

Pontefract Halfpenny Lane Junior Infant and Nursery School

Halfpenny Lane, Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF8 4BW

Inspection dates

6–7 February 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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The head of school has worked successfully to raise expectations and create a culture where all pupils can thrive.
- Leaders, including those responsible for governance, are passionate about their school and share a united vision of securing high achievement for pupils.
- The trust knows this school well. Effective support has helped the head of school to bring about rapid improvements to teaching and learning.
- Outcomes are good and improving, especially in mathematics.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Pupils enjoy books, and their comprehension skills are developing well. Teachers have developed a healthy culture of reading for pleasure.
- Children in the early years get off to a flying start because provision is closely matched to their needs and interests. From below-average starting points, they make good progress and the large majority reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year.
- Staff know the pupils exceptionally well and relationships are strong. This leads to happy pupils who feel safe and cared for.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, but a little variability remains.
- Pupils make good progress in their writing, which is improving rapidly. However, handwriting is inconsistent and a small number of pupils do not receive the support they need to write independently. The quality of pupils' writing varies in subjects other than English.
- Pupils access stimulating experiences in the wider curriculum but do not develop subject-specific knowledge and skills in some subjects in enough depth.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is good. On occasion, the management of playtime activities is less developed.
- Leaders at all levels have identified the right priorities for improvement. However, written plans do not map out the improvement journey clearly enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - plans for improvement better reflect the school's priorities by giving a clearer indication of how leaders and governors will check the effect of improvement strategies on improving outcomes for pupils
 - provision for pupils at breaktime provides more purposeful and better-managed opportunities to play
 - work to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) continues so that they attend school as regularly as they should.
- Further improve the quality of pupils' writing by:
 - teaching letter formation and handwriting consistently well
 - developing strategies to help pupils write independently
 - ensuring that teachers expect pupils to write to a high standard across all curriculum subjects.
- Further develop the curriculum so that pupils:
 - acquire subject-specific knowledge and skills across subjects beyond English and mathematics in greater depth
 - develop a better understanding of British values and different religions and cultures and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The trust has recently appointed new leaders and governors, who have brought about much-needed improvements. The chief executive officer of the trust, primary consultant executive and executive director of teaching and learning have worked effectively with the head of school to raise expectations and improve teaching.
- The head of school has a clear and unwavering vision shared by all staff. He has created a very happy school with high staff morale. Parents and carers are appreciative of the changes the new leaders have made.
- The head of school has a hands-on approach to the leadership of teaching, learning and assessment. He carries out regular visits to lessons, book scrutiny and discussions with pupils to gather an accurate insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Teachers, especially those in the early stages of their career, receive appropriate and timely support, which is checked closely. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved.
- Although relatively new to their posts, middle leaders have identified and tackled the right priorities with a sense of urgency and commitment. This has secured rapid improvement across the school.
- Leaders check pupils' attainment and progress very closely. They know when pupils are falling behind and when they are catching up. Leaders and teachers meet regularly to discuss pupils' progress and review their work to identify where additional support is required. This bespoke approach to intervention is helping to address historical gaps in pupils' learning and accelerate their progress.
- Leaders use additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND effectively. They review the effect of the funding regularly to ensure that it continues to meet the pupils' changing needs. Consequently, the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is improving quickly.
- Leaders spend the primary school physical education and sport funding effectively. They offer a wide range of additional sporting activities after school which has increased the rates of pupil participation and activity. The trust has recently appointed a physical education, school sports and well-being leader to further develop competitive sport and lead the professional development of teachers. It is too early to measure the impact of this action.
- Leaders have established opportunities for middle leaders and teachers to work with colleagues in other schools within the trust. Joint activities to share good practice and check standards of teaching and pupils' work are contributing to the development of a strong middle leadership team.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through assemblies, enriching curriculum visits and visitors to the school. Leaders provide pupils with the opportunity to lead class assemblies, which are well attended by parents. This brings the school community together and develops pupils' self-confidence.

- Leaders promote fundamental British values in practical ways, such as through pupil elections to the school council. However, some aspects of the school's work to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain through the taught curriculum are less developed.
- Leaders have appointed a new curriculum leader, who is working with staff to enhance the curriculum. This process is at an early stage, and pupils do not acquire subject-specific knowledge in the wider curriculum in the same depth as in English and mathematics.
- Leaders are taking appropriate action to address the school's main priorities. However, written plans for improvement are not precise enough.

