

Sowerby Village CofE VC Primary School

St Peter's Avenue, Sowerby, Sowerby Bridge, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX6 1HB

Inspection dates 6–7 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher provides an ambitious and clear direction for school improvement. She is well supported by senior leaders, an effective staff team and the governing body. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are both good and strongly improving.
- Provision is good in the early years and children achieve well in all areas of learning. They are well prepared for their future education when they start Year 1.
- Pupils of all abilities make good progress throughout the school in reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects. They are keen to learn and take pride in their success.
- The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers have high expectations and make good use of marking and feedback. Teaching assistants are trained and deployed well.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are good. Pupils are thoughtful and attentive. They consider the needs of others and older pupils take good care of younger and new pupils.
- The curriculum is well planned. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly promoted. The school takes every step to embed its core values of friendship, thankfulness, trust and forgiveness.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- On a few occasions, pupils do not achieve all they are capable of in writing because their spelling is not always accurate enough. This is not consistently addressed.
- Pupils do not always make efficient use of their mental calculation skills to solve mathematical problems and check the accuracy of their answers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school and also conducted several short visits to classrooms. They carried out one joint observation with the headteacher. The inspectors also looked at a wide range of pupils' work and listened to several pupils read.
- The inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, a representative of the local authority, senior leaders and other leaders with particular responsibilities, and members of staff.
- The inspectors took account of the 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), the results of the school's own consultations with parents, and spoke to several parents during the inspection. They also considered the responses from staff to the inspection questionnaire.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including: information on pupils' current progress, the school's plans for improvement, the management of teachers' performance, the use and impact of pupil premium funding, and records relating to pupils' behaviour, safety and child protection.

Inspection team

Andrew Clark, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Keith Bardon

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- Children attend the Nursery class on a part-time basis.
- The school met the government's current floor standards in 2014. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- There have been several staff changes since the previous inspection, including teachers who are new to the profession.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the already good and improving teaching in order to accelerate further pupils' learning by:
 - improving pupils' ability to spell accurately in all their written work
 - taking every opportunity to ensure that pupils make efficient use of their mental calculation skills to solve mathematical problems and check the accuracy of their answers.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a very clear vision for school development and is energetically driving further improvement. She is well supported by an effective senior leadership and a continually strengthening staff team. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are both rapidly improving and are now good. In particular, pupils make much more consistent progress from Years 3 to 6 and the most able now achieve well overall.
- Middle leaders are effective in their roles and contribute well to school improvement. For example, they produce accurate action plans for different subjects which support overall school improvement. This has contributed well to developments to teaching and learning in literacy, numeracy and computer studies. Some staff are new to their roles but are already having a good impact on further improvement. As a result, although achievement and the quality of teaching are not yet outstanding overall, the school is well placed to address the few remaining inconsistencies in teaching and learning.
- Self-assessment is accurate. Senior leaders ensure that it is securely based on accurate assessments of pupils' achievement, together with other aspects of their learning and development. The school is developing and trialling new procedures to assess pupils' progress following recent changes to the national curriculum. These procedures are already contributing to effective teaching and learning.
- Staff morale is high. Teachers, teaching assistants and support staff appreciate the good procedures for staff training and development.
- Pupils make good progress in a number of subjects because teaching is well informed through good-quality training, delivered both through the school and through links with other schools and the local authority. The local authority provides good support through regular, challenging reports and arranging specific training, for example in writing and mathematics.
- The school tackles any issues of discrimination and fosters good relations well. It promotes equality of opportunity successfully; this contributes to both pupils' well-being and the narrowing gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others.
- Staff are held fully accountable for the progress that their pupils make and are required to fulfil stringent criteria, linked to pupils' achievement, to reach the next salary level.
- Statutory safeguarding requirements are met. Policies are clear, appropriate and fully reflect local and national guidance. Staff are well trained and vigilant in child protection. They are supported by good systems of communication and record-keeping.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used well and has an increasingly positive impact on minimising any gap between the standards they reach and those of other pupils. Detailed analysis of the outcomes of specific teaching programmes ensure that leaders and the governing body are well placed to act speedily to address any underachievement.
- The curriculum is rich and imaginative throughout school, including the early years. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is central to the school's work. Pupils have good opportunities to develop musical, artistic and sporting skills. The school makes effective use of the primary school physical education and sport funding, and builds on existing good links with local professional sports organisations. The impact of the expenditure is closely monitored to ensure that it successfully contributes to pupils' involvement in competitive sports and team games and to the development of teachers' skills in physical education.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain through assemblies and work in many subjects. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well. For example, pupils investigate the work of different worldwide charities and missionary activities, and raise significant funds. They undertake exciting enterprise projects involving planning, creating and selling their own goods to raise money for board games.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is efficient and well led. Its members are passionate and well informed about the school and make a good contribution to self-evaluation and improvement. The governing body has reviewed all aspects of its work and continued to improve its effectiveness. For example, it has undertaken audits of governors' skills and financial management to ensure that members are deployed well. They regularly review the effectiveness of their work and create an action plan for future improvement.
 - The governing body receives detailed reports from the headteacher, senior and, increasingly, middle leaders linked to the school improvement plan and through members' own frequent and systematic checks on the school's work. These include learning walks with senior and middle leaders. Governors

make very good use of this information to hold leaders increasingly to account.

