

# Valley Park Community School

Norton Avenue, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S14 1SL

## Inspection dates

15–16 March 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Over time, pupils' progress has been too slow in a range of subjects and year groups. This is because the quality of teaching across the school is too variable.
- Leaders are overly generous in their evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, teaching is not improving quickly enough.
- Teachers do not always address pupils' misconceptions swiftly enough. This means that pupils do not consistently make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not consistently equip pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to enable them to progress as well as they could. This is particularly evident for the most able and lower ability pupils.
- Teachers' development of pupils' language and communication skills is inconsistent across subjects and year groups.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills. This means that pupils do not learn how to reason and solve problems effectively.
- Too many pupils are frequently absent from school. This is exacerbated by high rates of exclusion, which are well above the national average. The overall level of attendance remains well below that seen nationally.
- The teaching of the wider curriculum does not enable pupils of all abilities to acquire sufficient knowledge and skills in a range of subjects.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, including governors and trustees, show an admirable passion for serving their community. They are determined to give pupils the best life chances possible.
- Adults in school have secure and positive relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils are courteous and confident to share their views.
- Teaching in early years is good and results in children making strong progress from their often low starting points.
- Teaching of phonics is good. Consequently, pupils in key stage 1 are proficient in using phonic skills to advance their reading.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good or better, so that pupils maximise their progress
  - making sure that teachers and teaching assistants have the necessary subject knowledge to support pupils' good or better progress across the curriculum
  - improving the accuracy of leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching, so that it focuses upon the gains in pupils' progress
  - continuing to prioritise and check on the effectiveness of strategies to improve pupils' attendance and reduce behavioural incidents that lead to exclusion.
- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that they are good or better by ensuring that:
  - teaching addresses pupils' misconceptions swiftly and provides pupils with direction so that learning is moved on at a more rapid rate
  - teaching equips pupils, particularly the most able and lower ability pupils, with the skills and knowledge they need to make at least good progress across a range of subjects
  - teaching staff take every opportunity to develop the language skills of pupils, particularly in broadening their vocabulary
  - pupils are given regular opportunities to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics.
- Improve attendance rapidly by:
  - reducing the rate of fixed-term exclusions
  - reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school
  - making sure that those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities access appropriate support to ensure they attend more regularly.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Prior to, and following, the school's opening as an academy in April 2015, the school experienced very high rates of staff turnover. The subsequent difficulties in recruiting and retaining personnel, including for leadership positions, caused an extended and significant period of turbulence for the school. This has had a detrimental impact on pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance.
- Since this period of turbulence, the trust has acted to strengthen the leadership of the school. The appointment of co-headteachers and new middle leaders has brought much-needed stability. Although there are signs that leaders and managers are beginning to improve areas of underperformance, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment remains variable.
- Leaders demonstrate a high level of ambition for the school's performance, and staff morale is unwaveringly positive. However, leaders have focused too much on the positives and not enough on the remaining weaknesses when evaluating the school's current position. Consequently, they are not addressing weaker aspects of teaching rapidly enough.
- Leaders' actions are starting to reduce the number of behavioural incidents that lead to fixed-term exclusions. They are also tackling pupils' absence, which is slowly starting to decrease. While this is heartening, rates of absence and exclusion remain exceptionally high and are not improving quickly enough.
- Senior and middle leaders know what good-quality teaching and learning look like. They articulate the well-reasoned strategies they are implementing to move the school forward effectively. They have identified some aspects of teaching that need to improve. For example, the training they have provided to improve the teaching of phonics has been effective. However, leaders have not adequately identified or improved the weaknesses in some teachers' subject knowledge.
- Leaders have carefully mapped out the progression of pupils' skills across a range of subjects. However, leaders have not identified how pupils will progressively build up their knowledge within units of work. In addition, leaders are not checking that teachers are covering all aspects of the wider curriculum. They do not recognise where pupils may be missing out on learning in some subjects.
- Despite identifying language development as a high priority for pupils, leaders have not given teachers clear direction about developing pupils' subject-specific vocabulary. Consequently, pupils are not always equipped to succeed in the tasks set for them.
- Leaders are now using funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities more effectively. A newly appointed special educational needs coordinator from within the trust is starting to have a positive effect on the provision the school offers. As a result, the majority of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are now beginning to improve their engagement with learning to help them make good progress.
- The opinions of parents and carers about the school vary, with the large majority of parents expressing positive views. On the whole, parents say that they feel the school

is improving and acknowledge the challenges the school has faced in the past.

