

Austwick Church of England VA Primary School

Austwick, Lancaster, Lancashire LA2 8BN

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher is a dedicated leader who has driven improvement relentlessly. She is passionate about keeping the school's Christian ethos at the heart of the school's work.
- Following a decline in the school's performance, governors responded well to the local authority's challenge to make urgent improvements. Governors now provide effective support and hold leaders to account.
- While there has been some variability in outcomes for pupils over time, the majority of current pupils are making good progress now, especially in writing.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching and learning. All staff are well trained and highly motivated.
- Higher expectations in the early years are helping children to make good progress. The outdoor classroom has been developed to improve children's learning. However, the quality of the teaching of phonics is variable.
- In 2018, all Year 1 pupils achieved the phonics screening check. However, some of the reading books in Year 1 include sounds that pupils do not know. This affects their confidence and slows their progress.
- Most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are making good or better progress. Teachers' expectations of the most able pupils, however, are not consistently high.
- Some aspects of the wider curriculum are exceptionally well designed. This includes opportunities pupils are given to learn outside and also from visitors to the school.
- There is scope for further development of subject leadership so that learning, particularly for most-able pupils, is deepened in subjects beyond English and mathematics.
- Pupils have a deep understanding of tolerance and respect, and they are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. The curriculum ensures that pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve consistency in the quality of the teaching of phonics in Reception and ensure that reading books in Year 1 are well matched to pupils' phonics skills and knowledge.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching to ensure that there are even higher expectations of the most able pupils in English and mathematics lessons.
- Develop leadership of the wider curriculum to ensure that all pupils make good or better progress in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is a dedicated and inspirational leader. Prior to her appointment, there was a period of instability and uncertainty in the school's leadership arrangements. The school's performance declined at that time.
- The headteacher won the trust and confidence of the whole school community when she led the school on a temporary basis in 2015. Following her permanent appointment in January 2016, the school has gone from strength to strength.
- The local authority and Leeds diocesan representatives speak very highly of the positive difference the headteacher has made. The school's reputation has markedly improved in the local community and pupil numbers continue to rise. Parents and carers value the good quality of education their children receive.
- This school is much smaller than typical and set in a picturesque rural location in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Leaders have adapted the curriculum exceptionally well to make the most of the school's beautiful setting as a learning resource. This enriches pupils' learning and deepens their knowledge because practical learning experiences such as woodland bluebell walks are so enjoyable and memorable.
- Recognising that pupils are living in this idyllic 'little bubble', leaders have successfully designed a curriculum to widen pupils' horizons. Leaders have established links with schools in very different contexts in England and internationally. Leaders have ensured that pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have increased opportunities for pupils to attend after-school clubs and competitive sporting events. Pupils are very happy at school and they want to stay and take part. Pupils' social skills, and their health and fitness levels, are improving as a result.
- Leaders use additional funding very effectively, including employing specialist coaches to teach physical education (PE). Leaders ensure that all disadvantaged pupils can take part by fully funding trips, transport and also music lessons for these pupils.
- Leaders identified writing as an area for improvement. Staff appreciate the extra training they have received to help them improve the quality of their teaching. The curriculum has also been changed to give pupils of all ages more opportunities to practise their writing skills. Pupils are now making good progress, and the standard of writing has improved as a result.
- Leaders welcome challenge. In addition to monitoring visits from local authority and diocesan advisers, leaders work with other schools, including some within the Castle Alliance. Teachers regularly attend writing moderation events to discuss and compare the quality of pupils' writing with teachers in other schools. This has helped to improve teachers' confidence and accuracy in their assessment of pupils' writing.
- Leaders are now working with teachers within the Castle Alliance to share ideas about improving the wider curriculum, as they have already identified this as an area for improvement.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school well, and their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate. They have identified appropriate priorities for improvement.
- The school development plan includes sharp targets which enable governors to hold leaders to account thoroughly. There is evidence in the minutes of their meetings that governors challenge school leaders effectively.
- Governors recently completed an audit of their skills and then recruited governors who had the necessary professional knowledge and experience to add value to the governing body. The governing body now includes governors who have expert skills in education and finance.
- Governors have recently taken some difficult cost-saving decisions to ensure that they maintain effective control of the budget. Governors are monitoring the success of these decisions and the effects that any resource reductions may have on staff well-being.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff have received appropriate training and they are confident about what to do if they have concerns about child protection. All the necessary checks are made when staff are recruited.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school. Staff, parents and pupils all say that there is no bullying at this school.
- Pupils take part in outdoor adventurous activities, such as caving and climbing. These activities are led by specialist instructors and all the necessary risk assessments are undertaken to ensure that pupils stay safe.
- In 2018, the great majority of Year 6 pupils reached competent swimming standards and many were confident in safe water rescue techniques.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- In this very small school, some year groups include only three pupils. Consequently, leaders have grouped pupils of different ages together to be taught in the same class. There is one class for key stage 1 pupils and another class for key stage 2 pupils.
- Teachers and other adults have warm and caring relationships with pupils. Parents say that this school is 'more like a family than a school'. The positive relationships evident in all lessons help pupils to thrive.
- The teaching of reading is good. Teachers in key stage 1 hear pupils read frequently, often daily. Pupils are encouraged to supplement the school's reading resources by taking in books to read from home. Some of the reading books available in school for Year 1 pupils to read are not suitable for them because they contain sounds that pupils do not know, so they cannot read them. This is limiting Year 1 pupils' developing confidence and fluency as early readers.
- The teaching of writing is good. Teachers' expectations of pupils' handwriting and

