

Yorke Mead Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117130
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	363860
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Canham

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	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Will Connolly
Headteacher	Margaret Moss
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, observed seven teachers and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils, as well as talking with pupils in lessons. The inspectors also held discussions with parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including assessment and attendance information, lesson plans, safeguarding arrangements, strategic planning, minutes of governing body meetings and pupils' work. Inspectors scrutinised the 51 questionnaires received from parents and carers, as well as those from 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 extent to which higher expectations and improved assessment procedures, highlighted in the school's self-evaluation, are helping to increase the level of challenge and lift achievement levels for boys.
- The level to which the recently-formed leadership team, supported by the governing body, is increasing the school's effectiveness and ensuring continued improvement through staff changes.
- The extent to which the school is strengthening pupils' knowledge and understanding of different cultures and faiths.

Information about the school

Yorke Mead is an average-sized school. The very large majority of pupils are from families of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also average.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage into a Nursery class.

The school has won a number of awards, reflecting its commitment to healthy living, care for the environment, and the way it develops its staff. The headteacher is retiring at the end of this academic year.

A children's centre is located on the school site, but it is not managed by the governing body and did not form part of this inspection.

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

Yorke Mead is a good school. It has several outstanding features, including high-quality care and support which is underpinned by extremely good links with outside agencies. The impact of these positive elements is echoed in pupils' personal qualities, including their keen interest in what they do and enjoyment of learning. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to keep safe. Most parents and carers are in agreement that they are happy with their children's experience at school.

The tenacity and resourcefulness of the headteacher and strengths in collective leadership are key features in driving improvement. Since the last inspection, the headteacher, with close support from the governing body, has strengthened the leadership team and increased the focus on key priorities. These changes have led to improved assessment procedures and to staff taking more responsibility for attainment in their subjects. These positive features have helped to raise pupils' achievement and lift attainment. The school leaders' awareness and vision are well informed by effective self-evaluation procedures. The governing body and leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the priorities that need to be addressed to maintain recent improvements. The importance the school places on the professional development of its staff is evident in the way that well-considered arrangements have been made to ensure continuity in the school's leadership and management after the imminent retirement of the headteacher. Key staff have been given revised leadership roles and a broader range of management responsibilities.

These positive elements, including the clear strategy for future leadership and management, mean that the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

Accurate and reliable assessment procedures support successful teaching, which motivates pupils and captivates their interest from the start. However, on occasion, teachers talk for too long and pupils are not given activities that engage or challenge them early enough. Achievement is good and pupils currently in Year 6 are on course to reach higher attainment levels than those reached last year. Intervention work, including tailored support for individual pupils, is successfully supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables pupils to celebrate cultural diversity and improve their knowledge and understanding of different faiths and religions. However, while pupils are respectful and value the views of others, they have limited direct experience of communities elsewhere in this country and globally, and the impact of some initiatives has yet to be evaluated fully.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - shortening the length of lesson introductions
 - making better use of assessment to provide pupils with more challenging activities from the beginning of lessons.
- Extend the strategy for promoting community cohesion by:
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to appreciate and value people from communities further afield in this country and around the world
 - evaluating the impact of this work on pupils' learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The pupils' enthusiastic approach to learning was seen in their willingness to become engaged in well-paced activities in English, mathematics and religious education. Having discussed the range of techniques that could be used to describe a recent adventurous activity trip, pupils in Year 6 combined a number of ideas while making particularly good use of information and communication technology. In mathematics, pupils could not wait to find out whether their knowledge of numbers could be used to good effect when solving problems. In religious education, pupils were mesmerized by the ritual before and during the reciting of the Qur'an. They showed respect and a good knowledge of other faiths and religions. In physical education, pupils participated with zest during a health-related fitness session which they shared with parents and carers. In almost all cases, boys and girls were fully involved in the activities and willingly shared ideas in an attempt to solve the problems they had been given. In music, pupils in Year 3 worked together exceptionally well and produced a good quality sound during a performance for parents and carers. However, pupils make less progress in satisfactory lessons when teaching is not so stimulating and less engaging.

Children join the school with attainment that is broadly at the levels expected for their age. However, skill levels in communication, language and literacy, and problem solving, reasoning and numeracy are lower. While pupils' attainment is broadly average by the end of Key Stage 2, school data and the work seen show that levels of attainment and the rate of progress are improving rapidly and securely. Achievement is good and a considerably larger proportion of pupils are on course to reach the higher level (Level 5), especially in English. The gap is narrowing between the progress made by boys and that of the girls.

Pupils say they like coming to school because they enjoy participating in the many interesting activities and making friends. They value the respect shown towards each other and adults. Pupils represent the views of others through the school council and help make decisions regarding fund-raising activities and interviewing prospective staff, for example. Pupils also attend parish council meetings to share views on local facilities and decide on strategies to keep the immediate environment free from litter and fouling by dogs. Pupils' personal qualities are strengthened through the play leadership scheme and involvement in projects that include budgeting and identifying the pitfalls when planning a small business. Pupils' in-depth understanding of how to keep safe and live healthily is evident in the way they talk confidently about aspects of their own safety on adventurous

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trips, the importance of eating different kinds of food, and the impact of physical activity on the body. These positive features are recognised in the school's national awards.

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	3
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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?

Lessons typically feature good relationships and a wide range of teaching methods. Well-paced activities, including those that link different subjects and encourage creativity, successfully arouse pupils' interests. Questioning often reveals the degree of pupils' understanding and this information is regularly used to adapt the pace of learning. Occasionally, activities are not demanding enough from the start of lessons because too much time is spent listening to the teacher. Improvements to assessment procedures and planning have led to pupils making more rapid gains in learning than before. Pupils are given good opportunities to assess their own work and that of their peers. Marking is supportive and often provides guidance on how pupils can improve their work.

