

# Highfield Farm Primary School

Address: Stokewell Road, Wath-upon-Dearne, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, S63 6NF

Unique reference number (URN): 149118

## Inspection report: 3 March 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	● ●
Needs attention	● ● ● ●
Urgent improvement	

### ✔ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

#### How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

## Expected standard

### Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school has a deeply inclusive culture where every pupil is welcomed and feels that they belong. There is a clear sense of care and nurture throughout the school. Staff quickly and accurately identify any barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff devise well-considered plans to meet pupils' needs.

Regular training contributes to staff expertise. Teachers and support staff make careful adaptations and reasonable adjustments in meeting pupils' needs. For example, pupils benefit from visual timetables, breaks or additional support from well-trained adults. Robust systems allow the school to carefully monitor the impact of any support provided.

The school also has a clear strategy for the use of pupil premium funding, which is linked to school improvement priorities, such as improving reading. This is helping some pupils to engage more positively with learning and attendance. However, the impact of this strategy on academic outcomes is not yet consistent.

The school's recently introduced 'Hub' provision is beginning to reduce anxiety and improve readiness for learning for a small number of pupils receiving targeted support for social, emotional and mental health needs. For some pupils, this provides a calmer and more settled start to the school day.

### Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school has established a well-sequenced personal, social and health education curriculum. Leaders ensure this is delivered effectively. Pupils recall past learning with confidence, discussing topics such as substance misuse, racism or how to respond to emergencies. When necessary, teachers adapt the curriculum in response to relevant local issues. Pupils learn about growing up and staying healthy. They know that healthy relationships are founded on respect and kindness.

Pupils develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally through the school's carefully planned calendar of events across the year. Events include celebrations from different faiths, memorable visits and visitors, and recognition of different cultural events. Pupils thrive in the school's inclusive environment. Pupils have an understanding of what it means to be a member of modern British society. They have a depth of understanding of what it means to live in a democracy. Pupils know and appreciate that everyone is different and unique and that discrimination for any reason is unacceptable.

The school works hard to ensure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, benefit from the wider offer the school provides. There is a wide choice of extra-curricular lunchtime and after-school clubs. Pupils are proud of their responsibilities, including those as librarians, school councillors and mental health ambassadors. These prepare them well to be active and positive citizens of the future.

The school provides pupils with high-quality pastoral support. Pupils appreciate the nurture and support the school provides and that they can choose to access support if they need it. They say that this is a school where everyone gets the help they need.

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## Needs attention

### Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils' achievement is not strong enough. Although there have been some improvements, published outcomes at the end of key stage 2 are low, particularly in writing at the expected standard, in phonics, in the Year 4 multiplication check and in the higher standard for English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Some pupils are not well enough prepared for the next stage of their education.

Historic gaps in knowledge, particularly in early writing and number formation, are not closing quickly. Unaddressed errors in letter and number formation hamper progress and the development of fluency. Some pupils, particularly older pupils, recall their learning better and use vocabulary with confidence, although some are not securing the breadth of knowledge they need across the whole curriculum.

While the unevenness of the academic progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities reflects the wider weaknesses in curriculum and teaching, many make notable steps of progress from their starting points. This progress is reflected in greater confidence and fluency in how they express themselves and their increasing independence in managing themselves in their learning and social times.

### Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Pupils' attendance rates at the school are low. Pupils who are absent from school miss out on essential learning and develop gaps in their knowledge. Leaders prioritise and monitor attendance closely with weekly oversight from the trust. Leaders work with parents and external agencies to improve attendance. Despite this, some barriers, including specific family needs or pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities, are proving stubborn and difficult to overcome. Consequently, the school's efforts to improve attendance are not yet leading to sufficient improvement.

Pupils usually respond positively to the high expectations that adults have for their behaviour and attitudes to learning. However, this is not consistently the case. Sometimes, pupils lose focus and attention in lessons. This is not addressed swiftly enough by staff. Movement into and around school is founded on well-established routines. Pupils are typically calm and sensible. Pupils' behaviour at lunchtime and playtimes is appropriate.

