

Hillside Academy

Crags Road, Denaby Main, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN12 4DX

Inspection dates

12 to 13 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. Despite pupils making better progress recently, there is still a way to go before pupils make up for the lost ground of previous years.
- Teachers' expectations, including for the most able pupils, are not high enough. While the quality of teaching is improving, good teaching is not consistently the norm.
- The progress pupils are making is variable in all year groups from Year 1 to Year 6. In a range of subjects, the progress the most able pupils are making is not good enough.
- Teachers do not apply the academy's assessment policy consistently. Pupils' misconceptions in mathematics and incorrect spellings are not identified quickly enough.
- Leaders have plans to improve the quality of the wider curriculum, but this has not happened yet. This means there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills in many subjects.
- The curriculum does not prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils are not taught enough about different religions. This is limiting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The school has the following strengths

- The principal has improved the quality of teaching so that it is no longer inadequate. He has won the trust and confidence of pupils, staff and most parents.
- The principal has made an effective start in tackling the underperformance of the past. Senior leaders demonstrate a clear capacity to improve.
- Apart from outdoors, the quality of teaching in Nursery and Reception is good. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has continued to rise.
- Leaders have used additional funding effectively to help them to reduce frequent absence. As a result, pupils' attendance is improving strongly.
- Pupils understand the new core values and are proud of them. As a result, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning have improved markedly.
- The board of trustees has decisive and strategic plans to further improve the quality of education at the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good, enabling pupils to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils, including the most able pupils, can achieve in English and mathematics
 - ensuring that teachers consistently use the academy's assessment policy.
- Improve the curriculum to ensure that:
 - pupils have a more secure depth of knowledge and skills across a range of subjects beyond English and mathematics
 - pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain and have a good knowledge and understanding of different religions.
- Improve the quality of experiences children have to play and learn outside in the early years.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal inspires trust and confidence through his leadership. He is relentless in his drive for improvement. This has resulted in improved outcomes in all key stages at the expected standard. However, while current pupils are making better progress, there are too many gaps to fill, following a legacy of previous inadequate teaching.
- Leaders are accurate in their evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They regularly monitor the quality of teaching and give teachers clear guidance for improvement. This means that teaching is improving rapidly.
- The principal has worked hard to engage parents and gain their support. Many parents appreciate the changes that he has made. One parent said, reflecting the views of other parents, that the principal, 'has been a great asset to the school and has ensured it has gone from strength to strength.'
- The multi-academy trust is continuing to train middle leaders. For example, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is quickly developing new knowledge and leadership skills. This is improving outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- The multi-academy trust provides regular leadership development days. A recent development day focused on developing the wider curriculum. This has led to a review of the school's curriculum plans. These are due for implementation from September 2019.
- Leaders' introduction of a new approach to the teaching of writing last September has given pupils more opportunities to write in different styles and genres. These more frequent opportunities to practise using their skills in different types of writing, in English lessons, are helping pupils to improve their writing.
- The wider curriculum is underdeveloped and does not offer sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects. This is limiting their progress. Too few pupils reach the higher standard of writing achieved by other pupils nationally.
- Teachers are positive about the training they are given. In the staff survey undertaken as part of this inspection, 100% of staff agreed that, 'Leaders do all they can to ensure the school has a motivated, respected and effective teaching staff.' Focused training in mathematics and writing is leading to pupils making better progress in these subjects.
- Leaders have recently used additional sport premium funding to increase the number of after-school clubs. Pupils enjoy the extra clubs that have been offered.
- Leaders use additional funding for disadvantaged pupils to pay for extra English lessons for pupils who have fallen behind. They also use this money to pay for staff from within the multi-academy trust to teach classes so that senior and middle leaders can attend leadership training sessions. This means that the quality of teaching is consistent when teachers are out of school.

