

West Vale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107573
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	377606
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2012
Lead inspector	Kathleen McArthur

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynn Lynch
Headteacher	Rachel Kemp
Date of previous school inspection	25 September 2006
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Introduction

Inspection team

Kathleen McArthur
Anthony Kingston

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The team observed 16 lessons taught by 10 teachers and held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They listened to pupils read, and observed intervention groups and assemblies. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including improvement plans, school and national data, school policies, monitoring records and procedures for the care and protection of pupils (safeguarding). They also analysed responses in the 35 questionnaires received from parents and carers and those completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average, and a lower than average proportion has a statement of special educational needs. The school meets the government's current floor standard.

There has been considerable staffing change and disruption since the previous inspection and a new headteacher took up post since September 2011.

The school holds the Eco-School Bronze award.

A private provider offers before- and after-school provision on the school site. This provision is inspected separately and receives a separate report, available on the Ofsted website.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- West Vale is a good school. A happy and harmonious community pervades with staff and pupils sharing a strong sense of teamwork. Particular strengths are the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Achievement is good and attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. Children make a good start and progress well in the vibrant learning environment of the Early Years Foundation Stage. All groups of pupils, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, progress well in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Reading skills are taught well, but staff changes mean that some staff are not confident in using all available strategies. More-able pupils in Year 2 do not always attain the higher levels, often finding it difficult to predict and infer meaning from the text. Most pupils write confidently and imaginatively, but some careless presentation and the lack of a consistent style of handwriting lowers the quality of written work. Consequently, the school's overall effectiveness is good rather than outstanding
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They feel very safe and secure, seen in keen attitudes and high levels of attendance. They are proud of their school; one comment summed up the views of many: 'I definitely think we are fortunate to be at West Vale. It's a good education and so many people spend their own time to run clubs showing that everyone cares about us.' In their questionnaires, parents' and carers' views were very positive and all agreed their children feel safe at school.
- Teaching is good. Teachers use strong subject knowledge to provide well planned lessons. Rigorous assessment systems provide staff with accurate information to set challenging tasks. Pupils enjoy their lessons and build and develop their skills and knowledge across the interesting, relevant and meaningful curriculum.
- Leaders, managers and staff are fully united in their commitment to ongoing improvement. The highest priority is given to staff development and sharing of good practice, for example to boost pupil's speech and language skills. Consequently, pupils demonstrate highly positive attitudes to learning, progress well and are well prepared for the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in reading at Key Stage 1 by:
 - ensuring more able readers reach higher levels by developing their ability to deduce meaning and make predictions from their reading
 - ensuring all staff know and consistently apply all available strategies for the teaching of reading
 - providing further guidance for parents and carers so they are confident to help their child read at home.
- Implement a consistent style of handwriting throughout the school and raise expectations for the presentation of pupils' work.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those typical for their age, particularly in language and communication. They quickly become confident and independent in the calm, safe environment, keen to investigate the stimulating activities indoors and outside. Simple routines make them feel secure, they tidy up carefully before the music ends, listen avidly to stories and enjoy searching for words hidden in the outdoor learning area. Children make good progress in all areas of learning and enter Year 1 with skills close to those expected for their age.

Good behaviour and keen attitudes support good progress as pupils move through Key Stages 1 and 2. Observations during the inspection show progress is good in lessons. Responses in the overwhelming majority of questionnaires show that parents and carers feel their children achieve well. Pupils tackle tasks eagerly, work hard and cooperate well with classmates and staff. Pupils' workbooks, together with school and national data, show that attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. However, pupils are not always expected to present their work neatly. In each year group good teaching and additional support meet individual learning needs very effectively. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they receive well-organised support and any potential barriers to learning are minimised.

Pupils use and develop their skills across the curriculum, for example by using literacy and numeracy skills to create timelines of significant events in different decades. At the end of Key Stage 2 attainment in reading is above average, and reading skills support pupils' learning and progress in all subjects. By the end of Key Stage 1 attainment in reading is broadly average, but in 2011 fewer pupils attained higher levels. Effective actions to increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels, including staff training in strategies for the teaching of reading, small group reading sessions and attractive resources, are boosting progress successfully. Many pupils benefit from support with reading at home but some parents and carers commented that they would welcome further guidance so they know more about how to help their child.

Quality of teaching

The vast majority of parents and carers said their children are taught well. Consistently good teaching and some outstanding examples were observed. Thorough use of assessment information ensures staff match activities closely to pupils' different abilities, enabling all groups to progress well, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. The welcoming environment and high quality care in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure children quickly become eager learners; children worked busily in the 'garden centre'; an activity that particularly stimulated and engaged the boys. As they move through the school pupils become increasingly independent learners and are able to reflect on issues that concern them. For example, Year 6 pupils worked cooperatively on persuasive arguments in favour of being allowed mobile phones in school. Pupils enjoy assessing their own and each other's work, know their targets for improvement and are keen to move to the next level. However, the marking of pupils' work is of variable quality and does not always show them how to improve.