Some pupils struggle with their emotions. When this is the case, they respond well to the support of well-trained, caring staff. Where needed, the school makes appropriate use of consequences. Leaders track behaviour incidents effectively, analysing and responding to any patterns. Bullying is not tolerated and is swiftly addressed.

## Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

The teaching of the curriculum is variable across classes and subjects. This leads to inconsistent learning experiences for pupils. In some lessons, tasks do not consistently secure new knowledge, and pupils are not able to move on in their learning sufficiently. For example, on occasions, pupils undertake activities that lack clear learning intentions, such as unnecessarily copying sentences from the board.

The school's curriculum follows a clear sequence. Where learning is well planned, it builds pupils' knowledge securely over time. Where this is the case, teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge when teaching in mixed-age classes and across all curriculum subjects. This helps pupils understand how new learning connects to what they already know.

The school places a priority on reading. Phonics sessions are well structured, and teachers regularly check pupils' progress. Where pupils have gaps in phonics knowledge, teachers identify and address these effectively. The school does not apply similar rigorous approaches to the teaching of writing. There is not a systematic, consistent approach to the teaching of early writing. Pupils do not secure the foundations of writing as quickly as they do in reading.

The school's emphasis on vocabulary and oracy is evident in pupils' verbal communication. They elaborate on the views of others. Teachers make helpful adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or other barriers to learning, such as providing additional vocabulary or physical apparatus in mathematics.

## Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

The school has not ensured that pupils' education is of a consistently high quality across the school. This has led to a history of underachievement. The trust's and the school's actions to address weaknesses in attendance, curriculum and teaching and achievement have not yet been sufficiently impactful. Where there are weaknesses and inconsistencies in teaching, improvement strategies historically lacked the necessary precision and urgency.

Trustees fulfil their statutory duties effectively. They have well-established structures and mechanisms to ensure that lines of accountability are clearly understood and fulfilled. The trust's governance model has been recently reviewed, clarifying accountability and securing systems for support and challenge. This higher level of accountability is yet to result in consistent improvements in teaching quality or pupils' outcomes.

The school benefits from its membership of the trust. Collaborations and links with other schools and expert colleagues are bringing welcome expertise, opportunities and improvements in areas such as attendance and special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders articulate a shared and ambitious vision to include all pupils. The school works closely with families and wider agencies. Parents typically speak positively about the school and its leadership. Leaders' decision-making invariably has the pupils' best interests at heart. Staff speak positively about their experience of working at the school. They benefit from ongoing professional development. They appreciate leaders' concern and

consideration for their workload and wellbeing. Leadership at trust and school level is characterised by a positive and supportive culture.

## **What it's like to be a pupil at this school**

Pupils are welcomed into this school with a family feel where everyone belongs. Pupils feel safe at school. They know how to keep themselves safe both online and offline. They learn about being positive members of the community and develop characteristics that will help them in later life. Many pupils enjoy coming to school and speak positively about their teachers. However, some pupils' attendance is too low.

Pupils talk enthusiastically about their learning in subjects such as science and reading. They participate in clubs that include parkour, art and a range of sports. They look forward to memorable trips such as a residential visit. These opportunities spark pupils' interest and broaden their horizons.

The educational experience of pupils varies across the school. When teaching is effective, pupils are typically engaged and explain their learning well. Some pupils recall their learning with confidence and use vocabulary maturely. Older pupils explain how suffragettes fought for women's rights or demonstrate their understanding of the water cycle. There are times, however, when pupils lose focus or become frustrated when they are not undertaking appropriate tasks or receiving the support they need. This can occasionally lead to low-level disruption that slows learning.

Too many pupils do not make the progress they should through the curriculum. Some have gaps in their knowledge, and these are not addressed quickly enough. This limits how well pupils are prepared for their next steps. Where pupils have barriers to learning, these are identified, and pupils are supported well. However, further work is needed to ensure that all pupils quickly secure the important foundations in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils play together well at social times. They have positive and supportive relationships with each other and adults. They understand the importance of respect and tolerance. Bullying is rare and dealt with swiftly and decisively. Pupils know adults care about them and will listen if they have worries. They appreciate the pastoral support the school provides.