Governance of the school

- Following a review of governance, trustees recognised that arrangements for local governance were ineffective. The trust acted swiftly and introduced a new school performance review board (SPRB) structure. Members of the SPRB have a good range of skills and have quickly established an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are ambitious and committed to the school, sharing the leaders' vision for improvement.
- Lines of accountability between the trust, SPRB and school leaders have been strengthened recently by the introduction of achievement and improvement meetings with a partner school.
- The trust has high expectations for pupils' academic performance and has provided effective support for new leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders carry out thorough checks on the suitability of adults working with children. They have ensured that all staff are well trained and know what to do if they have a concern.
- Staff share a collective responsibility for keeping children safe. Leaders follow up concerns over pupils' welfare and record these thoroughly. They maintain close links with external agencies to keep children safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan engaging work that helps pupils to learn well. Leaders provide staff with appropriate training and support. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved throughout the school.
- Teachers challenge pupils' thinking through careful questioning. Pupils are keen to share and discuss ideas with each other. This helps to deepen new learning.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and classroom routines are well established. Pupils are confident to answer questions and respond enthusiastically to adults' questions and requests. Relationships between pupils and staff are strong, and help to foster pupils' good attitudes and behaviour.

- The teaching of reading is effective. Pupils develop secure phonics skills that enable them to decode unfamiliar words accurately. Teachers successfully foster a love of reading. Pupils read widely and often. Older pupils regularly read with younger pupils, which improves their confidence and self-esteem. They are keen to share their opinions about the texts they read and can talk about their favourite authors.
- In mathematics, pupils benefit from regular opportunities to practise their basic skills and solve problems. Pupils say that they like mathematics and enjoy taking quizzes and tests to check their understanding. Teachers' confidence and subject knowledge have developed well. This is having a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment.
- Teachers use interesting contexts to motivate pupils to write at length. Pupils develop a secure knowledge of grammar, spelling and punctuation, which contributes to the fluency and accuracy of their writing. However, in subjects other than English, errors are not routinely corrected. As a result, high standards are not maintained across the curriculum.
- On occasion, adults do not use examples precisely enough to show pupils exactly how to develop their writing. Some pupils are unable to form their letters correctly, and pupils' handwriting varies widely. Consequently, some pupils are unable to write well independently.
- Teachers maximise opportunities to improve pupils' vocabulary. For example, in an instructional writing lesson, pupils used the word 'tepid' rather than 'warm' to describe the temperature of water in a subtle way. However, on occasion, a small number of adults are not careful enough to speak in correct forms of Standard English to reinforce pupils' language development.
- The frequency and quality of teaching in the foundation subjects is variable. As a result, pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are underdeveloped in some subjects, such as computing and religious education.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are happy and welcoming to visitors. They are very proud of their school and want to do their best. Pupils say that they enjoy lessons and the wider experiences they get, such as visits to The Deep, Filey and Pontefract Castle.
- Pupils get along well and are considerate towards each other. Pupils told inspectors that adults take good care of them.
- Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given, for example as reading ambassadors and digital leaders. This is helping to develop their confidence and maturity.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and they know how to keep themselves safe in a range of different situations. For example, they have learned about stranger danger, online safety and the dangers of drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