Governance of the school

- Trustees are very proud of their record of improvement as a multi-academy trust. They are ambitious that this academy continues its journey of rapid improvement.
- Trustees delegate some of their responsibilities to officers within the trust, and others to a transition management board. Minutes of the transition management board's meetings show that the main challenge they offer leaders is to ensure compliance, for example, that checks have been made to make sure that the right information is published on the academy website.
- The multi-academy trust's challenge visits focus on safeguarding compliance checks, or support for the recently appointed SENCo. These challenge visits have been effective in bringing about improvement.
- Trustees are monitoring the academy's finances diligently.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders review safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that they are fit for purpose. The principal has introduced new systems to keep safeguarding records.
- The trust provides effective challenge for this aspect of the academy's work. The local authority has completed thorough annual health and safety checks of the premises for many years. The trust is making arrangements to ensure that site risk assessments and checks continue to be carried out.
- Staff at all levels are well trained and there is a strong culture of safeguarding. Pupils say that they feel safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning is improving rapidly, but remains variable.
- The teaching of phonics is good. Teachers and teaching assistants have good subject knowledge. They use language precisely. Pupils enjoy learning their letters and sounds and have a secure knowledge of phonics. Pupils are quickly becoming confident and fluent readers.
- In Year 1 and Year 2, teachers give pupils reading books that are well matched to the sounds and letters that they know. Pupils' reading records show that many parents hear their children read at home. This home-school partnership, along with good teaching, is helping pupils in key stage 1 to make good progress in their reading.
- The legacy of inadequate teaching means that older pupils were not taught well as early readers, so they are less confident readers now. The progress Year 6 pupils made in their reading test last year was significantly below the progress made by pupils of the same age in other schools. Consequently, leaders introduced a new approach to the teaching of reading in September 2018. As a result, older pupils are currently making stronger progress in reading.

- The quality of pupils' written work is generally poor. Pupils do not take enough pride in their work. Teachers do not apply the academy's assessment policy consistently, so they do not identify pupils' spelling errors quickly enough or notice the poor quality of pupils' work. Many pupils struggle to spell accurately, and some teachers make spelling errors on the board when they are teaching, or in things they have written in pupils' books. This is not helping pupils to improve their spelling.
- The quality of the teaching of writing is variable. Where teachers have good subject knowledge, pupils are making progress. However, some teachers' expectations are far too low, and the tasks they set for writing are too easy. Teachers' expectations of the most able pupils are undemanding. This is holding the most able pupils back.
- In mathematics, the standard of teaching is variable. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 are making good progress. This is not, however, the case in key stage 2, where work set is often far too easy. For example, teachers continue to set easy and repetitive calculations when pupils have already shown that they understand. There are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge to reasoning and problem-solving. When problems are set, they tend to be simplistic.
- Leaders have already identified that the standard of teaching across the wider curriculum requires improvement. The standard of work pupils produce in subjects like history and geography is poor. There are gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills in all subjects, so pupils are not making the progress they should.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The principal has introduced core values in a way that appeals to pupils. These core values are resilience, empathy, aspiration, contribution and happiness. Pupils can easily remember these core values because each one is linked to a type of shoe.
- Pupils were proud to tell me about the 'Hillside shoes'. For example, one pupil explained that 'contribution' is symbolised by trainers, because it's about teamwork. Pupils want to make a positive contribution and be a valued member of a group, the class or academy community.
- Pupils are rewarded when teachers notice that they have shown one of these attributes. This motivates pupils to work well together. Pupils' conduct around the academy has improved as pupils strive to show these values every day.
- Bullying has reduced markedly. Although a very small minority of pupils and parents are still concerned about bullying, most pupils say they feel safe in the academy now. Pupils say that if they report that bullying is happening, adults work quickly to resolve it. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online.
- The weaknesses in the wider curriculum mean that pupils are not taught well enough about other religions. They have a very limited understanding of other faiths and cultures, and of the need for tolerance and respect for differences. This means pupils are not prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Too many pupils have been frequently absent in recent years. Leaders used some of their additional funding to improve pupils' attendance and this has made a real difference.
- The posh, shiny Hillside shoe symbolises aspiration. Pupils show a determination to have positive attitudes to their learning and try their best in lessons. They show self-discipline, behaving well in lessons even when work is too easy to sustain their interest.
- Most pupils behave well around the academy, between lessons and at breaktime. There have been some fixed-term exclusions, but these are reducing. The principal takes a firm stand on behaviour that is unacceptable.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Although improving, outcomes remain variable. Gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding from inadequate teaching in previous years are beginning to be addressed. Pupils' attainment is rising and is now above average in mathematics and writing. Pupils' outcomes in reading have further to travel and remain below average.
- In the past, outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check have been well below the national standard. However, recent improvements to the teaching of reading have helped to ensure that current Year 1 pupils are now making good progress in their early reading and phonics.
- Outcomes at the end of Year 2 have been variable over time, but they have remained well below the national standard in reading, writing and mathematics. No pupils reached the higher standard, in any subject, in 2017 or 2018.
- Weak teaching in the spring term slowed the rate of progress that the most able pupils made.
- Although it remained well below average, attainment improved at the reading, writing and mathematics combined standard in the Year 6 tests in 2018. However, no pupils achieved the higher combined standard in 2017 or 2018.
- Effective interventions, led by skilful teaching assistants, are helping pupils with SEND to make good or better progress. Some pupils with SEND have made such good progress that they have now caught up with their peers and no longer need additional support.