- Leaders place suitably high emphasis on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils gain spiritual development from structured opportunities to formulate and express their views on differing faiths. Their aspirations are raised through educational trips, workshops and other enhancements such as expert visitors to the school.
- Leaders have used pupil premium funding to enable disadvantaged pupils to overcome potential obstacles to learning. For example, an aspect of the 'CALM' approach to learning focuses on pupils developing effective learning behaviours.
- Primary physical education (PE) and sport funding is used very well. Pupils benefit from specialist coach-led lessons and teachers are upskilled through working alongside the coaches. Pupils show their appreciation of extra-curricular activities through their increased attendance at clubs and tournaments.

### **Governance of the school**

- Representatives of the local governing body and the board of directors have an inflated view of the progress pupils make and the points they reach in their learning. They rightly recognise the improvements made to outcomes for children in early years and for pupils in Year 6. However, their understanding of the progress and attainment for pupils in other year groups is more limited. For example, governors do not know about the proportions of pupils who are exceeding the expected standards in reading, writing or mathematics in each year group. Consequently, governors and directors are not able to challenge leaders effectively and hold them to account for pupils' achievements.
- Governors and directors are well informed about the strategies leaders have introduced to improve teaching, behaviour and attendance. They use their standards committee as a vehicle to question leaders and to ascertain the effect of these new initiatives. The result is that governors and directors know these aspects of the school's effectiveness well.
- The fervour with which governors and directors approach their role is impressive. They are heartfelt in their belief that the school is the 'engine of social mobility' for the community. They take seriously their role in improving the future quality of life of pupils.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders work diligently to ensure that they keep vulnerable pupils safe from harm. The designated safeguarding lead and co-headteachers are relentless in their approach, and this attitude is reflected across the staff team. Staff at all levels are suitably knowledgeable and well trained to recognise when pupils may be at risk. As a result, staff are vigilant and act swiftly if they have concerns about the safety of pupils. Pupils say that they have faith in adults in the school and would readily share any concerns they have with a trusted member of staff.
- Leaders are reflective and proactive in seeking ways to improve site safety and in

ensuring that pupils are educated about potential risks. Consequently, pupils say that they feel safe in all areas of the school and show a firm understanding of how to stay safe outside the school. They are clear about the potential dangers they may encounter online and know how to avoid these.

- The designated safeguarding leader has strong links with external agencies and with senior safeguarding staff within the trust. He keeps well informed about current good practice and services available within the locality of the school. As a result, he provides invaluable support to a significant number of pupils and their families.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable. Although leaders have provided coherent advice to teachers through their '5 star learning' plan, some teachers do not use this guidance effectively. As a result, learning activities do not consistently meet the needs of pupils, particularly for the most able or lower ability pupils.
- In some lessons, pupils become less interested and restless, and occasionally disrupt the learning of others. This happens when the work provided does not challenge or engage them sufficiently or when the pace of learning is too slow.
- Leaders recognise that teaching in the wider curriculum has not taken pupils' starting points into account. Therefore, pupils' learning has been restricted.
- In the teaching of mathematics, too often teachers do not correct pupils' misconceptions swiftly enough. This hinders pupils' progress. Furthermore, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their learning and develop problem-solving or reasoning skills.
- Although the development of pupils' language is a priority for the school, teachers do not consistently take opportunities to build pupils' vocabulary and communication skills. Leaders have introduced 'talk frames', which give pupils a structure to express their views and thoughts. Pupils are not always able to utilise these fully because they do not have the words they need in order to do so.
- The effectiveness of the use of other adults in lessons is inconsistent across the school. Some pupils, particularly lower ability pupils, make slow progress because adults do not intervene swiftly and effectively.
- Younger pupils now receive better phonics teaching and learn to decode unfamiliar words effectively. Teachers model sounds accurately for pupils and provide a wealth of opportunities for pupils to practise and consolidate their understanding. However, once pupils enter key stage 2, the support they receive to extend their reading skills is less effective. Weaker readers struggle to address the gaps in their knowledge and are not supported to select books with an appropriate level of difficulty.