Good curriculum planning ensures writing, mathematics and communication skills are taught effectively. Reading skills are generally taught well, but different strategies to further raise the attainment of more able readers in Key Stage 1 are not embedded fully. Younger pupils enjoy daily 'letters and sounds' practice, and Reception children particularly enjoy the 'Silly Soup' game, collecting objects beginning with the same sound. Homework extends classroom learning; another topic debated by Year 6 pupils in a lively literacy lesson. Lessons promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, resulting in the trusting relationships between pupils and staff. A clear sense of enjoyment of learning was evident in all lessons. Pupils say staff expect them to work hard, but also that, 'they make us smile'. Consequently, pupils behave well, support each other and happily cooperate with their 'talk partners', all of which contributes to their good progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents and carers, pupils and staff agree that the school is a safe environment. The curriculum ensures pupils know how to care for their own safety when using the internet, on the roads and in water. Good behaviour contributes strongly to pupils' good progress. A small minority of parents and carers feel that lessons are sometimes disrupted by bad behaviour. Inspectors observed good and often excellent behaviour, and found that systematic and consistent behaviour management procedures ensure learning is not hindered. Although some feel behaviour could be even better, pupils do not regard bullying as an issue, and they have a good understanding that bullying may take different forms, for example cyber bullying. They trust staff to sort out any problems and try to resolve any conflicts between themselves. Attendance is high and pupils arrive punctually each day. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very effectively. Pupils gain a strong sense of belonging as members of the four school teams. They work hard to earn team points by helping others and raising money for charity. They socialise happily across the age groups. School meals staff make dinner times fun; older pupils serve the younger ones and play leaders organise activities in the playground. Pupils treat others with consideration and respect and greet visitors in a very friendly manner, reflecting the way they are treated with great care and respect by staff. 'School is like a big family' and 'We're all friends' were typical comments.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers rightly describe themselves as a strong team. Despite many changes since the previous inspection, staff morale is high and the shared vision and high aspirations for ongoing improvement are firmly in place. Accurate self-evaluation leads to tightly focused improvement plans with clear priorities supported by appropriately rigorous actions to realise these. Rigorous monitoring and effective professional development procedures to ensure good teaching, good pupil progress and above-average attainment at the end of Year 6 have been maintained and consolidated. The school has demonstrated that it has a good capacity for further improvement. Members of the governing body present rigorous challenge and informed support based on their knowledge, expertise and close involvement with the school. They work with senior leaders, ensuring safeguarding arrangements meet all current requirements and give no cause for concern. Rigorous performance management strategies extend good practice and support new members of staff. Senior leaders recognise the need to ensure that all staff are confident and fully conversant with the school's strategies to enhance the reading skills of younger, more-able pupils.

Well promoted spiritual, moral, social and cultural development puts the provision of equal opportunity and pupils' individual needs at the centre of the school's work. For example, strategies to boost the reading skills of higher attainers in Key Stage 1 are ensuring they are provided with the opportunities to reach the higher levels. The curriculum covers all basic skills well and builds on pupils' enthusiasms and interests: studying the rise of popular culture through the decades, specialist teaching in French and music, visits and a residential experience for older pupils. Pupils are keen to attend the variety of clubs such as the Happy Songsters Glee Club and the Happy Songsters Fun Club, and are looking forward to visiting the mayor at the Town Hall.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of West Vale Primary School, Halifax, HX4 8LS

The inspectors would like to thank you for welcoming and helping us. We had a very enjoyable time meeting you all, visiting lessons, listening to you read and seeing you play outside. We were impressed by your good behaviour and very polite, friendly manners; you are a credit to your school and to your families, so well done!

We would especially like to thank the school councillors and team captains, the eco-team, and all of you who came to talk to us at lunchtime. You told us you enjoy everything at school, and your parents and carers are pleased with the school, too.

We found that West Vale is a good school, with good leadership, management and teaching ensuring that you are always safe. The Early Years Foundation Stage gives you a good start in school. We know you work hard because you make good progress and reach standards above those expected for your age when you leave. We were impressed with your enthusiasm for everything you do at school, and wish we could have seen you dressed up for World Book Day. You told us how much you enjoy lessons, especially the different topics, the visits and the clubs.

To make your school even better, we have asked the leaders to:

- make sure staff know how to help more pupils in Key Stage 1 reach higher standards in reading
- provide more information to help your parents and carers when they listen to you read at home
- make sure you all use the same handwriting style and always present your work carefully and neatly.

We know you will want to help the leaders and your teachers in every way. We send you our very best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Kathleen McArthur
Lead inspector

