

Sowerby Village CofE VC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133671
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	360560
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Marie Cordey

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carole Hitchen-Gibbon
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Bush
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 eight lessons and observed six teachers. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, school improvement officers, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including self-evaluation evidence, the school improvement plan, safeguarding documentation, internal and external monitoring reports, 63 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and questionnaires returned by pupils and staff.

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

- Pupils' attainment and achievement, especially in Key Stage 1 and in writing.
- The effectiveness of teaching and assessment to support learning and challenge and engage pupils.
- The effectiveness of the curriculum to improve pupils' basic skills, especially in writing.
- The contribution of leaders and managers to sustainable school improvement.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The school has achieved Healthy School status and the Activemark for its sports provision. Extended services, including a before, and after school club, are managed and run by an external agency. A report on this provision may be found 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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

School leaders, the governing body and staff are committed to improvement and have worked hard to limit the effect of financial constraints and some staffing changes on pupils' learning. However, while staffing has now stabilised and finances are healthy, there is a lack of clear direction for improvement or accurate monitoring of the school's performance. Too little has been achieved in establishing clear and consistent strategies for improvement. Consequently, previous underachievement, particularly for pupils in Key Stage 1 and in writing across the school, has not been acted upon quickly enough and achievement is inadequate. School leaders are having too little impact on the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils.

Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is low and pupils make inadequate progress from their starting points in the Nursery classes. The school provides satisfactory care although pupils are not achieving well enough. Their attendance is low and declining. Consequently, they are not prepared adequately for the next stage in their education. Expectations of the pupils' performance are too low. This is largely because targets do not take account of their achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, however, make satisfactory progress because their needs are rapidly identified and they are provided with sharply-focused support. Pupils are eager to learn but teaching does not focus sufficiently on improving their attainment, especially in writing. Basic skills in spelling, punctuation, sentence structure and composition are weak. While inspectors saw no inadequate teaching during the inspection, too much was no better than satisfactory and failed to tackle long-standing weaknesses in pupils' basic skills or to make up for previous underachievement. Lesson planning does not consistently take account of pupils' previous learning to reflect pupils' interests and abilities. Marking of pupils' work does not include precise guidance to help pupils make the next steps in their learning. As a result, the quality of teaching is inadequate.

Pupils enjoy the creative curriculum as well as the many opportunities to participate in music, drama and sport. Nevertheless, opportunities are missed for pupils to practise their basic skills in a range of subjects. The school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support for pupils, particularly those who face difficulties in their lives. Staff are committed to providing a reassuring and welcoming environment and pupils say they feel safe.

Children settle down happily in the Nursery and Reception classes because the school prepares them well for school life. They make good progress because the quality of

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teaching is good and children are provided with many exciting and creative activities to help them learn.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve achievement in all subjects, but particularly in writing, by:
 - – providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills in a range of subjects
 - – using assessment information from the Early Years Foundation Stage to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is at least good throughout the school by:
 - – making sure pupils know how to improve their work through better-quality marking and feedback
 - – ensuring work planned takes account of pupils' previous learning and reflects pupils' interests and abilities
 - – ensuring teachers use the skills of teaching assistants more effectively.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - – setting challenging targets that are clearly based on pupils' standards when they join Year 1
 - – embedding the tracking of pupils' performance so that rapid action can be taken to tackle under-achievement
 - – ensuring that leaders and managers set a clear direction for school improvement
 - – applying school systems rigorously and working more effectively with parents and carers to improve pupils' attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

The majority of pupils start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are, overall, below those expected for their age. Pupils' progress is inconsistent and over time, has been very slow in Key Stage 1. Although progress is more rapid at Key Stage 2 and is beginning to improve in Years 1 and 2, pupils do not reach the levels they should. By the end of Year 6, their attainment is low and consequently, their achievement is inadequate.

Pupils enjoy learning best when they are challenged to give of their best and they have opportunities to debate and reflect. This is evident in their positive attitudes to learning and in their enthusiasm for discussion. When work is effectively planned to meet the abilities and interest of individual pupils, progress improves. For example, a small group lesson was enjoyed by pupils, eager to rise to their teacher's high expectations of what they could achieve. This type of effective strategy also enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make satisfactory progress. When there is a lack of challenge pupils' learning is slower because work is not matched closely enough to their abilities. In these lessons opportunities are lost to develop pupils' language skills through discussion and reflection.

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Pupils are polite and welcoming. They were keen to talk about their many opportunities to keep fit through sport and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are proud of the various positions of responsibility they hold. Their contributions to the school council, the choir and as play-leaders, for example, demonstrate their involvement in school life and the local community. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highlighted by positive social skills, especially in their willingness and enthusiasm when welcoming visitors. Their understanding of communities other than their own is developing. Pupils' poor basic skills inhibit their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
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	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

The quality of teaching is not good enough to make up for learning that has been too slow over time. The strengths in teaching are characterised by positive relationships, opportunities for pupils to be involved in their learning and planning to engage and stimulate pupils at all levels of ability. However, these strengths are not consistently seen and effective planning is made more difficult because teachers are not aware of pupils' starting points in Year 1. A scrutiny of pupils' books confirms this picture. For example there are too few opportunities for pupils to be involved in assessing their own work. Teaching assistants are most effective when working with small groups or individuals to support their learning. Their effectiveness is reduced when teachers' planning does not make the most of their presence, for example, during teacher introductions to lessons.

