

North Ridge Community School

Tenter Balk Lane, Adwick-le-Street, Woodlands, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN6 7EF

Inspection dates

10–11 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Senior leaders do not make effective enough use of the monitoring information they collect. As a result, the quality of teaching is variable and some pupils do not make fast enough progress.
- At times, teachers set work that is too easy for the most-able pupils. Similarly, the work they set is sometimes too hard because it is not broken down into small and achievable steps.
- Pupils do not make consistently strong progress in English and mathematics. Their progress in a wide range of other subjects is also variable.
- The progress some pupils make in reading and spelling is held back by inconsistencies in the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent).
- The development of pupils' social communication skills is not consistently well supported.
- Children in the early years do not make fast enough progress because some adult-led and child-led activities do not help them to take the next step in their learning.
- Senior leaders do not hold teachers robustly enough to account for the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make.
- While governors check the information they receive from senior leaders and ask searching questions about some aspects of the school's work, they have not kept a close enough eye on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils have consistently positive attitudes to learning. They work hard and are keen to do well.
- Sixth-form learners are well prepared for their next stage of education, training or employment because study programmes are effective.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. The school works closely with a wide range of other professionals to provide the help children and families need.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all leaders have an accurate and fully rounded view of the school's strengths and the areas requiring improvement
 - making sure that all leaders use the monitoring information they collect to identify which aspects of teachers' practice need improvement in order to secure faster progress and better outcomes for pupils
 - ensuring that governors and the headteacher use performance management to hold leaders and teachers more robustly to account.

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the early years and in key stages 1 to 4 by:
 - making sure that teachers use assessment information to plan learning activities that build on what pupils already know, understand and can do
 - ensuring that teachers check whether pupils are making fast progress in lessons, including whether they need new or more challenging work or extra help to enable them to catch up
 - strengthening teachers' subject knowledge and the consistency of their practice in teaching reading and spelling
 - making sure that pupils' social communication skills are developed consistently and effectively in all subjects and throughout the school day.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding 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

