

Laithes Primary School

Laithes Lane, Smithies, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S71 3AF

Inspection dates

2–3 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
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

- Until recently, members of the trust did not monitor the quality of teaching at school effectively. They were unaware of the weaknesses in teaching at key stage 2. As a result, the progress that pupils made in Year 6 in 2017 was not strong enough and the standards they reached were too low.
- School leaders do not track the progress that pupils are making well enough in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- In key stages 1 and 2, the quality of teaching is too variable. Teachers do not always plan lessons that meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Attendance is too low and too many pupils are persistently absent.
- Due to a legacy of weaker teaching, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills. Not all teachers are addressing these gaps as quickly as they could. As a result, attainment is not high enough, including for disadvantaged pupils.
- Some pupils give up too easily on the task in hand. They do not persevere when work is challenging.
- The school's motto is 'learning to fly high'. School leaders and members of the trust understand that there is a way to go before this becomes a reality for pupils at school.

The school has the following strengths

- The new head of school has transformed the school in a relatively short period of time. She is passionate, capable, and effective. She has galvanised school leaders. Together, they are now improving the school at a pace.
- The profile of teaching is stronger now due to more effective accountability, and a stronger team of teachers.
- Teaching in Year 6 is particularly effective. Here, gaps in knowledge are being plugged well.
- Children in early years make good progress from their starting points. Planning is more precise, and activities better meet children's needs than in other key stages at school.
- Pupils at school are courteous, kind, and respectful of others. There is a culture of safeguarding at school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - improving the strategic direction of the trust
 - further improving the quality of monitoring and evaluation at all levels
 - developing the skills of members of the local governing body (LGB)
 - improving teacher appraisal
 - ensuring that the new target-setting and assessment procedures include subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers set work which provides an appropriate level of challenge for all groups of pupils
 - teachers have high expectations of the standards that pupils can reach
 - phonics is consistently well taught
 - teachers plan activities that help widen pupils' vocabulary
 - teachers use class time effectively to help pupils catch up with any gaps in their knowledge or skills left by weaker teaching in the past.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - pupils' rates of attendance increase and that fewer are persistently absent
 - pupils develop resilience and perseverance, so that fewer give up when tasks are more challenging.
- Improve standards of attainment, and increase the proportion of pupils who reach the higher standards, including for disadvantaged pupils.

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

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership of the trust has been ineffective. Under the direction of the executive headteacher, who is now the chief executive officer, the trust had not taken enough responsibility for supporting and challenging the school. She had no idea that the quality of teaching was far from good at key stage 2. As a result, the progress that Year 6 pupils made in 2017 was weak. The standards they reached were too low.
- Members of the trust were shocked by the 2017 results. They began to improve the ways in which the school and its staff were held to account, with some success. Their quality of monitoring and evaluation still requires improvement, as does their strategic leadership. The trust has, however, made some excellent appointments to the teaching staff.
- In January 2018, the trust appointed a new head of school. Since that point, there has been a step change in the quality of education on offer. The team, consisting of the head of school, the new assistant headteacher, and the strong deputy headteacher, has transformed the school in a short period of time. It is their leadership that has had a positive impact.
- The head of school knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school. She has been swift and uncompromising in her quest to improve the school. Other leaders and members of staff have full confidence in her leadership. Staff morale is high as a result.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has not been good enough. However, new systems are in place to check the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils are making. The head of school is in charge of these. She supports and challenges staff effectively. A stronger profile of teaching combined with sharper tracking systems has led to an improvement in the rates of progress that pupils are making.
- The head of school has had a positive impact on many aspects of school life, and she knows there is more to do. She is aware that the targets that teachers are working towards as part of their performance management are not precise enough. She knows that systems to track pupils' progress are relatively new and need to be refined. She has identified that leaders are not tracking the progress that pupils make in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- The deputy headteacher leads safeguarding effectively. She is tenacious and makes sure that the school does all in its power to support more vulnerable pupils. The new assistant headteacher and the phase leaders are glad to follow the lead of the new head of school. They are all increasing effective in their roles as a result.
- School leaders make sure that pupils understand the fundamental values of tolerance, democracy and the rule of law. Each day the head of school leads assemblies for the whole school in which she explains how she expects pupils to behave, and what it is to be a good citizen. This is bringing the school community together.
- There are a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and clubs on offer. There are many sports clubs, and school leaders have been keen to ensure that pupils take part in competitions to try to develop pupils' teamwork and levels of focus. School leaders

have used the sports premium effectively.

