

Northowram Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107486
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	356162
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Yvonne Mills-Clare

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	448
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Marcus Hunter
Headteacher	Mr Daniel Lomas
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 22 lessons and observed sixteen teachers. Inspectors spoke informally to a few parents and carers and analysed 102 questionnaires. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including pupils' work, systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress, plans for improvement and reports written by the local authority. Questionnaires completed by 195 pupils and 46 staff were evaluated.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas:

- How well the school ensures that all pupils reach their full potential.
- How well staff uses the school's system for tracking pupils' progress to support good learning.
- Whether leaders and managers at all levels take an active role in planning or the school's development.

Information about the school

Northowram is a large, two-form entry, primary school, where the vast majority of its pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those who do not have English as their first language, is also much lower than average. The school has Healthy School status.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Northowram is a good school where many lively displays celebrate pupils' work. Pupils demonstrate just how much they enjoy school by the pride they take in their work and their above average attendance. They are well behaved and polite and have good attitudes to learning. These qualities, together with excellent relationships and a calm and happy atmosphere, ensure a good climate for learning. The headteacher, staff and governors are determined to reach the highest possible standards in all aspects of the school's work and are committed to fulfilling their aim.

The attainment of pupils in the current Year 6 is above average. Young children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, entering Nursery with skills that are broadly average. The safe, warm and stimulating environment ensures that they make good progress. This good progress is maintained throughout the school. The rigorous tracking of pupils' progress and regular monitoring procedures by senior leadership help to ensure the good quality of teaching, and the school's evaluation of what still needs to be done is accurate. Improvements in attainment and increasing numbers of pupils for whom progress is accelerating, demonstrate a good capacity to improve. The creation of a more distributed leadership is further increasing capacity, but the role of some subject leaders is still developing and this sometimes results in monitoring outcomes at this middle level not being used as effectively as they could be to impact fully on whole school improvement.

Good, and on occasion outstanding, teaching often results in creative use of the curriculum to produce activities that motivate all pupils. This is not always the case. In the minority of lessons that are less successful, pupils are not so well motivated. They have less opportunity to take decisions about their learning and fewer occasions to work independently.

Increasing links across subjects benefit all pupils in providing opportunities to practise their basic skills regularly. Targeted, personalised programmes, aimed at breaking down individual barriers to learning have been effective in improving boys' progress in the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities learn well with the skilled help of teaching assistants and make the same good progress as all other pupils. The good curriculum contributes well to pupils' good spiritual, moral and social development and is enriched by a wide range of visits and visitors.

Community links are very much at the heart of the school's ethos and the school is a very cohesive community. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of the diverse cultures that exist in the United Kingdom and internationally.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further increase the amount of teaching that is good and outstanding by:

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- ensuring all lessons are sufficiently interesting to engage and motivate all learners
- providing more opportunities for pupils to follow their own lines of enquiry
- Further develop the role of middle leaders throughout the school and extend their monitoring role in order to consistently use findings to set targets that are closely linked to pupils' progress and the acquisition of skills.
- Improve pupils' understanding of the diverse nature of cultures both in the United Kingdom and internationally by providing more opportunities for them to learn about cultures that are different from their own.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils enjoy their learning, are active participants and are keen to succeed. They respect and trust the teachers to help them and apply themselves diligently to their tasks and activities.

Children start school with skills that are broadly in line with the expectations for their age and become articulate, confident learners. They make good progress through the school, leaving in Year 6 with above average attainment. The school's current data show that attainment of Year 6 pupils is on track to at least maintain this picture.

There is no major difference between the progress of different groups of pupils and overall they achieve well. Differences in the progress of boys and girls are being eradicated through effective personalised programmes directed at breaking down barriers to learning among boys. For example, in lessons seen, both boys and girls made good progress in their learning when teachers posed challenging, differentiated questions, which extended their thinking. 'Boy friendly' topics such as 'Back to the Future' seek to involve and motivate. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in relation to their starting points. New systems implemented by the school and good support by teaching assistants ensure they make similar progress to their peers.

Pupils say they enjoy school, feel safe and that most pupils behave well both in classrooms and in the playground. They get on well with each other, sharing a good sense of common values. Attendance is above average and there are good procedures in place to follow up any absence. Pupils are confident that any concerns they have are successfully dealt with by all staff. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe both in and out of school and they have a good knowledge of internet safety. Pupils know how to live healthily and they enjoy the wholesome tuck shop, nourishing school lunches and a range of sporting activities on offer. They enjoy having responsibilities and make a good contribution to the life of the school through the school council as well as being buddies to younger pupils. They are proud of the difference they make through their charitable support. Contribution to the broader community is more limited, partly because cultural development is a weaker strand of pupils' otherwise good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Pupils speak highly of the school, saying that they enjoy lessons. Where lessons are most successful, there is a high degree of pupil participation and targets are used well to bring about improvements. Marking makes a good contribution to pupils' knowledge about their work and planning is thorough, with outcomes of lessons used effectively to produce activities that are interesting and practical, promoting good learning. Teachers are keen and enjoy teaching, but at times their explanations can be too long, which limits the time available for pupils to work independently and make decisions about their own learning.