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare

### Requires improvement

#### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development and welfare. They have in place a wealth of strategies to ensure that pupils are nurtured while in the school. As a result, pupils are knowledgeable about how to stay safe. However, there remains a significant number of pupils whose welfare does not benefit well enough from the school's provision. This is because of the high levels of exclusion and persistent absenteeism that continue to be an issue for the school.
- Parents, pupils and staff say that bullying sometimes occurs in school. However, the vast majority agree that members of staff deal with this swiftly and effectively.
- Pupils are confident to express their views and say that one of the best aspects of the school is that 'everyone shows respect for others'. The school council has introduced a 'worry box' and a 'friendship box' to each classroom, and pupils appreciate this opportunity to share any concerns and give compliments, respectively.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to be healthy. They benefit from specialist PE teaching and, as a result, have positive views about the importance of exercise. They also learn strategies for exploring and managing their emotions. The curriculum and additional nurture provision are both used well as vehicles for promoting pupils' mental health.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Leaders have made a determined effort to reduce pupils' absence, and pupils' attitudes towards attendance are now improving. Pupils, particularly in key stage 1, were proud to report that their class had achieved a 'slam dunk' for high attendance. Pupils also understand how good attendance will affect their future employability as adults. Nevertheless, pupils' absences remain high and an exceptionally high number of pupils miss school regularly. Attendance is not improving quickly enough.
- The high turnover of teachers in the recent past meant that the challenging and disruptive behaviour of some pupils was not dealt with effectively. As a result, leaders have introduced a number of strategies which are starting to have a positive impact. For example, they have introduced intensive nurture provision for pupils who show challenging behaviour and exclusions for this group have reduced. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the reward systems and are keen to earn their 'Valley Time' reward each Friday. Despite the successes for some pupils, the incidence of extreme behaviour that leads to exclusion is still too frequent. Exclusion rates are not improving rapidly enough.
- During the inspection, pupils' conduct at all times of the school day was orderly. Adults have strong relationships with pupils and, as a result, pupils follow instructions from adults readily. Pupils were polite and courteous, showing consideration for others. This picture indicates that the approaches adopted by the school have established a much more positive culture than was seen in the past.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- A legacy of slow progress means that levels of attainment in reading and writing at the end of key stage 2 remain below the national average. There are signs that pupils currently in the school are starting to make stronger progress from their low starting points. Consequently, pupils are getting closer to acquiring the expected knowledge and skills for their age by the end of Year 6. While this is encouraging, progress is not consistently good in all year groups across a wide range of subjects.
- The progress of the most able pupils currently in the school is too variable. Leaders do not track the progress of the most able pupils carefully enough. Over time, pupils' work shows that teachers have not set tasks that are sufficiently challenging for these pupils. As a result, the proportion of pupils who exceed the skills and knowledge that are typical for their age is below the national average in key stage 1 for English and mathematics, and at key stage 2 for reading, grammar, spelling and punctuation, and mathematics.
- Similarly, because teachers do not consistently match work well to the needs of the least able pupils, the progress of these pupils is not quick enough to help them catch up swiftly.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils, who make up the large majority of the school's pupil population, is inconsistent. They generally make similar progress as their peers in the school. The progress of all pupils is variable across year groups and subjects. In some cases, disadvantaged pupils make faster progress than their peers. However, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils remains below that of other pupils nationally.
- The majority of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are now making better progress from their starting points. This is because leaders have started to track their progress more thoroughly, and ensure that provision is in place to meet pupils' needs more successfully.
- Evidence in pupils' books shows that progress is inconsistent across key stage 1. Not enough pupils reach the age-related standard for reading, writing or mathematics by the end of key stage 1.

