

Northowram Primary School

Baxter Lane, Northowram, Halifax HX3 7EF

Inspection dates

8–9 June 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

Early years provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Northowram is led by an inspirational team comprising the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who together provide a 'tour de force' in their drive to develop innovative teaching.
- Governors are enthusiastic and steadfast in their support of the school. Governing body minutes demonstrate a high level of challenge to school leaders, with a continual focus on providing the best possible education for pupils.
- Middle leaders are highly effective in their roles, monitoring the impact of teachers' work and supporting all staff to develop their skills.
- Teaching is never less than good and much is outstanding. Teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and have high expectations of what pupils will achieve.
- Skilful teaching ensures that pupils make rapid progress throughout key stages 1 and 2 so that, by Year 6, attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics are significantly above those seen nationally. High numbers of pupils in every year group are working at levels that exceed national expectations.
- High proportions of pupils achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics (the sounds letters make) check.
- The work of additional adults is highly effective in supporting all pupils, but particularly more vulnerable pupils, to overcome barriers to learning.
- As a result of strong leadership at all levels, all staff are guided by the school's vision to 'inspire success beyond expectation'. Time in lessons is used exceptionally well so that the focus on learning is relentless. Pupils' understanding of what they are learning is very well developed and pupils are motivated to continually improve.
- Pupils benefit from an inspiring curriculum. Leaders ensure that pupils receive excellent opportunities to develop their knowledge of subjects beyond English and mathematics.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Pupils are kind and considerate and demonstrate real understanding of the challenges faced by others in the world. The school's work to ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain is very effective.
- Children start school with skills broadly typical for their age. Careful provision in the early years is ensuring that children get off to a good start. Children achieve levels well above those typically seen by the time they leave the early years. However, assessment is not fully informing planning for individual children. Activities, particularly outdoors, do not always provide the challenge that children need.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of provision in the early years by:
 - providing a highly stimulating environment, particularly outdoors
 - embedding assessment systems to better inform the planning of teaching to meet the needs of individual children.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are a highly effective team, leading by example to consistently and earnestly reinforce high challenge for pupils. The impact of their uncompromising desire to provide the best and most appropriate curriculum for pupils at Northowram can be seen in very high standards throughout the school.
- The deputy headteacher has a deep understanding of how pupils learn. Together with the literacy leader, she has written and refined an approach to teaching reading and writing that is proving highly successful and has begun to export this approach to other schools.
- Senior leaders ensure that targets set for teachers help them to improve aspects of their teaching that will have the biggest impact on pupils' learning. They are skilful in designing and delivering training that will polish the skills of teachers and almost all teachers have attended the 'outstanding teacher' training programme, delivered in school.
- Middle leaders are very effective in their work to ensure the quality of teaching continues to improve. They are robustly monitoring and evaluating learning that is taking place and making recommendations to the whole staff. Middle leaders are assisting senior leaders in promoting a culture where it is safe to take risks and to use their imagination. Middle leaders are coaching and supporting staff, helping them to regularly reflect on lessons. Consequently, the quality of teaching is high.
- Leaders have worked consistently to ensure that pupils receive rich experiences and exciting learning in areas other than English and mathematics. Work in books shows that a strong focus on hands-on, investigative science is helping pupils to develop their practical skills and deepen their understanding of scientific processes. Visits out of school, for example to the theatre, and visitors to school help to make learning relevant and fun. Pupils have many opportunities to apply English and mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum which contribute to their rapid progress.
- The school's work to promote pupils' understanding of social, moral, spiritual and cultural issues is highly successful, as is the preparation of pupils for life in modern Britain. An inspector observed a lively assembly where pupils were posed the question 'what would you write in the Queen's birthday card?' Some pupils confidently wrote their responses and shared their writing with the whole school. Pupils recently took part in a European Union referendum, debating the issues and ultimately voting.
- Extra money provided to the school to support disadvantaged pupils is used very effectively to provide additional academic or pastoral support. It is used to assist pupils in taking part in music, drama and dance lessons, to purchase school uniform, or to take part in trips out of school. The disadvantaged pupils' team rigorously monitors the progress of vulnerable pupils, reporting on their work to a linked governor. As a result of this cohesive approach, disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils.
- Primary school sports funding is being successfully used to develop the subject knowledge of all teachers and to support the specialist teaching of physical education in Years 4, 5 and 6.
- Parents express much contentment with Northowram school. They are highly appreciative of the efforts to inform them of their children's progress and to involve them in school activities. An evening 'soiree', showcasing pupils' skills in street dance, singing and poetry, and invitations to the village 'Fun Run' or Farmers' Market, hosted by the school, are effective in bringing together staff, pupils, parents and the wider community.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are robust and persistent in their challenge to school leaders. They are fully focused on ensuring that any changes will have a positive impact on pupils' learning and earnest that pupils have opportunities to develop a broad range of skills that will enrich and equip them for life.
 - Governors have a full understanding of how additional monies such as pupil premium and school sports funding are used. Minutes of meetings show that governors challenge leaders to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs or disability are well supported to achieve.
 - Governors have an accurate view of the performance of the school. They have ensured that targets set for the headteacher have contributed to the present high standards and have supported his professional growth as he begins to support other schools to improve.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Documentation is carefully kept and policies are followed precisely by staff. Leaders ensure that all staff and governors receive appropriate training and

