

Hodge Clough Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	136223
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	382043
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2012
Lead inspector	James Kidd

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	390
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Matthews
Headteacher	Neil Cavanagh
Date of previous school inspection	NA
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Introduction

Inspection team

James Kidd

Terry Bond

Maria McGarry

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 17 lessons or part-lessons, taught by 15 members of staff. Meetings were held with three groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, pastoral and academic staff and the senior leadership team. They also spoke informally with parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' workbooks, pupil progress data, minutes of governing body meetings, school development planning and documentation in relation to safeguarding and child protection. They also scrutinised 183 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This larger-than-average-sized primary school was opened in January 2011, on the amalgamation of Hodge Clough Junior and Hodge Clough Infant schools. The current headteacher was the headteacher of the former junior school and the two deputy headteachers held the same posts, one at the junior school and the other at the infant site. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below that usually found. Most pupils are of White British heritage and there are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school meets the current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. Hodge Clough is a nationally-accredited Healthy School and an Investor in People. It also holds the Eco (bronze) award. This is the school's first inspection

The Scallywags before- and after-school club shares the school site. It is subject to a separate inspection and receives a separate report which 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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. The amalgamation was completed sensitively and successfully and, after only four terms, it is apparent that there are impressive levels of teamwork amongst staff and that pupils, parents and carers are also very proud to belong to the new school. Hodge Clough is not yet outstanding because teaching and achievement are good overall.
- From broadly expected age-related skills on entry to the Nursery, all groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well across the school to reach above average attainment by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. However, although now beginning to increase, the proportion of pupils in all stages reaching the higher levels is not as high as it could be.
- Teaching is good overall and there are examples of outstanding practice. The level of challenge for the more-able pupils, however, is not high enough on occasions. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and the adults who work with them are strong. Marking is good but in a minority of classes does not give pupils enough advice on how they can improve their work.
- All parents and carers who returned the questionnaires justifiably express the view that their children feel safe. Pupils pay tribute to the support they receive from the staff and say that bullying is a rarity in school. From as early as the Nursery and Reception, behaviour is good and pupils have a keen awareness of the needs of others. Attendance is consistently above average.
- The committed headteacher and talented senior team lead by example and, supported by a proactive governing body, ensure that there is a clear, shared vision among staff about future development. Good leadership of teaching, effective management of performance and high staff morale demonstrate that the school has a good capacity to sustain its improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels by:
 - sharing across the school good and exemplary practice already evident in the provision of challenge for the more-able pupils
 - giving pupils more opportunities to become independent learners, thus enabling them to take more responsibility for their own progress
 - ensuring that pupils have sufficient opportunities to use new technology as a learning tool in all classes.

- Ensure that marking in all classes gives pupils sufficient advice on how they can improve their work.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

In most classes, pupils are well engaged in the activities, see the value of what they are doing and are enthusiastic about their learning. They have warm relationships with their teachers and teaching assistants and thrive on working in groups, to act as extra resources for each other's learning. They display mature attitudes to study, are proud of their work on display in the vibrant classrooms and on the colourful corridors and are always willing to show visitors the assignments they have completed. They say they enjoy all their subjects; they like to play sport and produce thought-provoking work in history, on life during Tudor times, for example. All parents and carers who returned the questionnaires are accurate in their judgement that their children make good progress both personally and academically at the school. A typical comment is, 'Learning is fun for our children, their needs are met on a daily basis and their confidence and self-esteem have improved.'

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are broadly as expected for their age, but which are sometimes lower in speech and language development. As a result of good teaching and a well-planned curriculum, which provides exciting learning activities both indoors and outdoors, they achieve well overall in all areas of learning in both Nursery and Reception, but do not always reach the higher levels by the time they enter Year 1. They make good progress in their personal development, playing and sharing well together. They have confidence to talk to visitors and to show them the work they are doing.

This good achievement for all groups of pupils continues across the school and, by the end of Year 6, pupils demonstrate above average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. There are, however, too few pupils reaching the higher National Curriculum Levels 3 and 5 at the end of both Key Stages. This situation is now beginning to improve and pupils in the current Years 2 and 6 are showing the potential to gain a greater proportion of these higher levels than was the case in 2011. Pupils' skills in reading are improving apace. They are broadly average in Year 2, but in Year 6, most pupils read accurately, with fluency and expression. They enjoy reading, read every day in school and a considerable number read at least one and in some cases two books per week, often reading at home.

Good support in small group and individual sessions from the talented team of teaching assistants leads to disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable learning well and making the same good progress as their peers. As a result the school is closing the gaps between its pupils' performance and the performance of similar pupils nationally

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers are accurate in their view that their children are taught well. Indeed, the quality of teaching is good overall and there are examples of outstanding teaching and outstanding aspects of teaching in lessons in all key stages. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is complemented well by a good balance between teacher-led and child-initiated learning activities. Key features of good teaching include strong relationships in the classroom, secure subject and specialist knowledge of both teachers and teaching assistants and the rapid pace of learning. Assessment is good and the school monitors the progress of individuals and groups closely. This informs lesson preparation well and leads to focused intervention activities for those who appear to be falling behind. Pupils benefit from detailed marking. However, on occasions there is insufficient written comment on how pupils can improve their work.