## Early years provision

## Good

- Early years, including the provision for two-year-olds, is a strength of the school because highly effective leadership, coupled with consistently strong teaching, have ensured that children make rapid progress from their often low starting points on entry.
- Many children start in either the Nursery or Reception Year with skills that are below those typical for their age. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development has increased significantly over the last three years and is now close to the national average. Outcomes for children in 2017 represent rapid progress for many children.
- Teaching in early years is consistently good. The early years leader had previously identified adults' use of questioning and feedback as an area for improvement.

Following training for staff, this has become an area of strength. The leader has an in-depth understanding of the strengths in early years provision and the priorities for further development.

- Children enter early years with particularly low communication and language skills. Teaching staff take every opportunity to support children in the development of their speaking, reading and writing skills. Staff deliver this through accomplished modelling of language and by providing a wealth of early reading and writing activities, to which children are drawn. The direct teaching of phonics and writing skills, as well as the excitement caused by daily story time, result in children moving forward in their learning at a fast rate.
- Teachers provide a carefully structured range of adult-led and play-based activities. Children find the tasks on offer truly enticing and show sustained levels of concentration. Teaching staff thoughtfully plan activities that allow children to practise several vital skills at once.
- In early years, there are effective partnerships between staff and many parents. Parents are fully involved in the assessment process and members of staff have increased knowledge of the children as a result. Teachers plan next steps for children and share these with colleagues and parents. Where parents can benefit from further information to support their child, leaders deliver workshops to this end.
- Teaching staff track the progress of children rigorously. They are prompt to identify any children making less than expected progress and put additional teaching in place to address this. Therefore, all groups of children, including disadvantaged children and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, make good progress.
- Adults' relationships with children are secure and are rooted in nurturing the children. As a result, children are confident, calm and industrious in their learning. Members of staff make expectations for children's behaviour clear through the 'Park Rules'. Consequently, children collaborate with peers effectively to extend their learning and are polite in their interactions with others. Early years provides a safe and secure environment for children.

## School details

Unique reference number	141339
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10042140

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	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	462
Appropriate authority	Board of directors
Chief executive officer	Lesley Bowes
Chair of governors	Stephen Hillier
Co-headteachers	Michele Nott and Matthew Knox
Telephone number	0114 239 6464
Website	<a href="http://www.valleypark.sheffield.sch.uk">www.valleypark.sheffield.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiries@valleypark.sheffield.sch.uk">enquiries@valleypark.sheffield.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Valley Park Community School opened as a sponsor-led academy in April 2015. It is a member of the Mercia Learning Trust. The multi-academy trust has a board of directors who delegate powers to a local governing body.
- Valley Park Community School is larger than the average-sized primary school. The school has a nursery, which admits children from the age of two years.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement by the end of key stage 2.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons. Most of these observations were carried out jointly with the co-headteachers and other senior leaders.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, at playtimes and lunchtimes, and around the school. Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning, both formally and informally, and listened to them read.
- Meetings were held with directors, governors, senior and middle leaders, and a group of staff members.
- Inspectors looked at school documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings, and information relating to pupils' achievement and safeguarding.
- Inspectors talked to a number of parents at the start and end of the school day. They also took account of the 17 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the nine free-text responses. They considered outcomes from the school's own parental consultation.
- Inspectors took account of the 30 responses from Ofsted's online staff survey and 42 responses from Ofsted's online pupil survey.

## Inspection team

Karine Hendley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kate Rowley	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mujahid Ali	Ofsted Inspector

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