

Acomb Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121271
Local Authority	York
Inspection number	358971
Inspection dates	29–30 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Terry McDermott

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Christopher Heppell
Headteacher	Mr Lee Haynes
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2007
School address	West Bank Acomb, York North Yorkshire YO24 4ES
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and observed eight teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at its methods for tracking pupils' progress, at a range of school documents, including its policies, minutes of governing body meetings, monitoring records, an extensive sample of pupils' work, and reports from the School Improvement Partner. Ninety one responses from parents or carers to the Ofsted questionnaire were received and considered, along with questionnaires completed by staff and pupils.

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

- The reasons behind the apparently sustained good levels of pupils' personal development.
- How valid the school's self-evaluation is of the quality of teaching and learning experienced by pupils over their time in school.
- How effective leaders and managers are in improving those areas identified as satisfactory in its self-evaluation.

Information about the school

Acomb is a broadly average-sized primary school. A well below average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils of minority-ethnic heritage is well below average. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is very small. None are at the early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average. A new headteacher has recently been appointed. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed but has yet to take up post. Several other staff changes have taken place in recent years. The school holds several awards, including Artsmark Gold and Investors in People.

The school hosts an independently run before- and after-school provision. This is not managed by the school's governing body. It is inspected separately and the report is 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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. Its performance has been affected by staff changes in recent years. It has clear strengths in its curriculum, and in the care, guidance and support it provides. Pupils enjoy the wide-ranging curriculum, which they find exciting and motivating, and which leads directly to their above average attendance. The consistent and dedicated care, guidance and support provided by all adults in the school are very much appreciated by pupils and their families. It is clearly shown in the mutual respect between adults and teachers, and leads directly to pupils' very good attitudes to learning in lessons.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children join the school with skills that are generally close to those expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, attainment in English and mathematics remains broadly average. The school's reliable tracking system shows variations in the progress that pupils make from year-to-year. Inspection evidence shows that whilst some pupils are now learning well and making good progress, the learning of the majority is only satisfactory because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school. Nonetheless, all groups of pupils make at least satisfactory progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, the more-able pupils, those from minority-ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language.

The quality of teaching is variable. Sometimes it focuses too much on enjoyment rather than on learning. It facilitates good or even better learning when teachers set challenging problems for pupils to solve for themselves. Pupils listen well and try hard in lessons, and relationships between pupils and adults are good. This is because of the strong foundations of respect and tolerance established by all adults in the school. Teaching is less effective when teachers give long explanations of what pupils are about to do, instead of letting them do the tasks. Teachers measure accurately what pupils know and can do, but do not always use this information to plan work which effectively meets pupils' learning needs. In these instances, some pupils find work very easy, some find it too hard. In either case, their progress slows.

Self-evaluation is accurate. The new headteacher and the new group of senior staff now measure the school's effectiveness objectively against pupils' progress and achievement. Evaluation of learning in classes across the school is becoming more reliable. The school knows what it needs to do to improve. Because the actions taken to improve the pupils' progress are recent, their full impact is not evident. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - using the information about what pupils know and can do to set work which accurately meets their individual learning needs
 - giving pupils more opportunities to find things out for themselves through practical investigation, independent research, and sharing and discussing their own ideas
 - having consistently high expectations about the quality of pupils' presentation and handwriting across all subjects
 - giving the same quality of guidance when marking pupils' work in different subjects.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership at all levels, and intensify the drive for improvement, by checking more objectively that pupils are learning as much as they might in all learning situations whether whole class, small group, or one-to-one.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6, although there are signs that this is improving, especially when pupils have the opportunity to discuss ideas or to learn through carrying out practical investigations. This was seen to very good effect in an outstanding Year 6 mathematics lesson when pupils made significant gains in understanding how to select information to solve numerical problems expressed in words. The progress made by different groups of pupils, including those from minority-ethnic groups, is in line with their peers. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because skilful support enables them to access everything the school has to offer. Achievement overall is satisfactory and pupils enjoy their learning.

Pupils have a good understanding of what it means to be healthy. They take plenty of exercise and eat fresh fruit and vegetables. They say that they feel safe in school, not least because they are insistent that there is no bullying, and they do know what to do should it occur. They enjoy coming to school because of the many different experiences they have. For example, every child takes part in a dramatic production every year, and pupils in Year 6 particularly enjoy studying Shakespeare. Pupils are very clear about what is right and wrong and are keen to apply this to their own lives. They spontaneously recognise and celebrate each other's achievements. Their behaviour is good and they are very polite, patient and respectful to each other. Visitors to school and art and dance from different areas of the world broaden their understanding of a range of cultures. They think sensitively about their world and its different communities and they raise significant amounts of money for charitable causes. When they leave school at the end of Year 6, they are mature, considerate and reliable young citizens satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their lives.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
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?