are rigorous in keeping pupils safe. The effective deployment of the pastoral support worker and learning mentors is helping vulnerable pupils to continue learning well in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Through discussion, teachers and pupils have achieved clarity over what good learning should look like. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons and are rewarded by high levels of pupil concentration and involvement in learning.
- Leaders have worked extremely effectively with teachers to establish reliable assessment systems closely linked to the curriculum. Teachers are using new procedures to accurately determine what pupils know and understand. This information is then seamlessly used to plan for subsequent learning. Feedback to pupils is highly effective because it is linked to these shared expectations. Pupils use this information and fully understand what they need to do to improve their work and what they will learn next.
- Teachers ensure that pupils have ample opportunity to explore, understand and master new learning before they move on. Learning is seen as a continuum. As one teacher said: 'learning doesn't stop just because the bell goes'. In many lessons, inspectors observed teachers checking that pupils have properly understood, asking pupils to explain or to develop their answers more fully.
- Teachers' use of highly effective questioning ensures that all pupils, including the most able, are continually stretched and challenged. In all classes, the most able pupils are working at levels exceeding national expectations. In Year 6, a large proportion of pupils are working at levels that are expected of secondary school pupils.
- The excellent subject knowledge demonstrated by staff is ensuring that the teaching of phonics is highly effective and is underpinning the ability of all pupils, but particularly those who are less able, to read and write unfamiliar words. In lessons observed in Year 1, the most able pupils were successfully spotting patterns in challenging words that would more typically be used with much older pupils.
- The teaching of reading and writing has been considerably strengthened through closely linking the learning of all aspects of English through well-chosen texts. In a lesson observed, pupils' understanding of grammar was much enhanced when they were required to be detectives, finding short and long sentences, noun phrases and other grammatical devices in their own writing. In this way, teachers ensure the teaching of reading, handwriting, grammar and punctuation is an organic part of the writing process.
- The teaching of mathematics is highly effective. Much thought has been given to helping pupils to understand new concepts through exploration. Resources are carefully sourced and pupils are encouraged to investigate. In one lesson, pupils were determining their own way to measure angles around a point. Pupils came up with several different methods, all valued by the teacher.
- The wider curriculum in Years 4, 5 and 6 is taught by subject specialists who dedicate their afternoons to teaching their subject across all six classes. This arrangement is leading to in-depth teaching, often at higher levels than typically seen and much appreciated by pupils and parents. In their own words, pupils feel 'they have the best teachers for the job'.
- Homework is regularly set and is helping pupils to reinforce learning from the week, or to research and introduce new learning. A small number of parents expressed the view that homework is not always appropriate, but this view was not shared by inspectors or by pupils, who considered homework to provide valuable practice.
- Staff ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of clubs and activities to attend out of lesson time. Pupils are able to excel in sports such as cricket and gymnastics and to develop musical and artistic skills, through violin club and choir for example. Pupils valued these opportunities and spoke enthusiastically about doing a 'big show' at the leisure centre and about the chance to attend homework club.
- Pupils really do love learning. They value the work their teachers do and expect that sometimes learning will be challenging. The continual dialogue between teachers and their pupils is helping less able pupils in particular to develop resilience in learning. In the words of the pupils: 'when you are struggling, the teachers help you and they do it in a nice way'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils learn how to eat well and stay healthy both physically and mentally. Pupils feel 'you can express yourself in lots of ways' at Northowram, giving examples of contributing to the poetry anthology published by the school, or doing embroidery.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet, through well-planned lessons, interwoven through all aspects of school life.
- Pupils' understanding of cultures or families that are different to their own is very well developed through lessons and assemblies. The school has the Stonewall accreditation in acknowledgement of its age-appropriate work to help pupils understand different ways of expressing sexuality.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils respond very well to the school's merit system, earning rewards for excellent work or behaviour. The ultimate reward is to achieve the Governors' Award, given for 100 merits. Teachers have consistently high expectations and pupils do not disappoint. Consequently, incidences of low-level disruption in lessons are infrequent.
- Bullying is a rare occurrence and, when it does happen, pupils are very confident that their teachers will intervene. The view of pupils was that 'it is really easy to make friends' at school.
- The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and on time so that attendance at Northowram is in line with national averages. The pastoral manager has been effective in improving the attendance of some pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Children enter the Nursery at stages of development broadly in line with those typical for their age. As a result of good teaching, the proportion of children leaving Reception with a good level of development is above national expectations.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check is well above the national average.
- There has been a steady increase, over a three-year period, in the proportion of pupils who are attaining expected levels at key stages 1 and 2. In 2015, pupils in both key stages performed at levels significantly above national averages. At the end of key stage 2, a high proportion of the most able pupils attained very high levels, well above national averages, in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress made by pupils between key stages 1 and 2, in 2015, was exceptionally high when compared to progress made by pupils nationally. As a result, pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the demands of high school.
- Work in books shows that current pupils make excellent progress across all year groups and in all subjects. Pupils are very productive and the work they are producing is of a high quality. There is little difference between the achievements of boys and girls and the most able pupils achieve exceptionally well. As a result of very precise teaching and pastoral support, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs or disability catch up rapidly and make good progress. Between 85% and 90% of current pupils are working at levels expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics and high proportions are exceeding expectations.