- Support for vulnerable pupils is strong. School leaders and staff know pupils and their families well. They work with a range of professionals and external agencies to ensure that the right support is in place. Parents are thankful for the help they receive from school staff, such as referrals to the food bank.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying. They know who to go to if they have any concerns and feel confident that it will be sorted out.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes and a healthy respect for difference. They say that everyone is welcome at this school. However, their understanding of British values and different religions and beliefs is variable. They know right from wrong and understand the principles of law and justice. They are less clear about diversity and differences within other cultures.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Leaders have established a successful behaviour policy. Pupils understand the system and say that they particularly like the house points. They listen attentively, follow routines and apply themselves to their work. Behaviour in lessons is consistently strong throughout the school.
- Parents recognise and appreciate the school's positive approach to behaviour management. New leaders have successfully addressed historical issues relating to behaviour management.
- Adults model good manners, and as a result pupils are polite and conduct is good.
- Most pupils behave sensibly at breaktimes, although a few boys are a little boisterous at times. On occasion, adults do not manage the activities of these pupils well enough.
- The attendance of pupils has improved so that it is now broadly in line with national figures. Despite the work of the learning mentor, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, although improving, remains too low.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders have successfully reversed the decline in pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2018, a much higher proportion of pupils left Year 6 well prepared for secondary school. Although attainment remained below national figures last year, progress is improving and pupils are catching up quickly because teaching is more effective.
- Effective leadership has secured and sustained improvements in mathematics. Changes to the curriculum and higher expectations are ensuring that pupils are making much better progress in mathematics at key stages 1 and 2, where attainment is in line with national figures at the expected standard and greater depth.
- Leaders' focused efforts to improve the progress and attainment of pupils in writing have paid dividends. Most pupils are now writing at the expected standard for their age or better. The outcomes of the 2018 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test at the end of key stage 2 show a marked improvement in this important aspect of writing.

- Pupils make strong progress in phonics in the early years and key stage 1 because it is taught effectively. Pupils apply their phonics skills with confidence and enjoy reading books. As a result, the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was slightly above the national average last year.
- The new inclusion team is rapidly improving the provision and outcomes for pupils with SEND. Effective support in lessons and bespoke interventions allow teachers and support staff to help pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- Historically, disadvantaged pupils at this school have not done as well as others, especially in reading. Better teaching and sharper checks on learning and progress are improving disadvantaged pupils' progress. This is reflected in the 2018 outcomes and in pupils' current work.
- The school's assessment information and work in books show that current pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, progress is not consistently strong in other subjects.
- Pupils' attainment in science at the end of key stages 1 and 2 has been below the national average for the last two years. Work in pupils' books indicates that this is improving, but inconsistencies remain.

Early years provision

Good

- The new early years leader has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Very quickly, she has established a strong team with a shared vision, which has accelerated the pace of improvement in the early years.
- Children make good progress from their different starting points. Those entering the school with skills, knowledge and abilities that are below those typical for children of their age catch up quickly. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development is in line with national figures.
- Adults have created a learning environment which is attractive and carefully organised. Children access resources independently to structure their own activities and solve problems together. They make full use of the plentiful opportunities to practise their reading, writing and number skills.
- Teachers plan learning opportunities with great thought and adapt planned provision very skilfully in response to children's emerging interests. This sustains children's engagement and secures their good progress.
- Staff have high expectations of children. They model expected behaviour exceptionally well, and consequently children display lovely manners when playing together. Staff have cultivated a learning environment that enables children to make rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Parents are fully engaged in the learning journey with their children. They attend developmental workshops and access the activity library, which helps to continue children's learning and progress at home.
- Strategies to secure the good progress of children with SEND are effective.

- Adults ask thoughtful questions and develop children's knowledge and understanding about the wider world through incidental conversations. Many children enter the school with poor speech and language skills. The early years leader develops children's responses very effectively, but this is not consistent practice among all adults.

School details

Unique reference number	139502
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10082025

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	455
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Tim Craven
Headteacher	James Parkinson (Head of School)
Telephone number	01977 703270
Website	www.halfpennylane.net
Email address	admin@halfpenny.patrust.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 March 2015

Information about this school

- Halfpenny Lane is larger than the average-sized primary school. It is part of the Pontefract Academies Trust. The SPRB is a sub-committee of the trust board and provides support and challenge to the head of school (appointed September 2017).
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is slightly lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is slightly above the national average.
- The school operates a breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons, some alongside school leaders. They listened to pupils reading and looked at the work in a wide range of pupils' books to evaluate their progress over time.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils, staff, governors, representatives from the trust and parents. Inspectors also considered 106 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed by inspectors in lessons, during break and lunchtimes and during assembly.
- Inspectors analysed information from a range of school documentation. This included the summary of self-evaluation, school improvement plans, governance documents, the school website and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors considered the 40 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jo Bentley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Allwood	Ofsted Inspector
Mary Lanovy-Taylor	Ofsted Inspector

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