Classrooms are calm and friendly places and many are a blaze of colour, particularly in Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively to invigorate learning. Higher level teaching assistants are deployed very effectively. Clear marking in English tells pupils what they have done well and gives guidance towards further improvement. This good practice is not applied consistently, even by the same teachers, in other subjects. Equally, high standards of handwriting and disciplined presentation are routinely expected and produced in some books, while careless and untidy work is often accepted in others. Work set in lessons does not always offer appropriate challenge to pupils of all abilities or give them opportunities to find things out for themselves.

The personal development needs of all pupils are met well through the exciting curriculum. Links between subjects are well established and enable pupils to practise skills learned in one subject across a range of others. All pupils have full access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including: multi-media art from many cultures; a wide range of music, including a rock'n'roll band; a modern foreign language, drama, sport and residential visits. These provide good enrichment to the curriculum and are very effective in developing pupils' personal attributes. The focus on extending pupils' learning in English and mathematics is not as sharp.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils and their families are well known to staff. Links between school and home are strong. Support for pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable is good and this allows them to take a full part in what the school has to offer. There are good transition arrangements when pupils start school, as they move from year-to-year through school, and when they move on to secondary education. The school acts rapidly and vigorously to secure external support for pupils when the need arises.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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 new headteacher has acted quickly to identify objectively the school's strengths and those areas in need of improvement. The school development plan has rightly prioritised the rate of pupils' progress in English and mathematics. Not all leaders have focused on this when monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in whole class, small group and during individual tuition.

Governance is satisfactory and the governing body meets its statutory responsibilities. The governing body realistically and correctly appraises its own effectiveness by linking it directly to pupils' satisfactory outcomes, saying, 'It would be illogical to claim otherwise.' The school takes its responsibilities for child protection seriously and meets the statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils satisfactorily.

The promotion of pupils' individual interests and equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work. There is no bias, discrimination, or oppression in this inclusive school because pupils have fully taken on board the principles of equality, respect for the rights of individuals and of valuing diversity. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard for the quality of its work in ensuring the welfare and personal development of their children.

The school's provision for community cohesion is satisfactory. Its local links are strong but its national and international connections are less well established. Pupils have only limited direct experience of other faiths and ethnic groups, though indirect experiences through art, music and dance are strong. The school recognises these challenges and has already begun work to address them.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

There are good arrangements to introduce children to the school before they begin their Reception Year. Relationships with parents and carers are very positive. These ensure that children settle quickly and make good progress. Adults provide good role models for children in working and playing together. As a result children behave well, sharing their toys and thoughts happily.

The recently appointed Early Years Foundation Stage leader has brought the measurement of children's progress to the same level of reliability as the rest of the school. Teachers and other adults now have accurate information about what each child is good at, because they make early checks on what children already know and understand. Adults in the Reception class make good use of this information to plan the curriculum. All areas of learning are developed through a balanced programme of learning led by the teacher and learning led through the activities that children choose for themselves. The school is in the process of developing the outdoor area in order to extend children's learning further and increase the opportunities they have to learn through exploration and discovery. Adults take good care of all the children and welfare requirements are met.

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

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 Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

About half of the parents and carers of pupils in the school responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. This is higher than the usual proportion. They were unanimous that their children enjoyed school. They were very strongly positive in support of most aspects of the school's work. A small minority expressed concerns about how much progress their children are making. Inspectors shared this concern. The new headteacher had identified the same concern before the inspection took place.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Acomb 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 91 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 219 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	65	71	26	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	61	67	29	32	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	41	45	46	51	0	0	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	46	38	42	8	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	59	33	36	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	43	47	52	2	2	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	42	50	55	1	1	0	0
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)	30	33	46	51	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	44	43	47	4	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	36	43	47	4	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	37	48	53	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	35	38	45	49	5	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	52	40	44	1	1	0	0

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.



31 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Acomb Primary School, York, YO24 4ES

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We were really impressed with your very good attitudes to learning in class, your good behaviour and the respect you always show each other.

We found that Acomb is a satisfactory school, because it is helping you to make satisfactory progress. The school has a very exciting curriculum (that is the things that you learn about) which helps you learn a great deal about many different things and also means that you like to come to school. The adults in the school look after and support you all well.

We found that the school could do some things better, which would help you learn English and mathematics more quickly than you do at present. We have asked the teachers, and those who lead the school, to do the following.

- Make sure that the work they set for you in lessons is neither too easy (which means you finish very quickly), nor too hard (which means you never really get to understand what it is you are learning about).
- Spend less time keeping you listening and give you more time to find things out for yourselves.
- Make sure that when marking your work they give you equally good help to get better, no matter which subject you are doing.
- Expect the best possible presentation of your work at all times.
- Check very closely that you are learning as much as you might do in English and in mathematics.

You can help the school to get better by doing the very best work you can at all times and by continuing to come to school as often as you already do.

Yours sincerely

Terry McDermott

Lead inspector

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