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Marking of pupils' books is regular and up-to-date but lacks precise and helpful pointers about how pupils might improve their work.

Pupils' enjoy studying 'topics' that develop their interest and link their learning and skills across many subjects while studying, for example, about animals and the local environment. Nevertheless, it does not develop their basic skills sufficiently well and there are limited opportunities, for instance, for pupils to practise their writing skills. Pupils particularly enjoy sport and music. The demonstration by the 'Rhythm Sticks' in a celebration assembly was skilful and exciting. Pupils enjoy the many educational visits provided and take part in regular after-school activities.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are confident because of the personal support they receive from their teachers and teaching assistants. The school works effectively with outside agencies to support the most vulnerable families, to ensure the safety of all pupils and to improve the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils look forward to their move to secondary school as a result of having the chance to visit and sample lessons beforehand. However, they are not effectively prepared for their move to Year 1 because the Key Stage 1 curriculum does not build effectively on their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The effectiveness and capacity of leaders to secure necessary improvements securely and quickly are inadequate. Leaders recognise that there are issues, particularly in writing, but their evaluations of the school's performance, especially in relation to pupils' achievement and attendance, have been inaccurate. The focus on raising attainment has not been strong enough until recently. Actions to set challenging targets and improve the consistency and quality of teaching to improve pupils' attainment, highlighted at the last inspection, have not been successful. The governing body increasingly challenges the school's performance and is very involved in school life but it has had too little impact on the school's performance. Nevertheless, the governing body promotes the safety of pupils and staff effectively to ensure that good safeguarding arrangements are in place. The school works effectively to tackle discrimination and pupils respect and value people from different backgrounds. The extent to which the school promotes equality of opportunity is inadequate because too many pupils do not make the progress they should. Partnerships with outside bodies are effective in promoting the school's work with families and the most vulnerable pupils. Overall though, they are inadequate because measures to improve attendance and pupils' learning have been ineffective. The school is a cohesive community

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and effectively promotes pupils' understanding of other faiths and cultures in the world. It is more limited, as leaders identify, in developing pupils' understanding of other cultures in the wider community. Based on the poor outcomes for pupils, the school provides inadequate value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
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	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are welcomed and nurtured in the setting. They make good progress and their skills are in line with age-related expectations by the time they leave the Reception class. Children are encouraged to be independent through stimulating activities and good day-to-day routines. They make positive progress in their personal development because they are well looked after and feel safe in the vibrant atmosphere of the setting. There is a good balance of indoor and outdoor learning and children enjoy playing together co-operatively. Opportunities for children to practise their writing skills by playing and learning outdoors have, rightly, been extended to improve children's basic skills. All welfare requirements are met. Staff work well together and share the clear vision of leaders and managers to provide good-quality play and learning in a caring environment.

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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

Just over one third of parents and carers responded through completing the questionnaires. Of these, the majority were happy with the school's provision and all parents and carers indicated that their children enjoyed school. These parents and carers also agreed that the school helped to keep their children safe. A very small minority of parents and carers felt that unacceptable behaviour was not dealt with effectively. Inspectors evaluated the school's procedures for managing pupil behaviour and found them to be satisfactory. There was a very small minority of parents and carers who had concerns about their child's progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sowerby Village CofE VC 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 63 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 161 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	57	25	40	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	56	27	43	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	18	29	39	62	5	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	46	31	49	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	44	35	56	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	40	34	54	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	37	35	56	4	6	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)	20	32	41	65	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	38	38	60	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	32	32	51	7	11	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	33	38	60	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	46	31	49	3	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	49	32	51	0	0	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	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.



20 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sowerby Village C of E VC Primary School, Halifax, HX6 1HB

Thank you for making us welcome when we inspected your school recently. We would particularly like to thank the pupils who met with one of the inspectors and the pupils who gave us such an interesting and informative tour of the school. You were all very polite and enthusiastic. The school has helped you to be thoughtful and responsible. We were very impressed with your enthusiasm for keeping fit and healthy!

We looked very carefully at your school and found that some important things need improving. We have judged that it needs 'special measures'. This means that your headteacher and staff will get extra help to improve your education and inspectors will return to your school to check that it is making progress. We found that too many of you are not doing as well as you should and so we have asked leaders and staff to help you to improve your progress so that your work is better, especially in writing. We would like you to practise your writing in many subjects to help improve your standards. We also want all your lessons to be taught well so that your learning is at least good and have asked the school to work on this. We know that you are capable of achieving higher standards and have asked your school to set you more challenging targets. Although you are eager to learn and, mostly, you enjoy coming to school, some of you do not attend regularly enough. We would like your school to work with your families to help improve your attendance. We are pleased that you understand how to keep safe. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are welcomed into school and make good progress.

We hope you all continue to work hard and help school leaders and teachers to improve the school.

You all have our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Marie Cordey

Lead inspector

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