- The school's policies and website are updated regularly and the governing body ensures that statutory requirements are met. Finances are well managed by ensuring close scrutiny of all aspects of budget planning. Governors raise challenging questions on, for example, the use and impact of specific spending such as the pupil premium and sport funding.
- Governors are well informed of the quality of teaching in order to support decisions as to whether teachers should be rewarded with salary increases and to review targets for the headteacher. They are clear about the steps the school takes to address any aspects of underperformance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' conduct in lessons is good and they respond well to the high expectations of all staff. This reflects the headteacher's high expectations and the rigorous application of the school's behaviour policy. Very occasionally, pupils are not as self-motivated as they could be when teaching does not fully meet their needs.
- Pupils enjoy their school and are eager to talk about their experiences. They are polite and friendly towards each other and their teachers.
- Pupils work well with others. They try hard and take pride in their work and their appearance. They appreciate the steps teachers take to celebrate their achievement through marking and awards. They take pride in fulfilling their roles as school councillors, befrienders and lunchtime monitors. For example, the school council researched and purchased new 'buddy benches' to make playtimes safer and friendlier for all.
- The school keeps detailed records of the few incidents of poor behaviour and responds to them in a robust and well-considered manner. The few exclusions are managed well. The school provides good support to pupils who have emotional and social difficulties, helping them to manage their own behaviour.
- Pupils are concerned for others and express this through their studies in religious education, personal and social education, and fundraising activities. For example, they study the work of fair trade initiatives and contribute to local and international charities.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe and their parents agree. Leaders and the governing body are well trained and vigilant in ensuring that pupils learn in a safe and secure environment.
- Attendance is average and improving. The school has rigorous procedures to promote good attendance and punctuality. It makes effective use of pupil premium funding and initiatives such as the free breakfast club. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has significantly reduced and is below average.
- Pupils understand risks and dangers in their everyday life. They are well informed about different types of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying and the safe use of the internet. Well-planned assemblies, special days and studies in several subjects reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding. Attractive and informative newsletters, good use of the school's website and regular questionnaires contribute to pupils' and parents' awareness of these issues.
- Pupils rightly feel that there are few incidents of bullying and they know what they would do should any occur. They are tolerant of the views and beliefs of others, and staff and the governing body work well to promote this.
- Pupils are prepared well for the potential dangers they may meet in later life. Personal and social education, including activities with the emergency services, teaches them how to avoid the dangers of drugs and alcohol misuse as well as fire safety and other concerns.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers establish positive relationships with their pupils and have high expectations for their success throughout the school. Classrooms are orderly and stimulating environments. As a result, all groups of pupils are keen to learn and aim to do their best.
- Staff make good use of accurate assessments of pupils' progress to set clear targets for them to achieve in

all subjects. Teachers are trialling the use of new assessment procedures to raise expectations and meet the demands of the new national curriculum. Pupils say that their work usually challenges them.

- Marking and feedback are used well to celebrate pupils' achievement and guide them to reach the next steps in their learning. Most are successfully developing pupils' ability to criticise and edit their own work.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed throughout school. They bring skilled support to pupils of all abilities and, particularly, to those who have special educational needs and to the most able. The teaching assistant supervisors make a strong contribution to the training and effectiveness of all classroom support staff.
- Leaders use the funding for disadvantaged pupils well to provide teaching closely matched to these pupils' individual needs. Leaders regularly analyse and review the effectiveness of specific activities to address any gaps in learning in order to ensure they are effective and that staff are suitably trained.
- Teachers generally question pupils closely to broaden and deepen their thinking. For example, in Year 5 the teacher asked pupils to explain why they chose certain parts of a text to change into a play script and to leave out others. Teachers expect pupils to explain their thinking and understanding clearly to others which helps to develop their reasoning skills.
- The teaching of literacy is good overall. Effective teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) from the early years onwards contributes to pupils' success. Teachers encourage pupils to listen carefully and articulate sounds accurately. Their love of reading is strongly promoted throughout the curriculum, such as in their research in history, geography and science. Writing skills are now taught systematically. Pupils acquire a fluid handwriting style from the early years. Teachers expect pupils to write for a wide range of purposes and accurately apply their very good knowledge of grammar and punctuation skills.
- The teaching of mathematics is good, so standards are average and rising. Leaders have worked well to produce and apply a policy for teaching calculation skills which is helping pupils reach the expectations of the new national curriculum.
- Although the teaching of phonic skills is contributing to improved spelling for younger pupils, older pupils, especially in Years 5 and 6, rely too heavily on adults to help them spell unfamiliar words. They do not review their own work closely enough to ensure consistent accuracy.
- Pupils do not always make the best use of their mental calculation skills to solve mathematical problems in the most speedy and efficient way and this is not consistently addressed by teachers. For example, some opportunities are missed for pupils to use their knowledge of place value and their skills of estimation to check their own answers and whether they are likely to be accurate.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils of all abilities achieve well overall in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school. The pupils' progress is now consistently good through Years 3 to 6 and building effectively on their earlier learning.
- The results of the statutory tests and assessments in Year 2 and Year 6 have risen consistently over the last three years. As a result, they were in line with national averages in 2014 for reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching higher levels has improved well since the previous inspection. The headteacher and her staff take strong and effective action to tackle historical gaps in pupils' learning. The evidence of the inspection shows that the majority of pupils in the current Year 6 are now working at levels above those normally expected for their age, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- The high proportion of disadvantaged pupils make increasingly good progress compared to other pupils nationally. The school makes effective use of funding for disadvantaged pupils. At the end of 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 were in line with other pupils in the school in reading, one term below in writing and two terms below in mathematics. They were in line with other pupils nationally in reading, one-and-a-half terms below in writing and two-and-a-half terms below in mathematics. Inspection evidence shows that the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils is narrowing across the school and particularly in the current Year 5 and Year 6.
- The most able pupils achieve well overall. Pupils retain facts well and largely make good use of their skills in a range of subjects. These pupils show good levels of maturity, enthusiasm for their work and, when given the opportunity as they increasingly are, the ability to take the initiative. This is evident, for example, in their effective use of animation and hyperlinks in computing, and in designing very informative brochures on the Rocky Mountains in geography.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well from their individual starting points. Their individual needs are regularly and accurately checked. Staff ensure that they are prepared

