led activities.
- Many children enter the early years with skills lower those typical for their age. An area of particular weakness on entry is children's language and communication skills. The school allocates resources, including additional speech and language provision, to ensure that this is addressed as soon as possible. The skilful use of stories with repeated refrains supports children to develop their listening and attention skills and encourages them to speak.

- The development of gross and fine motor skills has high priority. The impact of this work can be seen for all children but is especially evident in the writing of children who are working at, and above, the expected levels in writing.
- Children settle in quickly because of warm relationships with adults and soon become used to the routines of school life. Children show respect for adults and quickly learn to share and cooperate with their peers and behave well.
- All safeguarding and welfare requirements are met. Staff are sensitive to the needs of the children and provide additional support from within the team or external agencies, where it is appropriate.
- Parents contribute to initial and ongoing assessments of children and are encouraged to visit school to engage with children's learning. Leaders have recognised that there is a need to engage parents at the earliest opportunity. A programme of stay and play sessions and meetings has been planned for the September 2019 intake for the latter half of the summer term.
- Children make good progress from their starting points. However, the proportion of children achieving and exceeding a good level of development is consistently below the national average. Current in-school data suggests that this proportion is likely to increase this year but is still unlikely to reach the national average.
- Teachers and teaching assistants support children in making choices during their play and most use many open-ended questions to extend their thinking. However, on some occasions, questioning is not used well, and children are not supported to follow their interests and explore.
- The most able children are generally challenged well, particularly in writing. They are developing their phonics knowledge because of precise teaching. They can apply this in reading and writing. However, the pace of learning for these children in phonics is not as quick as it could be.

School details

Unique reference number	144573
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10086838

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	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Janine Ward
Headteacher	Jane Littlewood
Telephone number	01977 702261
Website	www.girnhill.wakefield.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@girnhill.wakefield.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Featherstone Girnhill Infant School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school converted to become an academy in July 2017 and is part of Inspire Partnership Multi-Academy Trust.
- The trust's governance includes members, trustees and governors, who sit on the Local Governance Board (LGB) of the school. Management responsibility is delegated to a leadership group made up of executive officers and the headteacher of the school.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average, although the proportion with an education, health and care plan is below average.

- The school runs breakfast and after-school clubs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups. Some of the observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books alongside middle leaders.
- An inspector met with a member and the chair of the local governing board and the chair of the trust board.
- An inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust and the school improvement partner.
- A range of documents was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings, records of checks on teaching and learning, and attendance and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors met formally with a group of pupils, spoke informally to pupils in lessons and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions took place with staff about safeguarding and the support and professional development that they receive.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents by meeting informally at the start of the school day and through the 116 responses to a recent school survey.

Inspection team

Chris Cook, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Dawn Foster

Ofsted Inspector

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