

Inspection of Larks Hill Junior and Infant School

Larks Hill, Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF8 4RJ

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 March 2025

The quality of education **Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Outstanding**

Early years provision **Outstanding**

Previous inspection grade Good

The headteacher of this school is Kara Adams. This school is part of Pontefract Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Julian Appleyard OBE, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Phil Jones OBE.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. Pupils greet visitors warmly, engage in conversations maturely and show impeccable manners. They are polite, respectful and confident. There is a calm, supportive environment. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and caring.

Pupils love coming to school. Attendance is impressively high. Pupils take pride in the many experiences on offer. They embrace the wide range of opportunities that enrich their learning and personal development. Pupils follow firmly embedded routines.

Pupils achieve exceptionally well. They consistently meet the school's high expectations for learning and behaviour by embracing the school's values. Pupils, right from Reception, have excellent attitudes to learning. They recognise that reading is the key to accessing learning across the curriculum and develop a deep love of books. Pupils work attentively together, respect each other and form strong relationships. Older pupils act as role models, supporting younger children to develop their independence. Pupils are confident and independent.

Pastoral support is exemplary. Pupils feel safe, valued and supported to do their best. They are well prepared for their next steps. Pupils have a strong understanding of fundamental British values. They discuss sensitive topics maturely. Pupils engage thoughtfully with issues such as diversity and equality.

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

The curriculum is highly ambitious and carefully designed to build pupils' knowledge over time. The school has identified the key knowledge it wants pupils to learn. Knowledge builds progressively over time, ensuring pupils build on what they have previously learned. Pupils have opportunities to extend and embed their learning. The school has ensured that staff consistently help pupils to remember what they have learned. For example, teachers highlight key learning points throughout the lesson and help pupils to recap and revisit prior learning. This reinforces pupils' understanding. The curriculum is highly inclusive, ensuring that all pupils, access the same high-quality education.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They skilfully adapt learning to meet the needs of pupils, including those with SEND. They present new knowledge clearly, using a range of strategies to build pupils' interest. They check precisely what pupils know and remember and what needs to be re-taught. Misconceptions are quickly identified and addressed. The impact of this high-quality provision is reflected in the impressive standards that pupils achieve in end of key stage 2 tests.

Expert staff teach phonics consistently well. Pupils follow secure routines to build their knowledge of sounds. Books are precisely matched to pupils' phonic knowledge. Pupils read accurately using the sounds that they know. Staff skilfully support reading. In lessons, pupils read fluently, accurately and with increasing expression. They support each other successfully when reading in pairs. Pupils who need extra support, receive targeted

help to keep up. Teachers use a range of strategies to ensure pupils secure their knowledge of sounds and develop confidence in blending those sounds together so they can read. They model how to read and ensure pupils repeat what they have learned. Pupils make exceptional progress through the early reading curriculum.

Children make a strong start to Reception. The early years curriculum is purposefully sequenced to make strong connections with prior knowledge and future learning. A precise focus on developing vocabulary gives children the knowledge and skills to communicate confidently from the start. Developing children's resilience and independence are high priority. Knowledgeable staff are relentless in the pursuit of providing strong foundations for children. Children build detailed knowledge across all areas of learning. They are enthusiastic to demonstrate their learning. For example, children show their knowledge of phonics by teaching adults and other children. They show high levels of concentration when completing challenges.

Pupils are highly motivated to learn, whether working independently or in pairs. They support and guide each other's learning, helping their peers to succeed. Pupils work hard in lessons. They take on challenges with enthusiasm. At playtimes, pupils socialise sensibly and speak respectfully to each other. They engage purposefully with the wide range of activities available.

The personal development offer is excellent. It includes a wealth of deliberately designed experiences, both within and beyond the curriculum. The school empowers pupils to be involved in decision making and take on responsibilities. Pupils are committed to plan and lead activities for their peers. They embrace the wide range of leadership roles, giving all pupils a chance to have a positive impact on school life. For example, the eco team supports each class to grow food. Mental health ambassadors support pupils' well-being through mindfulness activities.

Leaders, including governors and trustees are aligned in their vision to provide a high-quality education to all pupils. The school and trust prioritise staff development, enabling them to develop their practice. Staff feel well supported by leaders with their workload and well-being. They feel valued and listened to. There is a strong team culture where staff are supportive of each other.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	139499
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10346489
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	202
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Phil Jones OBE
CEO of the trust	Julian Appleyard OBE
Headteacher	Kara Adams
Website	www.larkshill.patrust.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 June 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Pontefract Academies Trust.
- The headteacher is new to the role since the last inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provisions.
- There is a breakfast club run by the school on site.

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 met with the headteacher, associate assistant headteachers and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors met with leaders from the trust including the CEO, director of school improvement and the director of safeguarding and inclusion. They met with a trustee and members of the school performance review board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with leaders to sample other subjects in the curriculum, including history, science and religious education.
- Inspectors heard pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors met with the early years leader and visited the early years provision.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school, at playtime and at lunchtime. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their views of the school, their learning, behaviour and safety.
- 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 pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free text comments. Inspectors also talked to parents in the school playground.
- Inspectors met with staff to gather their views of the school. They also considered the responses to the Ofsted survey for staff.

Inspection team

Nicola Beaumont, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sharon Stelling

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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