well for their future learning by systematically and thoroughly developing their literacy and numeracy skills.

- Pupils read well. Pupils' phonic skills are well developed and they use them well to tackle unfamiliar words. The results in the Year 1 national screening check for phonic skills are above average and have improved well since the previous inspection. Pupils take a keen interest in books. By Year 6, pupils of all abilities read with evident enjoyment. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the level at which they are working and what they need to do to next to reach challenging targets. Consequently, they choose books which challenge them from the school's well-resourced reading scheme. Pupils of all abilities read with expression and fluency.
- Pupils of all abilities now write well overall and make good progress. The quality of pupils' handwriting is a strength of their writing and they consistently present work well. They are increasingly productive and regularly write at length because they are eager to do so. Pupils use increasingly complex grammar in order to make writing in a range of subjects interesting. In science, for example, 'The heart always has the same pumping action, about once a second, to keep you alive.' However, older pupils' spelling is not always accurate enough.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics overall. They build on their knowledge of number facts, such as number bonds and multiplication tables, to use these skills in written calculations and solve real-life problems. By Year 6, pupils have a good knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages to use in their investigations. However, they do not always use their mental mathematical skills efficiently to solve problems and check the accuracy of their work.
- The headteacher and senior leaders are rapidly addressing any underachievement. The few remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning mean that achievement is good overall but not outstanding.

The early years provision

is good

- Leadership and management are good. The quality of teaching is good overall and procedures to assess children's progress are effective. This is a result of thorough procedures to evaluate and improve staff's skills and curriculum planning.
- Children's starting points are largely below those typical for their age, particularly their reading and writing skills. They make rapid progress in these areas and so, by the end of Reception Year, they are well prepared for their next stage of learning in Year 1. Children of all abilities make good progress and many reach the level that is expected for their age by the end of Reception. Achievement through the Nursery and Reception is, therefore, good.
- Relationships are good. Staff establish positive relationships with parents from the very start through helpful procedures to prepare children for Nursery and to settle them in to their new surroundings. These procedures enable the staff to build a good initial knowledge of children's individual starting points and move quickly to eliminate any gaps in their learning.
- Teachers make accurate assessments of all aspects of children's achievement and use these to plan future learning. Overall, staff question children closely to secure and extend their knowledge and understanding of the world. Very occasionally, questions from staff do not build on children's learning or deepen their understanding.
- Children of all abilities work and play very well together and concentrate on their activities. Their behaviour and safety are good. They feel safe and are cared for well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well and they are curious about the world around them.
- Literacy and communication skills are well taught and this supports the rapid progress that many children make in reading and early writing, including disadvantaged children. Staff make effective use of indoor and outdoor activities to improve children's speaking skills and form a firm foundation for reading and writing development. Children have good opportunities to write for a range of reasons inspired by role play, children's literature, rhymes and songs.
- Disadvantaged children in the early years achieve well and make good gains in their early language and communication skills. The school has good links with educational and health agencies, such as speech therapists, to provide early support to children who have special educational needs, if needed.
- The most-able children make good progress because they make rapid gains in key skills such as phonics, comprehension, addition and subtraction. They are stimulated by the opportunities for role play and questions which help them think and reason. For example, they carefully consider the effects of water on the speed of rolling balls in exciting work on friction.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	133671
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	462286

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shirley Stoker
Headteacher	Lynsey Mitchell
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2013
Telephone number	01422 831971
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	admin@sowerbyvillage.calderdale.sch.uk

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