- While the previously identified strengths in pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare have been maintained, there has been a decline in the quality of teaching, the quality of early years provision and outcomes for pupils. All now require improvement in order to be good.
- The headteacher and senior leaders routinely monitor important aspects of the school's work, for example by observing in lessons and checking teachers' assessments. Crucially, however, they do not use this information well enough to ensure that they have an accurate or fully rounded view of the school's strengths and the areas needing further work.
- Similarly, the headteacher and senior leaders do not use the information they collect to identify clearly the aspects of teachers' practice that require improvement. As a result, the school's development plan does not specify what actions leaders will take to secure consistently good teaching.
- Senior leaders and teachers are set annual performance targets, which are closely linked to the priorities in school's development plan. However, governors and the headteacher do not hold teachers robustly enough to account. The targets they set are not specific or measurable and do not focus sharply enough on improving teachers' practice and getting better outcomes for pupils.
- Additional funding, including the pupil premium and the physical education (PE) and sports premium for primary-aged pupils, is used well to extend and enhance the curriculum. However, senior leaders do not systematically evaluate the impact of these activities on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and levels of participation in PE and sport. Similarly, the impact of the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium on pupils' learning and progress is not routinely checked by senior leaders.
- The school's newly redesigned curriculum has a stronger focus on achieving four outcomes for young people: employment; independent living; community inclusion; and health. Senior leaders have developed a new assessment system to help them check how well pupils are progressing towards these important outcomes. In addition, senior leaders have introduced a new method of assessing pupils' progress in English and mathematics. Although higher expectations can be seen in the more challenging targets set for current pupils, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this work.
- Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is promoted effectively by the school's strong focus on positive behaviour and through a wide range of school-based and out-of-school activities. This includes opportunities for pupils to learn about people from different cultures and with different faiths. As a result, pupils have a growing understanding of their local community and the wider world. This helps them to be well prepared for their lives as citizens in modern Britain.
- Much has been done to create stronger pathways into employment for young people. Work experience, work placements and supported internships are now a strong feature of sixth-form study programmes. Senior leaders are rightly proud of the three students who moved successfully on to full-time employment in 2015.
- **The governance of the school**
 - While governors are committed to the school and are ambitious for pupils, they have not done enough to check the accuracy and reliability of the information they receive about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the progress pupils make.
 - Similarly, governors have not used performance management well enough to hold the headteacher and senior leaders robustly to account for the school's effectiveness.
 - In contrast, governors' oversight of safeguarding is exemplary. Governors are knowledgeable about safeguarding, meticulous in the way they check the information they receive and robust in the way they support and challenge senior leaders to improve safeguarding practice.
 - Governors have not made sure that the school publishes all required information on its website. The website does not include information about how additional funding is used to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils, increase participation in PE and sports, and accelerate the progress of Year 7 pupils who need extra help in English and mathematics.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong and firmly embedded culture of keeping children safe at North Ridge. Leaders and staff know pupils well and are alert to the things that make them vulnerable. Records show that concerns are reported quickly and timely action is taken to protect pupils. The school works closely and effectively with other professionals and services to provide the help and support the most vulnerable children and their families need.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teachers plan learning activities that build on pupils' interests. However, teachers do not always pitch work at the right level for pupils, and occasionally, expectations of what pupils will learn in lessons are not sufficiently clear. As a result, some pupils do not make fast enough progress.
- Pupils work hard and develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Sometimes, however, the most-able pupils do not move on to new or more challenging work quickly enough. Equally, there are too few opportunities for the most-able pupils to work independently or consolidate their learning by using and applying what they know, understand and can do.
- Sometimes, teachers do not spot when pupils are finding the work too hard. When this happens, some pupils lose interest and fall behind.
- There has been a stronger focus on teaching phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) and reading skills. There are, however, some gaps in teachers' subject knowledge and some inconsistencies in their practice. For example, teachers and teaching assistants do not always give pupils the opportunity to use their phonics knowledge to read or spell unfamiliar words.
- Teachers use a range of methods to help pupils develop their social communication skills. This includes signing, symbol-based systems and the use of multi-sensory resources. Sometimes, teachers do not use these systems well or consistently enough to help pupils make fast progress in developing these crucially important skills.
- Teachers have consistently high expectations for pupils' conduct and behaviour. Pupils understand that they are expected to work cooperatively and behave well. Teachers are quick to praise good behaviour and give pupils clear and reassuring guidance when it is needed.
- Teaching assistants help pupils to engage with learning activities, maintain their interest and concentrate well. Occasionally, their contribution to pupils' learning is less effective because they do not know how to help pupils make progress, for example by questioning them about their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently positive. In lessons, they work hard and are keen to do well. Pupils value the praise and rewards they receive for their good work and are proud of their successes and achievements. Occasionally, when the work set is too hard or too easy, some pupils 'switch off'.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at North Ridge and parents share their children's view. Pupils say that they trust the adults who care for them. They respond consistently well to the calm and reassuring guidance and support they receive. One parent singled out the strength of this aspect of the school's work, saying, 'the school has gone out of its way to make sure that my child feels safe and secure'.
- Pupils learn about how to stay healthy and keep safe. For example, pupils learn about how to use public transport safely and how to stay safe when using computers and the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The headteacher, senior leaders and teachers expect pupils to behave well. Pupils understand the school's expectations and boundaries and value the praise they receive for good behaviour. Pupils willingly follow guidance and direction from adults when, for example, they are reminded to be kind or speak politely to a friend.
- Levels of attendance are below the national averages for primary and secondary schools. However, good attendance is promoted well, and as a result, levels of attendance for pupils with previously high levels of absence are improving.
- Senior leaders and teachers take great care to work out why pupils sometimes behave in an aggressive or challenging way. Pupils are helped to feel safe, build strong relationships and make sense of the world around them. As a result, there is a strong downward trend in behavioural incidents.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Inspectors' observations in lessons show that rates of progress are variable. At times, the most-able pupils and those needing extra help or support do not make fast enough progress. This is because the work is not matched closely enough to pupils' different levels of ability.
- Assessment information shows that pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in English and mathematics at different rates. Some pupils make strong progress from their different starting points. However, consistently good progress is not the norm in English or mathematics.
- Many pupils enjoy reading and persevere when given a difficult or challenging text. Some pupils read fluently and with interest and understanding. However, some do not develop their reading skills quickly enough because they have too few opportunities to use their phonics knowledge or other reading skills to recognise, read and spell unfamiliar words.
- Pupils learn to communicate using a range of systems and methods. Many pupils communicate confidently and independently with different people and in different situations. While some pupils make strong progress, others do not develop their ability to communicate well enough. This, in turn, holds back their progress in other areas of learning.
- Although the school's assessment system is new and leaders cannot say whether pupils make consistently strong progress in a wide range of subjects, current assessment information indicates that disadvantaged pupils make comparable progress to other pupils with similar starting points.
- Pupils develop the positive attitudes and personal skills they need to be ready for the next stage of their education. Pupils acquire and develop the confidence and skills they need to stay healthy, keep safe and be increasingly independent. Importantly, pupils are well prepared for the opportunities and challenges of the sixth form.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Leaders do not have an accurate enough view of the effectiveness of early years provision. They do not use the monitoring information they collect to identify the stronger aspects of early years provision and the areas needing further work.
- Sometimes, children do not make fast progress because some adult-led and child-led activities are not focused sharply enough on each child's next steps in learning. At snack time, for example, one child was not asked a question or encouraged to make a choice despite one of his daily targets being, 'I can answer questions'.
- Although adults use a range of methods to help children learn how to communicate, they do not do this consistently well. There are too few opportunities for children to increase their motivation, confidence and skills in social communication.
- Children are safe and all welfare requirements are met. Leaders work closely and effectively with a wide range of professionals and ensure that children, including those who are disadvantaged, receive the specialist support and help they need to stay healthy and keep safe.
- Children behave well and learn how play and learn safely and cooperatively. They willingly follow adult direction and show that they have learned to take turns and share with their friends.
- There is good communication between home and school. Parents are kept informed about their children's progress and are encouraged to support their learning and development at home. Parents say that their children are 'happy, settled and learning well'.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Leaders have high expectations for sixth-form learners and are absolutely focused on improving their life chances. Learners' personal development is effectively promoted through their study programmes.
- There is a strong and effective focus on getting learners 'work ready' in the sixth form. Effective teaching, good careers advice and the development of work placements and supported internships are helping more learners to move successfully into voluntary work and employment.