Early years provision

is good

- Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the effectiveness of early years provision and are ensuring that the setting is rapidly improving. They have helped staff to provide a welcoming learning environment where children are happy and safe.
- The teaching of basic skills in the Nursery is helping pupils to develop early reading and writing, to recognise numbers and count objects. As a result of the good teaching received in the Nursery, children enter Reception at levels of development above those typical for their age.

- In Reception, resources are well organised so that children can explore independently and further develop their social skills. Staff question children well to foster curiosity and to develop understanding. Effective teaching is ensuring that all children make good progress, so that around four fifths, above proportions seen nationally, enter Year 1 at, or above, expected levels. However, assessment systems have been reviewed recently and are in need of some refinement. As a result, assessment is not precisely used to plan the next steps in learning for individual children.
- Children are confident, articulate and happy in school. They play well together and are very keen to share their learning journals, workbooks and homework books. The quality of work in children's books shows they have developed reading, writing and mathematical skills above those typically seen for their age.
- Additional funding provided to the school for disadvantaged children is used to provide free meals and additional support for children and, as a result, almost all disadvantaged children attained a good level of development last year.
- Staff are vigilant about the safety of children in the setting and hold appropriate first aid certificates.
- While provision indoors is enabling children to develop their knowledge and understanding, activities provided outside are less productive in helping children to fully acquire the skills they need.
- Parents are encouraged to look at learning journals and to reinforce school learning at home using children's homework books. They are welcomed into the setting and staff regularly meet with parents, both formally and informally, to ensure that information is passed on to enable children to make good progress. As a result, parents speak highly of the early education that their children are receiving.

School details

Unique reference number	107484
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection Number	10003269

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	473
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Booth
Headteacher	Daniel Lomas
Telephone number	01422 202704
Website	www.northowram.calderdale.sch.uk
Email address	admin@northowram.calderdale.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 March 2011

Information about this school

- Northowram Primary School is twice the size of an average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium is lower than average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for children who are looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average.
- Over 90% of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Children in the Reception class attend full time. Children in the Nursery class attend part time.

Information about this inspection

- Together with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, inspectors looked at pupil progress data, information about the performance of teachers, documents relating to behaviour and safety and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 24 parts of lessons, some alongside senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, and observed pupils' learning in small groups. They spoke with pupils in lessons, at lunchtime and at playtimes and met with groups of pupils from all classes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, class teachers, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. They considered the opinions of 53 parents through Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents).
- Inspectors took account of 37 online responses returned by members of staff and 75 online responses from pupils of Northowram.

Inspection team

Lesley Butcher, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Cheryl Lodge	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Rigby	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Slack	Ofsted Inspector

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