In the best lessons, for example an outstanding Year 3 mathematics session, detailed assessment and clear planning enabled activities to be focused very closely on pupils' individual learning needs. Similarly in an excellent Year 5 history lesson, pupils' acquisition of higher-order skills was developed exceptionally well by the use of challenging questions, problem-solving and a wide range of historical sources. In many lessons, pupils are encouraged to use quite complex subject-specific terminology. In an impressive Year 2 literacy lesson on descriptive labelling, for example, pupils used 'animal classification', 'habitat', 'waterproof' and 'insulating' accurately and in context. Many could also give convincing explanations of their meanings. In all three lessons, pupils were delighted at what they could achieve, and were engrossed in their learning.

Teachers and leaders recognise, however, that the challenge for the more-able pupils is not sufficient in a minority of lessons. They are aware too, that the sharing of good and exemplary practice in this regard is required if more are to reach the higher levels of which they are capable. Similarly, there is too much teacher direction in some classes and pupils do not always have enough opportunities to work independently and, therefore, to take greater ownership of their own progress. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are taught sensitively and well.

Teaching has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, group work in lessons fosters pupils' moral and social development well.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils hold true to the school motto 'Respect Yourself, Respect Each Other, Respect the Environment', which is displayed in all classrooms. They behave well in lessons and around the school, show consideration for the thoughts and feelings of others and support a wide range of charities. They enjoy school and feel safe within its environs. Parents agree with their children's sentiments. In their words, 'If we are lonely or unhappy, there is always someone, pupils and grown-ups, to help us.' Older pupils and pupils with responsibilities, for

example school councillors, Eco warriors and members of the Healthy Action Team, are proactive in offering their advice to help improve the school. Older pupils support younger ones and there are many examples in class of pupils learning together.

The school's emphasis on developing pupils' personally has a positive impact on their confidence, self-esteem and the emotional well-being of all groups. Those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable, for example, are able to access everything the school offers as a result. There is an effective anti-bullying policy, which is regularly updated, and there is zero tolerance of harassment and racism. As a result pupils have a good awareness of bullying in all its forms. They understand the nature of prejudiced-based bullying and speak accurately about the dangers of cyber-bullying. Pupils are in no doubt that bullying is not a problem in the school and that, on the rare occasions it occurs, it is dealt with rapidly.

The school is rightly proud of its close liaison with parents and carers and of its impressive induction and transition procedures. It places particular emphasis on support pupils joining Year 3, who are entering a different school site, and does it all it can to ensure that pupils settle down quickly into their new surroundings.

Leadership and management

Staff of all levels of experience and responsibility express their confidence in the senior leadership of the school with the words, 'We feel led as well as managed here; we are encouraged to take risks and there is no fear of failure.' Indeed, inspirational leadership by the dedicated headteacher and the committed senior team, including an impressive business manager, ensures that teachers and support assistants, administrative, caretaking and canteen staff work together in harmony and have a clear vision for how the school is to move forward. This demonstrates the school's good capacity for further improvement. Extensive professional development is a strength of the school, enhances staff expertise and is based closely on educational priorities. Performance management systems are fully in place and continue to have a strong impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

The well-informed governing body supports the school effectively and holds the leadership rigorously to account. Through the work of cross-phase teams, the school has an accurate and honest view of performance in all areas of its life. It is never complacent and recognises where improvements need to be made, in the challenge for the more-able pupils, for example.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, is complemented well by the developing creative programmes, 'Wow!' weeks for example, and enables pupils to see the links between the subjects they study. It reinforces their skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics well, a view also held by almost all parents and carers. However, in some classes, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use new technology as a tool to enhance their learning. The planned curriculum fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Outstanding 'celebration' assemblies, attended by parents and carers also, promote moral and spiritual development. The link with a nearby primary school makes pupils more aware of different cultures and religions. Pupils speak highly of the many extra-curricular activities and of the variety of educational visits they attend.

Safeguarding and child protection policies and practice are monitored closely and fully meet national requirements. Discrimination in all its forms is rejected and the school promotes equality of opportunity well.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

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

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

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

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

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

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



14 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hodge Clough Primary School, Oldham, OL1 4JX

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. You were very polite to us and we are particularly grateful to those of you who gave up your time to talk and to read to us. I promised to write to you to tell you what we think about your school and here is the letter!

Hodge Clough is good school and you told us that you are very proud to be pupils of it. You feel safe because the grown-ups look after you and because older pupils care for you too. Bullying is rare and if it does happen, the school deals with it quickly. You behave well in lessons and around the school and you enjoy the 'celebration' assemblies every Friday when you receive awards and certificates for the success you have in school. Sport is particularly popular and both boys and girls represent your school in so many teams.

You receive good and sometimes outstanding teaching and, as a result, you make good progress and achieve well in your studies to reach standards in Year 6 which are higher than in many schools.

Your headteacher and all the other staff are always looking for ways to make the school even better for you. The inspection team want to help them do this so we have asked them to try and make sure that more of you reach the higher levels in English and mathematics. We have asked them to give those of you who sometimes find the work a little easy, work which is going to challenge you to do even better. We have also said that they should give you more opportunities to find things out for yourselves and also to use computers more to help you learn. We would like them to make sure that the comments in your books always tell how you can improve.

Thank you again for being so friendly and kind. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

James Kidd
Lead inspector

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