- Sixth-form learners work towards an increasingly wide range of vocational and life skills qualifications. Study programmes include personal, social, health and citizenship (PSHC) education and a wide range of other activities, for example fund-raising, volunteering and enterprise activities.
- Typically, sixth-form learners are kind and respectful to each other. They all say that they trust the adults to sort things out if one of their friends 'is having a bad day'. Importantly, learners are confident and feel well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Sixth-form learners continue to study English and mathematics and build on the knowledge, skills and understanding they have previously acquired and developed. However, there are too few opportunities for sixth-form learners to use and apply their English and mathematical skills in their daily lives.

School details

Unique reference number	135548
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10002604

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	34
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Melanie Marr
Headteacher	Christine Djezzar
Telephone number	01302 720790
Website	www.northridge.doncaster.sch.uk
Email address	admin@northridge.doncaster.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 January 2013

Information about this school

- North Ridge is an all-age special school for children and young people with severe learning difficulties. All have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is much higher than the national average.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and whose first language is not English has increased since the last inspection.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. The website does not include information about how additional funding is used to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils, increase participation in PE and sports and accelerate the progress of Year 7 pupils who need extra help in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning on both days, spoke to pupils and examined the work in their books and folders. Several lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with sixth-form learners, parents, senior and middle leaders, four governors (including the chair of the governing body) and North Ridge's school improvement partner.
- Inspectors considered the information recorded on Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) and took account of 13 pupil questionnaires and 41 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors examined documents relating to governance, school improvement planning, self-evaluation, pupils' progress, attendance, and behaviour, and the curriculum and safeguarding.
- Pupils in key stages 2, 3 and 4 and some sixth-form learners were out of school on the first day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Nick Whittaker, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gina White

Her Majesty's Inspector

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