presentation are consistently high. Key stage 1 pupils establish a neat, joined handwriting style and this is maintained in key stage 2. Pupils take great pride in their work.

- Even the youngest pupils are given the opportunity to write extended pieces of writing frequently. The standard of writing that pupils produce is generally high. However, some of the writing tasks set for the most able pupils in key stage 2 are not challenging enough. This means that the progress the most able pupils make in writing across key stage 2 is average. As a result, too few of the most able Year 6 pupils reach the higher standard of which they are capable.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Teaching assistants are well trained and the intervention sessions they lead are effectively helping less-able pupils to catch up. All pupils are confident when explaining their mathematical thinking and reasoning.
- Most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, are making good progress in mathematics. Some of the work set for the most able pupils in upper key stage 2 is too easy for them and this slows their progress. A greater proportion of the most able pupils are capable of achieving the higher standard in mathematics.
- Sometimes, especially in the wider curriculum, pupils of different ages are given the same work to do. As a result, some of the work is not hard enough for the older pupils in the class. This limits their progress in some subjects.
- Leaders use the school's location creatively as a learning resource. For example, the school backs onto land with extensive woodland and the landowners allow pupils unlimited access. When studying the Stone Age, pupils went into the woods and foraged for wood and slate. They learned how to tie knots properly with rope and made their own Stone Age weapons by tying sharp stones and pieces of slate onto bits of wood. Unsurprisingly, the pupils vividly remembered what they had learned about Stone Age weaponry.
- Leaders use a wide range of specialist visitors and local partners to further enrich the wider curriculum. For example, Chinese sixth-form students from Giggleswick School came in to speak to pupils about how Chinese New Year is celebrated traditionally. Pupils made Chinese food and learned to use chopsticks. These first-hand accounts brought learning to life and helped deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultural traditions and symbolism.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning. Pupils know how to stay safe online.
- Pupils know how to stay fit and healthy. Fruit is freely available for all pupils, and young sports leaders arrange active games at playtime and lunchtime. Some staff have received certified training to help them support pupils' emotional health and well-being.
- The diocese of Leeds recognised this school's outstanding provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in its 2017 inspection. The report highlighted

'exemplary relationships' and 'impressive attitudes and behaviour'. Evidence gathered during this inspection reflected these outstanding judgements.

- Pupils' first-hand experience of visiting their predominately Muslim friends at a partner school in Bury and their experiences of visiting different places of worship in Bradford mean that they can speak with great confidence and respect about other faith traditions.
- Pupils were bursting to describe what they had learned from a Sikh visitor who came from Bradford to visit the school. He performed a sword dance, before teaching pupils about the kirpan. Pupils have a much greater depth of knowledge and understanding of other faiths than is typical for pupils of their age.
- Pupils have a very well-developed understanding of fundamental British values. Their visits to London include climbing the dome in St Paul's Cathedral, watching a play, visiting the Tower of London and visiting the Houses of Parliament to meet their MP. The work of the school council deepens pupils' understanding of democracy in practice.
- Pupils are rightly very proud of their work with their partner school in Uganda. Many pupils have a background in farming and they were staggered to learn that cows are rare in this Ugandan village. Pupils worked out how many laps of the field they needed to run to complete a marathon. The whole school then took part to run a marathon between them. The sponsorship money they raised as a result bought a cow for the village. Pupils have gone on to sponsor the education of orphans at their partner school and to provide sports and play equipment. Pupils have a strong understanding of rights and responsibilities, justice and fairness.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are very eager to learn and they love coming to school, so attendance rates are high for pupils from Reception to Year 6.
- There are no exclusions at this school. There is no low-level disruption in lessons. Pupils' conduct in and around school between lessons is impeccable. Pupils are well mannered and courteous. Their behaviour on the playground and in the dining hall is exemplary.
- There is no evidence of bullying at this school. Pupils are very kind to each other. The older pupils care for the little ones. One parent said that pupils' outstanding behaviour in school transfers into village life. She has noticed pupils looking after her child when they are playing in the park at the weekend.
- The whole school sits in one big circle for collective acts of worship. As a small cross is passed around, each pupil chooses their own morning greeting to say to the person sitting next to them. During the inspection, more than 50 pupils were completely silent, patient and attentive, listening to each other respectfully as each pupil was wished a happy day. The exemplary collective act of worship that followed, on the theme of perseverance, was a privilege to observe.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The very small numbers of pupils mean that the school's published data can swing