The curriculum is well organised, meeting the needs of all pupils well. Art is a strength and high quality displays permeate the school. Gifted and talented pupils are well provided for, through academic and sporting links with other schools. There is a wide range of well attended extra-curricular clubs for pupils to extend their learning, including martial arts, drumming and dance.

Pupils receive a good level of care, guidance and support. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are well supported by the learning mentors, who make themselves available for pupils if they have any worries. There are individual examples of pupils who have been successful in overcoming significant barriers to their learning. Support for individual pupils and targeted groups ensures that pupils at risk of falling behind are given extra help. Many outside agencies provide specialist advice to enhance the provision in the school, including educational psychologists, social services and the school nurse. There are

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good transition arrangements both when children start at the school and when they move on to their secondary education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have communicated a vision for improvement to the whole school community and there is a strong team spirit and commitment to excellence. Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and know what needs to be done to improve. Forward planning is good. As a result of a particularly thorough programme of self-review and evaluation, undertaken mainly by senior leaders, the correct priorities inform the school's development plan. A newly created tier of middle leaders has resulted in a more distributed leadership. The role of these subject leaders is still developing and outcomes of audits and monitoring of initiatives undertaken by them are not yet used consistently in order to set targets that are closely linked to pupils' progress and hence further accelerate whole-school improvement.

The governing body offers good support to the school and is not afraid to challenge issues. Its members know the school well and monitor its work through productive links with staff, through taking part in termly 'Governor days,' as well as through the school development plan. The promotion of community cohesion, although satisfactory, is stronger at school and local level. However, pupils do not have a strong enough sense of the cultural diversity that exists in the United Kingdom and beyond.

The school has good links with parents, seeking their views in a range of areas, and providing information through a weekly newsletter, 'Friday tea' and consultation days. A good range of partnerships supports and enhances pupils' learning. Ensuring that all pupils have equality of opportunity is well managed through careful monitoring and is becoming more effective as provision and progress for all pupils continues to improve. The school does not tolerate any form of discrimination. There are good safeguarding procedures and regular training supports staff well in carrying out their safeguarding obligations.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children have a very positive start to their school life because relationships between staff and parents are good, and teachers ensure that the children feel safe and secure in their new surroundings. Adults interact well with children, joining in their play while asking questions and facilitating learning. Relationships are warm and caring and the environment is safe, calm and stimulating for young children. These features, together with good teaching and organisation and the correct balance between adult- and child-initiated activities, help children to achieve well and ensure that they become increasingly independent. The curriculum is varied and interesting, engaging children well. Use of the outdoor area is stronger in Reception, although the very wide range of activities provided can, at times, be complicated to manage. There is a lot of praise and encouragement for pupils, and ongoing assessment is well used, particularly in Reception, to plan activities that challenge and enthuse children. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led, but the physical siting of the two locations at different ends of the school makes monitoring the consistency of the two settings more difficult. Learning journals are established and are a strong feature, but are not continuously used throughout the setting.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation	2

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Stage

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded are extremely supportive of the school. Typical of the comments made by parents and carers was: 'My daughter talks about what she is learning all the time and is eager to find out more at home. I am more than happy that my child goes to school with a smile on her face and comes home with an even bigger one!'.

A small minority of parents indicated concerns about how misbehaviour is dealt with. In addition, a few parents raised concerns about progress. These were looked into during the course of the inspection. Inspectors found that behaviour was good and that pupils make good progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Northowram Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 102 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 448 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	58	40	39	1	1	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	55	54	42	41	3	3	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	34	33	57	56	8	8	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	38	49	48	9	9	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	42	41	53	52	2	2	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	37	50	49	6	6	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	44	51	50	1	1	2	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	36	35	49	48	5	5	3	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	42	46	45	6	6	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	30	52	51	7	7	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	32	56	55	3	3	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	49	48	47	46	2	2	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	51	43	42	2	2	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



7 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northowram Primary School, Halifax, HX3 7EF

What a delightful time my colleagues and I had when we visited your school. Thank you for talking to us and for showing us your work. We appreciated especially hearing all about your visits, your achievements and what you enjoy. It was very clear from our chats and the questionnaire replies we received from you, your parents and carers that you enjoy school and think that you are safe and very well cared for. You know lots about being healthy and staying safe. It is lovely that you are so kind to each other.

Your school provides you with a good education. Good teaching allows you to make good progress. As well as your good behaviour, you work hard and have a very positive attitude to everything the school offers. You enjoy your lessons, clubs, and visits out of school. All this is happening because all adults care very much about how well you do and want you to do your very best. Although they know what needs to be done next, we have asked them to do some additional things to make your learning even better.

We have asked your teachers to make sure that you always have lessons that you enjoy and that make you want to learn. We have also asked them to give you lessons where you have a greater choice of ways of working, for instance when finding the answer to a question or writing a story. When leaders in your school are finding out how well you are all doing in all the various lessons you have, we have asked them to use their findings to set targets that help you make even better progress in learning different skills. We also think your school can give you more opportunities to find out about other people in the world.

You can help by continuing to do your best and by working hard.

Best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Yvonne Mills-Clare

Lead inspector

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