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## **Next steps**

- Leaders should ensure that teachers have the knowledge, skills and expertise necessary to secure the foundations of writing and address any gaps in pupils' knowledge effectively.
- Leaders should further develop the consistency of teaching by ensuring that tasks are closely aligned to curriculum aims and pupils' prior knowledge so that they secure new learning more effectively.
- Leaders should continue to embed strategies to improve achievement by ensuring that historic gaps in knowledge are identified and closed quickly, particularly for younger pupils in the foundations of writing and mathematics.

- Leaders should ensure that there are consistently high expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning.
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## About this inspection

This school is part of The James Montgomery Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, David Silvester, and overseen by a board of trustees chaired by Richard Punshon.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, as well as several other leaders, including those responsible for the school's curriculum and provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Inspectors also spoke with representatives of the trust and met with a range of staff. Inspectors carried out learning walks across the school in a range of subjects and reviewed pupils' work. They met with groups of pupils and observed social times. Inspectors examined a range of school documents, including those related to the curriculum, school improvement, safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and governance.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not use alternative provision.

Headteacher: Donna Mackinnon

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### Lead inspector:

Dughall McCormick, His Majesty's Inspector

### Team inspector:

June Richardson, Ofsted Inspector

## Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.



This data is from 3 March 2026

## School and pupil context

### Total pupils

**84**

Well below average

#### What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

### School capacity

**180**

Below average

#### What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

### Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

**59.04%**

Well above average

#### What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

### Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

**11.90%**

Well above average

## **What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

## **Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support**

**22.62%**

Well above average

## **What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

## **Location deprivation**

**Well above average**

## **What does this mean?**

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

## **Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)**

**No resourced provision**

## **What does this mean?**

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

## **All pupils' performance**

### **Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics**

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		61%	
<b>2024/25 (revised)</b>	42%	62%	Below
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	41%	61%	Below
<b>2022/23</b>		60%	

### **Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading**

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		74%	
<b>2024/25 (revised)</b>	67%	75%	Below
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	53%	74%	Below
<b>2022/23</b>		73%	

### **Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing**

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		72%	
<b>2024/25 (revised)</b>	42%	72%	Below
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	47%	72%	Below
<b>2022/23</b>		71%	

### **Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics**

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		73%	
<b>2024/25 (revised)</b>	58%	74%	Below
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	41%	73%	Below
<b>2022/23</b>		73%	

## **Disadvantaged pupils' performance**

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

### **Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics**

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		46%	
<b>2024/25 (revised)</b>	33%	47%	Below
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	27%	46%	Below
<b>2022/23</b>		44%	

### **Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading**

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		62%	

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	67%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	45%	62%	Below
2022/23		60%	

### Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		59%	
2024/25 (revised)	33%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	36%	58%	Below
2022/23		58%	

### Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		60%	
2024/25 (revised)	44%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	27%	59%	Below
2022/23		59%	

### Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference

between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

### **Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics**

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National non-disadvantaged score</b>	<b>School disadvantage gap</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		68%	
<b>2024/25 (revised)</b>	33%	69%	-36 pp
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	27%	67%	-40 pp
<b>2022/23</b>		66%	

### **Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading**

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National non-disadvantaged score</b>	<b>School disadvantage gap</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		80%	
<b>2024/25 (revised)</b>	67%	81%	-14 pp
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	45%	80%	-34 pp
<b>2022/23</b>		78%	

### **Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing**

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		78%	
<b>2024/25 (revised)</b>	33%	78%	-45 pp
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	36%	78%	-41 pp
<b>2022/23</b>		77%	

### Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		80%	
<b>2024/25 (revised)</b>	44%	81%	-36 pp
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	27%	79%	-52 pp
<b>2022/23</b>		79%	

### Absence

#### Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
<b>2024/25 (2 term)</b>	8.0%	5.2%	Above
<b>2023/24 (3 term)</b>	5.9%	5.5%	Close to average
<b>2022/23 (3 term)</b>	5.9%	5.9%	Close to average

## Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	24.3%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	16.4%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	14.3%	16.2%	Close to average

## Our grades explained

### Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

### Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

### Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

### Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

### Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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