

Athelstan Primary School

Richmond Park Way, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S13 8HH

Inspection dates

18–19 June 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching requires improvement because over time it has not been good enough to ensure pupils make fast progress.
- Teachers do not always have sufficiently high expectations of what their pupils can achieve.
- In some lessons teachers talk for too long or pupils are not given challenging work.
- Not enough pupils make more than expected progress in English and mathematics.
- The teaching of reading is inconsistent and teachers do not monitor pupils' progress in reading closely enough.
- Pupils do not get enough opportunities to practise calculation and problem-solving skills in mathematics or develop their writing in other subjects.
- The school has not built on its previous strengths quickly enough.
- Not enough use is made of the information the school holds to measure the impact of initiatives to improve teaching and achievement.
- The governors do not provide leaders with the level of challenge to bring about improvements and embed them across whole the school.

The school has the following strengths

- There are examples of good teaching across the school.
- Pupils feel safe and are well cared for by adults, particularly pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Pupils have good manners, enjoy the many enrichment opportunities and are glad to be part of the school community.
- Attendance and punctuality are improving as a result of determined leadership.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 23 lessons. Several lessons were seen with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors heard pupils read and observed some small-group activities. They also examined examples of pupils' work with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, a representative from the local authority, governors, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 89 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and the 27 questionnaires from school staff.
- The inspectors examined school documents including those about pupils' attainment and progress, teachers' performance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Henry Moreton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Huda Aslam

Additional Inspector

Paul Plumridge

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger primary than most.
- Most pupils are White British and the proportion from other ethnic heritages is larger than that seen nationally.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals or those from service families, is broadly in line with other schools.
- The school does not have a stable pupil population, with numbers rising quickly and movement in and out. An increasing number of pupils travel to the school from outside its immediate locality, some from a distance.
- The school has a thriving breakfast club.
- During the inspection pupils took part in a 'science week'.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that it is consistently good or better, by ensuring all teachers:
 - give pupils consistent guidance on how to improve when marking their work
 - use information about how well pupils are learning to plan lessons that match the needs of all pupils, and particularly the more able
 - have high expectations about the quality and quantity of work pupils produce
 - plan for pupils to complete all their work
 - teach reading and handwriting systematically.
- Accelerate progress across the school in English and mathematics by:
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to practise calculation and undertake problem-solving skills in mathematics
 - ensuring all pupils have opportunities to develop their writing skills in all subjects
 - ensuring pupils develop good strategies to read and for teachers to consistently track their progress over time.
- Improve the behaviour and safety of pupils by:
 - ensuring all pupils attend regularly
 - ensuring all pupils are punctual
 - ensuring all lessons engage and motivate pupils of all abilities.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - acting to eliminate teaching requiring improvement to be good
 - ensuring the statistical information on pupils' achievement is accurate and making better use of it
 - tightening the systems for checking how well the school is performing
 - ensuring that training is provided for governors so they can gain an accurate view of the school's performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement. The school's own data, lessons observed by inspectors and the work in pupils' books all show that pupils' rates of progress, while improving, are not as fast or as consistent as they should be across the school as a whole. Standards are rising, but not fast enough.
- Pupils' progress in English is broadly in line with national expectations but too few make fast progress from their starting points. There are still too many inconsistencies in pupils' letter formation, spelling, grammar and punctuation. While pupils produce some good pieces of writing in English lessons they do not have enough opportunities to practise their writing, including their handwriting, in other subjects. By the end of Year 6 pupils' attainment in English is below that expected of pupils nationally.
- Teachers place an emphasis on reading and encourage pupils to read at home but there is no systematic check on how well this is done. This means that by the end of Year 2 pupils are not using their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) well enough to help them work out new words. By the end of Year 6 pupils' attainment in reading is below that expected of pupils nationally.
- In mathematics pupils' attainment is below that expected of pupils nationally. Standards in mathematics are improving but pupils' knowledge of number facts and their core skills of calculation are insecure. The result is that too many are still unable to apply their mathematical knowledge successfully when solving problems or carrying out investigations. Pupils of all abilities are not always making the progress expected of them.
- In 2012 the attainment of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding was below that of similar pupils nationally, and below that of other pupils in the school in English and mathematics. The pupil premium funding has been used to provide eligible pupils with additional support, both in and out of class. However, while this support is extensive it has not helped to narrow the gaps between groups of pupils fast enough. It reflects the lack of rigour in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the additional support provided.
- Children typically enter the Reception with knowledge and skills which are below those expected for their age, and sometimes well below. Still, too few make good progress and standards are still below average by the time they enter Year 1. Progress is slowest when children work independently. It speeds up when activities are led by adults.
- Most disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve in line with other pupils in school in English and mathematics. Their progress is tracked and in most lessons the work provided matches their learning needs.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is some good teaching throughout the school. The quality of teaching is improving as a result of the commitment of all staff. However, teaching is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that pupils' progress is fast enough in all classes, given pupils' starting points.
- In lessons that require improvement teachers often talk for too long and do not take enough account of what pupils already know, understand and can do. This slows learning and progress in developing key skills in English and mathematics. Some teachers do not expect enough from pupils. They are too accepting of, and overly praise, poor and often unfinished written work. Whilst there are some good examples of marking which informs pupils how well they are doing, marking is not consistently good across the school.
- Teachers do not consistently plan lessons that capture pupils' interest and motivate them. Activities do not always match pupils' abilities and, as a result, they are either unclear about what they are doing or bored and restless. In these instances little new learning takes place. There is not a consistent approach to teaching pupils how to work together.

