

Inspection of Sandal Castle VA Community Primary School

Barnsley Road, Sandal, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 6AS

Inspection dates:	7 and 8 January 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming, friendly school. They are happy and safe. They know that adults have their best interests at heart.

Pupils understand the school rules and meet the high expectations set in class. In most cases, they play nicely together during breaktimes and lunchtimes. However, some pupils report that they can experience unkind words and behaviours in the playground, and this is not always dealt with by adults in a timely manner.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences beyond the classroom, such as extra-curricular clubs and well-planned trips that help to bring the curriculum alive. Recently introduced pupil leadership roles give some pupils opportunities to contribute to the life of the school.

The school aspires for all pupils to achieve well. Effective improvements to the curriculum are having a positive impact. However, not all pupils achieve as well as they should in all subject areas yet. This is because the changes to the school's curriculum are very recent.

This school has experienced a significant period of turbulence since the last inspection. As this has stabilised, pupils are now benefiting from the many, well-considered improvements that new leaders have brought about. However, the quality of education that pupils receive still needs further improvement.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has recently reviewed the curriculum for all subjects. This is improving experiences for pupils in lessons. Pupils are now remembering what they have been taught. In some subjects, pupils talk confidently about recent learning. The revised curriculum is now clearly sequenced. This supports pupils to build on prior learning.

Staff check on pupils' learning in lessons. However, the school does not consistently use this information to make sure that gaps and misconceptions are addressed. They cannot be sure that all pupils are making the best possible progress through the curriculum.

In recent years, too many pupils did not achieve well in the Year 1 phonics check. The school has made changes to address this. The quality of phonics learning has improved. Expectations are higher and regular support is given to pupils who need this extra help. More pupils in Year 1 are now achieving well in reading. Reading outcomes at key stage 2 are below national expectations, especially for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have identified that the reading curriculum beyond Year 1 does not build well on pupils' more recent strong start. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to develop their fluency and comprehension skills.

The newly implemented writing curriculum focuses on inspiring pupils to write, using high-quality texts. However, pupils' understanding of the basic skills in writing, such as

letter formation, are less secure. This is because the school has not ensured that these are taught systematically from the early years.

The school swiftly identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They access an ambitious curriculum that enables them to learn successfully alongside their peers. Plans to support these pupils contain clear targets. This provides staff with the information they need to provide effective support.

Children in the early years enjoy their learning. Staff and children share positive relationships. The learning environment, particularly outdoors, is not yet planned with sufficient purpose. This means that learning is not always well matched to children's varying needs and the curriculum. Some children do not fully make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders are aware of this and have sought external advice to develop this further.

Pupils know what is expected of their behaviour and conduct. The behaviour policy outlines expectations clearly and children behave very well in lessons. A lack of clarity and consistency at unstructured times has led to some pupils behaving less well than they do in class. However, pupils' behaviour often improves in direct response to rewards and consequences. The school's previous work to promote pupils' personal and character development has resulted in gaps in pupils' learning. Leaders have begun to make improvements to the opportunities they offer. For example, they have introduced a new personal, social and health education curriculum. This underpins the school values and teaches pupils the importance of respect for others and the importance of good behaviour for everyone's safety and well-being.

The new leadership team has driven rapid and sustained change in all areas, with skill and determination. As a result, the education provided is having more of a positive impact on pupils' learning. Most parents and carers have recognised these improvements. Staff are extremely positive about the support they receive from leaders. Governors are aware of their statutory responsibilities. They use their skill and experience to provide appropriate challenge and support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school's systems to check what pupils know and have remembered over time do not provide staff with sufficient information to be able to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge effectively. This makes it difficult for staff to check and help pupils learn the intended curriculum securely. The school should ensure its systems enable staff to evaluate the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning and address any gaps effectively.

- The school's revised reading curriculum beyond early reading and phonics is in the very early stages of being implemented. Pupils do not build successfully on their phonics knowledge to develop fluency and comprehension. The school should ensure that the revised reading curriculum supports pupils across the school to read fluently and with understanding effectively.
- The English curriculum does not set out well enough the basic skills for writing, beginning in the early years. As a result, pupils are not able to write with accuracy. The school should ensure that the curriculum identifies these basic skills from the early years clearly and progressively so that pupils build fluency in the basic skills and are able to write independently with confidence and fluency over time.
- Behaviour during unstructured times does not always meet the same high standard as inside the classroom. Staff members' expectations of behaviour at these times are inconsistent. As a result, some pupils demonstrate behaviour that falls below that expected by leaders. The school should ensure that all staff have the skills and expertise to demonstrate consistent expectations of behaviour throughout the school day.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	108270
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10346236
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	624
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rowena White
Headteacher	Caroline Butterworth
Website	www.sandalcastleprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	16 and 17 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in September 2023.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Church of England primary school and is part of the Diocese of Leeds. Its last inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 was in October 2023. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision for any of its pupils.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to the headteacher and other school leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to members of the local governing board.
- Inspectors spoke to a representative from the local authority and spoke with a representative from the Diocese of Leeds.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors held a discussion about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at some samples of pupils’ work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors; reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff, and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children’s interests first.
- An inspector visited the school’s breakfast club.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and carers at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted’s parent survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also considered responses to Ofsted’s staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Tracy Duffy, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Deborah Sanderson	Ofsted Inspector
Frances Turner	Ofsted Inspector
Donna Waddington	Ofsted Inspector

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