- The curriculum has not ensured that pupils make good progress. However, the head of school has made sure that teachers now plan lessons starting from what the pupils actually know and what they can do. Teachers are, therefore, beginning to deal with the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding that stem from weaker teaching in the past. School leaders know that there is more work to be done, however.
- Parents have an increased level of confidence in the school. For example, the Easter fayre was well supported by the school community. Parents have mixed views of the quality of education of the school, but many perceive that it is improving. Inspectors agree.

Governance of the school

- The trust did not notice nor prevent a collapse in standards at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. It did not ensure that there was enough capacity to support the school.
- After a period of instability, the LGB is now more effective. The chair of the LGB has focused on developing the skills of new members, and knows that there is still work to do. The information about the quality of teaching and pupils' performance that members of the board receive from school leaders is now more precise.
- The trust and the LGB have ensured that all responsibilities relating to safeguarding are fulfilled. Their monitoring of the impact of extra funding for disadvantaged pupils, and for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, has not been effective.
- The trust's vision includes a focus on accountability. Further work is needed in this area before it has a greater impact on the education that pupils receive at Laithes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders give safeguarding a high priority. They have ensured that policy and practice are in line with legal requirements. Staff know what to do if they are concerned about the well-being of a pupil in their care.
- Under the leadership of the deputy headteacher, more-vulnerable pupils are well supported and any additional support they receive is well organised. Leaders use an electronic system which helps them to check out any possible safeguarding issues, and respond quickly if a pupil needs help.
- Pupils say that they feel safe, as do their parents. Inspectors agree that school leaders teach pupils well about how to stay safe, ensure that the physical environment is safe, and create a culture of safeguarding at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Not all teachers have consistently high expectations of how well pupils can achieve. Nor do they all plan work that matches the needs of different groups of pupils in their class, and that challenges them to make good progress. The quality of teaching is too

varied in key stages 1 and 2. Teaching is stronger in early years.

- Where teaching is stronger, teachers plan activities that meet pupils' learning needs. Teachers spark the interest of pupils and question them well. Here, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do, and subject content is stretching. Teaching in Year 6 is particularly strong at identifying gaps in pupils' knowledge from weaker teaching in the past, and plugging these. This is not routinely the case, however.
- In an upper key stage 2 lesson, pupils were studying a text about a child with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Pupils were using evidence from the text to decide which behaviours were more typical of pupils who have ADHD and which ones were not. The discussions in class were mature, deep and empathetic. Pupils' written answers were lengthy, accurate and thoughtful. This is an example of teaching which engaged pupils academically, and developed their understanding of others.
- The head of school is developing a curriculum that is explicitly linked to novels in order to nurture a life-long love of reading among the pupils. She knows that the teaching of phonics is not consistently good and needs to be stronger across the school to support this. She knows that pupils' vocabulary is too narrow, and has plans to expose pupils to vocabulary-rich texts more often.
- The quality of teaching is improving because current school leaders have the skills to identify and promote good teaching through professional development discussions. There is a currently a better profile of teaching at school due to the appointment of some stronger practitioners.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development requires improvement.
- Although many pupils are resilient, and persevere with their work in class, too many give up on tasks easily. Some find it difficult to concentrate when working in pairs or in groups. Sometimes they become fussy when adults are not directly supervising their work. Too many pupils have not developed positive attitudes to learning.
- Nonetheless, many pupils focus well in class and engage fully in school life. Many are involved in the leadership opportunities that are available. For example, the school council is active, and eco-warriors help to keep environmental issues alive at school. Table monitors help at lunch. Many pupils are involved in after-school activities and sports clubs.
- Pupils understand how to stay safe. They explained to inspectors how to stay safe online, and when crossing the road. Parents agree that school leaders help to keep their children safe.
- Pupils who attend off-site provision are well cared for. Leaders have a good relationship with the provider.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. School leaders help pupils to develop empathy. The curriculum focuses on developing pupils' wider social and moral understanding. In assembly, an inspector saw pupils being encouraged to 'see others