Early years provision

Good

- Children's attainment on entry is below that typically found for their age. From these very low starting points, children make strong progress. Leaders make effective links with parents and carers to help children to achieve well. There is a high take-up for the popular 'book and biscuit' story sessions on a Friday.
- Outcomes in Reception have continued to rise. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development is consistently well above the national standard. This often includes the proportion of children who exceed the early learning goals in reading,

writing and number. This means children are well prepared for the demands of Year 1.

- Some children have poor speaking and listening skills when they start Nursery or Reception. Leaders use additional funding wisely to get children the extra help they need. This is helping to improve children's communication skills so that they can reach the expected standard.
- Most children who join the early years have not attended pre-school provision before starting school. For the very small minority of children who have been to pre-school, leaders contact those settings to find out what children have learned already. This helps adults to ensure that learning can start quickly and children make good progress.
- The quality of the outdoor classroom is not as rich as the space children have to play and learn indoors. This is limiting children's opportunities for physical development.
- The experienced early years leader is well qualified and effective in her role. She oversees the work of the whole early years team and ensures that their assessment judgements are accurate. All staff have the necessary specialist training to ensure that children's care and welfare needs are met.
- Children play well together and they take turns and share. Children listen to each other. Children make positive relationships with adults and with each other. Behaviour in early years is good.

School details

Unique reference number	142934
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10087487

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	James Muir
Principal	Joe Woffinden
Telephone number	01709 862 640
Website	http://www.astreahillside.org
Email address	mailto: info@astreaacademytrust.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This academy is part of the Astea Academy Trust and opened in September 2016.
- The board of trustees is accountable for the school's performance. The scheme of delegation is published on the school's website.
- This academy is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school includes pupils from four out of 17 possible ethnic groups. Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- There is a higher-than-average proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding at this academy.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all year groups from Nursery to Year 6. Most of these observations were undertaken alongside school leaders.
- The inspector reviewed children's learning journeys and pupils' written work across the curriculum. Pupils' learning was evaluated alongside subject leaders.
- The inspector held discussions with pupils throughout the inspection.
- The inspector reviewed six responses to Parent View and talked to 10 parents before school. Inspectors considered the nine responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupils' survey.
- The board of trustees nominated the multi-academy trust's chief executive officer and executive director of education to represent them.
- Meetings were held with the principal, the assistant principal and the SENCo. A meeting was also held with the safeguarding officer.
- The inspector reviewed several academy documents, including the academy improvement plan, the principal's monitoring records, the multi-academy trust's pupil premium review document and the academy's attendance, behaviour and exclusion records.
- No records of governors' minutes were provided during this inspection, but the multi-academy trust did provide minutes of the transition management board meetings.
- A list of governors' visits was provided; visits related to either monitoring of safeguarding or supporting the SENCo.

Inspection team

Tracey Ralph, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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