The range of learning experiences provide a considered balance between basic skills in English and mathematics, and the development of pupils' creative and performance skills. Recent changes to the curriculum have led to closer links between subjects, greater attention to different learning styles, and more opportunities to develop writing skills, especially those of boys. These changes are having a positive influence on progress. Skills such as the ability to work collaboratively, those that enhance pupils' physical development, and those that develop the ability to play musical instruments are

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encouraged. Pupils' learning experiences are further enriched by a wide range of clubs, including breakfast club, residential trips, and visits to places of interest.

The outstanding support for pupils' personal development and pastoral care is recognised by parents and carers. Pupils are valued and the pastoral care pervades all aspects of the school's work. An effective programme for personal, social and health education provides pupils with opportunities for them to talk about feelings and concerns. Key members of staff have been engaged to work closely with families and give additional support. Several strategies have been introduced and proven to be highly effective in developing individualised programmes of support for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable to underachievement. As a result, pupils with the greatest needs gain confidence, develop their self-esteem and make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. Very good attention to pupils' health and well-being is reflected in the broad range of opportunities for physical activity, healthy school meals and in caring for the environment.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are increasingly and effectively embedding ambition and driving improvement. A recent restructuring of the senior leadership team has led to several staff taking wider responsibilities for different aspects of the school's work. With support from dedicated staff, leaders and managers have developed a school that is committed to developing each pupil's self-esteem and to lifting levels of achievement. Transparent procedures, clear expectations and systematic monitoring have ensured that the school's ethos is maintained even through staff changes. The promotion of equality and approaches to tackling any form of discrimination are well embedded. Information from data is used well to identify the needs of individual pupils earlier than previously. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress.

The governing body regularly challenges the school's work and is closely involved in its development, including the training of staff. It has a good awareness of what the school needs to do next to sustain progress. Quality assurance and risk assessment systems have been established and clear procedures ensure that safeguarding arrangements are good. The school has clear management responsibilities to ensure pupils are safe and the governing body routinely evaluates the impact of its policies and procedures. Local services and links with outside agencies are used exceptionally well to enhance the well-being of pupils experiencing challenging circumstances and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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Community cohesion is strongly promoted in the school and staff have a thorough understanding of local needs and the challenges faced by the families it serves. The school provides a number of opportunities for pupils to gain a good understanding of people's backgrounds within the local area. However, the school knows that it does not yet do enough to help pupils understand about people's backgrounds and communities in the wider United Kingdom and beyond.

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	1
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

In keeping with the rest of the school, staff give exemplary attention to the welfare and safety of children. Working effectively as a team, they have successfully established a safe and welcoming environment in which children are closely supported from the start. As a result, children enjoy learning and make good progress, especially in aspects of communication, language and literacy, and numeracy, where attainment is initially weaker than other areas of learning. Staff have accurate and reliable information about children's progress and this information is used effectively to plan topics that take account of their different starting points and interests. Children are attentive and are encouraged to talk about their work; they learn to work independently at an early stage. Children readily move from one activity to another, making effective use of the indoor and outdoor areas. These provide a well-organised learning environment, although opportunities are missed to develop children's writing when they are using the outdoor area. The provision is well managed and adults move seamlessly in and out of activities, responding to individuals or taking part in larger group activities. Adults give closely targeted support to activities directed by the teacher as well as those which children choose for themselves. Close links have been established with parents and carers.

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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

All but a few of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed positive views about the school's work. A number of parents and carers made written comments, which included complimentary remarks about the quality of staff and the supportive learning environment. However, a very few questionnaires included reservations over a small number of issues. These included the level of communication with the school, the amount of progress their children are making, and behaviour. The inspection team looked at these during the course of the inspection. The school uses a number of strategies for parents and carers to find out about their children's learning, including regular newsletters and consultation evenings. The school has recently introduced electronic mail and the use of texts. Pupils are making more rapid progress than in the past. The inspection team judged behaviour to be good. A few pupils occasionally become a little unsettled during some lessons, although staff manage this effectively and soon get them working again.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Yorke Mead 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 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 232 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	53	22	43	0	0	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	31	61	17	33	0	0	1	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	33	26	51	4	8	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	37	23	45	6	12	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	19	37	22	43	4	8	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	47	17	33	6	12	3	6
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	51	23	45	2	4	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)	22	43	18	35	4	8	2	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	33	23	45	3	6	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	27	24	47	6	12	3	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	39	22	43	5	10	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	24	47	17	33	1	2	4	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	51	18	35	2	4	2	4

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



8 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Yorke Mead Primary School, Rickmansworth WD3 3PX

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. Thanks to those who completed questionnaires to say what you thought of your school and also to those of you who talked to us. You said it was a good school and we agree. Yorke Mead is a place where you feel extremely safe, and enjoy taking part in the interesting activities and school trips. Most of your parents and carers expressed considerable satisfaction with the school.

Here are some other important things about your school.

You make good progress in lessons thanks to good teaching.

You behave well and show respect to each other.

You respond positively to activities and interesting lessons.

You make a good contribution to the smooth running of the school.

You have an extremely good understanding of what makes for a healthy lifestyle and healthy eating.

To make things even better for you, we have asked the headteacher and staff to make sure that:

- introductions to lessons are not so long, and you are given challenging activities right from the beginning
- you understand more about people's backgrounds and communities in this country and in other parts of the world, and to check how much this work helps in your learning.

We wish each one of you every success in your future education and hope that you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now. You can all help the school by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Paul Canham

Lead inspector

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