with your heart and not with your eyes'. This message mirrors the caring environment evidenced at school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' attendance is below average and too many pupils are persistently absent. School leaders, together with the parent support adviser, have worked hard to forge links with those families who find it hard to work with the school. Some of this work is resulting in a decrease in persistent absence.
- Pupils are kind and considerate to each other, and respectful to their peers and other adults. Pupils say that bullying is rare. If ever any unkind words are used, they have confidence that teachers at school would help sort this out for them.
- The majority of pupils behave well in class, although some can be restless. Pupils move sensibly around the building, and take care of their school environment.
- Pupils understand the importance of coming to school on time. They are generally punctual to school and to lessons.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The progress that Year 6 pupils made in 2017 was not good enough. The standards that pupils reached in reading and mathematics fell considerably and were too low. Too few pupils reached the higher standards. The progress that pupils made in writing was stronger.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the required standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 in 2017 was too low. The standards that pupils reached at the end of key stage 1 in 2017 were closer to the national average than those at key stage 2.
- The rate of progress of pupils currently in key stages 1 and 2 requires improvement. This is because, although improving, the quality of teaching is too variable. In addition, some pupils are behind in their learning due to weaker teaching in the past.
- The progress that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making is improving. This is because classroom teachers now have full responsibility for their progress. Any additional work that these pupils complete is embedded in their exercise books now, and the progress that they are making is checked more regularly.
- Disadvantaged pupils are benefiting from stronger systems to track their progress. School leaders are beginning to accurately check how additional money is spent to ensure that these pupils make better progress.
- Pupils are making stronger progress in Year 6 and in Year 2. Here, teachers are plugging gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding effectively. The standards that pupils are reaching are rising.
- The most able pupils make strong progress in some classes and not in others. This is dependent on the quality of teaching.
- The head of school has a passion for developing a love of reading among the pupils. Pupils talked animatedly about the books that they enjoy. The progress that pupils are

making in reading is improving, although it still requires improvement.

- Parents have a mixed view of the progress that pupils make. Some think that pupils make good progress and others feel that they are not making enough progress. This mirrors the inconsistency identified by inspectors.
- The head of school agrees that there is currently not enough focus in the curriculum on subjects other than English and mathematics. Leaders are not tracking the progress that pupils are making in these subjects effectively.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years leader has a good understanding of the strengths of early years provision and its areas for development. Children make good progress from their different starting points. A greater proportion of children attained a good level of development in 2017 than in 2016, and more children developed their early writing, reading and mathematical skills to a good level. Children are, therefore, increasingly well prepared for Year 1.
- Children feel safe. Teachers ensure that classroom routines are calm, and that children behave kindly towards one another. Teachers make sure that the setting is safe, and school leaders have ensured that all of the necessary training and safeguarding checks are in place for staff in early years.
- Teachers speak clearly in class, and have high expectations as far as children's speaking and listening skills are concerned. As a result, children are confident, chatty, and developing well socially.
- Teachers have forged strong relationships with parents. Teachers conduct home visits for some new starters. The early years leader works well with other agencies, when needed, to ensure that children's needs are met. The parent support worker is also developing links with families.
- Teachers plan activities to meet the different needs of the children. Teachers, and other adults, observe children closely, and record what they see. They use this information to personalise questioning and create additional tasks for individual children. During the inspection, children were seen developing their mathematical skills well in the context of money and shopping. On another occasion, a child noted that her boat would not float as it had a hole. The teacher encouraged her to think creatively about finding a solution to this problem. The child decided to cut up a plastic cup and use a piece of plastic to keep the boat afloat. The teacher's keen eye and well-considered questions helped the girl to think deeply about the problem at hand.
- The early years leader is aware that although children make good progress, some could reach even higher standards to help make the transition to Year 1 even smoother. She is tenacious and has high expectations for the children in her care.

School details

Unique reference number	141974
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	10048353

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	357
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Nicholas Adams
Headteacher	Georgina Fletcher
Telephone number	01226 281255
Website	www.laithesprimaryschool.co.uk
Email address	laithesprimary@shiremat.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is a member of the Shire Multi-Academy Trust with one other local primary school. This inspection is the first inspection of the school since it became a sponsored academy in September 2015. In addition to the board of trustees, the school has an LGB.
- Prior to joining the trust, the predecessor school was last inspected in May 2014, when it was judged to require special measures.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum

expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

- The school uses alternative providers to support some pupils. Currently, the school contracts places at Springwell Learning Community.
- Since the school became an academy, there have been major changes in staffing and leadership. Since September 2017, a new head of school and a new assistant headteacher have been appointed. There is also a new chair of the local governing body. The executive headteacher has changed designation and is now the chief executive officer.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning and groups of pupils working across school. Inspectors observed learning jointly with the head of school and discussed what was seen. Learning in early years was also observed.
- Inspectors observed pupils when moving around the school and at social times. They talked to pupils in lessons about their experience at school and looked at work in their books. They talked to two specific groups of pupils to hear their views about the school, and about the behaviour of other pupils. In addition, inspectors gathered another group of pupils at random to listen to their views.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the LGB and school staff, including senior and middle leaders. An inspector met with the chief executive officer of the Shire Multi-Academy Trust at different times during the inspection.
- Inspectors took account the 15 responses to Ofsted’s online parent questionnaire, Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and scrutinised a range of documentation including: the school’s view of its own performance; monitoring records; information about pupils’ progress; improvement planning; and records of behaviour and attendance. They looked closely at records relating to safeguarding and child protection, and at policies, including those published on the school’s website.

Inspection team

Michael Wardle, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Elizabeth Lawley	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Twaits	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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