- In the best lessons the pace of learning is sharp, effective use is made of questioning and timely opportunities are taken to check on progress without disturbing the flow of the lesson. The more-able pupils, in particular, are set challenging tasks to which they respond well.
- Throughout the school teachers and support staff establish strong relationships with pupils. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is promoted well, and the school is working hard to develop their spiritual awareness.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Children in the Reception classes quickly learn to play together. They benefit from the positive relationships with adults and each other. Children respond well to the opportunities given to exercise responsibilities but as they move through the school too many are not systematically taught the skills to work collaboratively.
- Pupils say that staff look after them well, and they feel safe and secure. Most parents who responded to Parent View, and to whom inspectors spoke, agree. Most pupils enjoy school, especially the many enrichment activities. Some are less keen on lessons. As a result, and in spite of recent improvements, attendance is still average. This also reflects a significant number of persistent absentees with whom the school continues to work. Punctuality is improving. The well-attended breakfast club ensures that those who attend get a positive start to the school day.
- The good levels of care provided by teachers and the consistent use of behaviour management strategies by all staff ensures that pupils' behaviour is good around the school. It requires improvement in lessons because too many pupils fail to be fully engaged. Though most pupils are keen to learn most of the time, some can become distracted when teachers talk for too long or activities are unclear and fail to challenge them sufficiently. There have been a small number of well-managed fixed-term exclusions.
- Pupils want to do well but do not always take enough pride in their work due to inconsistent expectations from staff. Where the reward system is used consistently it motivates pupils. Too much work is unfinished and poorly presented.
- Pupils have been provided with strategies to keep themselves safe, including the use of the internet and mobile phones. They are aware of the different forms that bullying can take, and say it is not common and that teachers will always deal with it quickly and effectively.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because they have not improved achievement and teaching sufficiently since the previous inspection.
- The systems for checking how well the school is doing are not rigorous enough. Leaders have a generous view of the school's performance. Monitoring is not sharp enough and improvements are not securely embedded across all classes. Insufficient action has been taken to eliminate teaching that requires improvement.
- The school has systems for assessing pupils' progress and much statistical information. However, not enough is done to check and ensure the accuracy of this information. This includes the effectiveness of the many interventions for pupils in danger of falling behind.
- Leaders have developed effective strategies for managing and supporting pupils' behaviour and these are consistently applied by teachers. Adults provide high levels of care. As result, the school is a harmonious community and the barriers which can prevent pupils from learning are being removed. This includes a determined drive to improve attendance and punctuality, though this remains a work in progress.
- Social, moral and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils' spiritual development is developing well including through the frequent assemblies. Much time and resourcing is devoted to attending to pupils' well-being.

- Discrimination is not tolerated and all pupils have access to the full range of opportunities that the school provides. Great strides have been taken by school leaders to tackle poor attendance.
- School leaders tackle all incidents of bullying robustly and document them meticulously. They work closely with individual parents, although a small number remain to be convinced.
- Replies to the staff questionnaire show that school leaders have the overwhelming support of the staff. Morale is high. Responses to Parent View paint a different picture, with a significant proportion expressing their misgivings about the school's performance.
- School leaders and the governors ensure that teachers' progression through pay scales is linked to pupils' progress.
- The school receives light-touch support from its local authority.
- The school provides a good range of opportunities to enrich pupils' experiences and these motivate and interest them. These include a range of sports, visits and the end-of-week opportunities to learn with others from different classes.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance requires improvement. Governors are very committed to the school and a significant number of them are involved in a range of monitoring activities. They are passionate about supporting the social and emotional needs of pupils. Governors ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met. They understand how the pupil premium is spent but not about its effectiveness on pupils' progress. This is because they are not provided with precisely accurate information about how well pupils are doing. As a result, they do not hold leaders fully to account for pupils' progress. Governors ensure that arrangements for pay increases to individual teachers are implemented appropriately but do not ensure teachers' targets are linked closely enough to pupils' achievement.

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	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. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	107083
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	412995

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	495
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Horsfield
Headteacher	Deb Halliday
Date of previous school inspection	20 July 2010
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