enormously compared to primary schools of a typical size. In cohorts of three pupils, each child represents 33%. This means that the data is not statistically significant.

- Results in Reception have declined over the last three years to be broadly in line with the national standard. Evidence of learning currently shows that children in Reception are making good progress now.
- Results in key stage 1 were above the national standard in 2018, with all pupils meeting the standard in the Year 1 phonics check. Year 2 pupils performed below the national standard in their writing. Recently, more effective teaching has resulted in current pupils producing higher standards of writing.
- Just over half of the 11 Year 6 pupils met the combined standard in reading, writing and mathematics in 2018. The progress pupils make across key stage 2 has been average for the last three years. Most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, are making good progress, but the most able pupils are capable of even better progress than they are making currently. Progress in writing has improved for all pupils across the school.
- Leaders use a specialist science teacher to teach science to the key stage 2 class each week. This has helped pupils to make good progress in science. The specialist skill of the PE teacher has been a key factor in pupils across the school making good progress in PE. Key stage 2 pupils won the local tri-golf tournament on the first day of the inspection, going through to the regional final competition in York.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have a secure understanding of the expectations of the curriculum for children in the early years foundation stage. Leaders have taken careful note of external guidance about higher expectations in the early years curriculum and now expect more from the children. This is helping Reception children to make good progress. These higher expectations are also ensuring that Reception children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Leaders have good links with the many pre-school providers that children attend before coming to school. When they do start school, their attendance is variable and some children only attend Nursery for one morning each week. This is slowing the progress they are making.
- Parents are welcomed into the classroom every morning to help settle their children for the day. There is regular communication between home and school about children's learning, with 77% of parents responding to the last school written learning link with parents. Parents say that they feel able to raise any concerns with leaders and that their children feel happy and safe. All children's care and welfare needs are met.
- The quality of the teaching of phonics is variable. Children in early years are taught under the guidance of the key stage 1 teacher, but Reception children are not always taught by a qualified teacher. Planning is not consistently sharp enough to ensure that the teaching of phonics in Reception is routinely good.
- Leaders have improved the outdoor classroom and there are rich opportunities for children to learn through play. This is helping pupils to make better progress. For example, a table-top number activity indoors was reproduced outdoors, using a large grid marked out onto the ground using masking tape. Some children, who had been

disinterested indoors, were excited to play the number game outside. They played independently, taking turns, doubling the numbers they had rolled and recording their answers. These high-quality areas of provision entice children to want to learn.

- Leaders build on children's interests. Some of the boys wanted to make potions in the mud kitchen, and took turns pouring and mixing soil and water into large muddy buckets. Leaders say they 'step back' and give children time to learn through discovery. This is helping children make good progress in their developing knowledge and understanding of the world.

School details

Unique reference number	121620
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10087660

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	Maintained / Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Hutchinson
Headteacher	Miss Jo Brookes
Telephone number	01524 251366
Website	www.austwickprimary.co.uk
Email address	admin@austwick.n-yorks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 November 2007

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than typical and is located in a rural village setting.
- A new headteacher was appointed in 2016.
- This school is voluntary aided. The last section 48 inspection by the diocese took place in December 2017.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is much lower than average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in both classes, in most cases alongside the headteacher. Inspectors also evaluated the learning recorded in pupils' books.
- Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were shared with the inspector.
- Six pupils from Years 1 and 2 read to the inspector. A mixed-age pupil focus group were interviewed over their lunch. Individual interviews with pupils from Year 5 and Year 6 were conducted to discuss their learning and progress. Pupils' learning and interactions in small groups, in lessons, in the dining room and during a collective act of worship were observed.
- Inspectors evaluated leadership documents provided by the school, including the school development plan, local authority reports, monitoring records, minutes of governing body meetings and the section 48 inspection report.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, middle leaders and a group of staff. An additional meeting was held with four members of the governing body. Telephone interviews were held with representatives of the local authority and the Leeds diocese.
- Parents' views given verbally were also considered.

Inspection team

Tracey Ralph, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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