

High Crag Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107271
Local Authority	Bradford
Inspection number	287775
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Ann Sharpe

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 on roll	
School	369
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Tamsin Treasure-Jones
Headteacher	Mrs G Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001
School address	Crag Road Shipley West Yorkshire BD18 2ES
Telephone number	01274 584068
Fax number	01274 774155

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most of the pupils attending this large school are White British, although a few pupils are from a variety of other ethnic backgrounds and are sometimes at an early stage of learning to speak English. The neighbourhood suffers from significant social disadvantages, and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school makes special provision for a small number of pupils with specific speech and language difficulties. The proportion of pupils who do not start and finish their primary education at this school is high. The school is still adjusting to a reduction in the number of school places offered. There have been major staffing changes in the last year or so, including several new senior staff.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's view of itself as a satisfactory school with good features is correct. It is a friendly and happy school, where pupils enjoy their education and gain a good knowledge of how to stay safe and healthy. They say that they like school because teachers look after them as if they were their very own children. Parents, too, think highly of the school. Pupils' behaviour is good because they learn how to make a helpful contribution to their school and to the community. This increases their chances of making a good start to their secondary education. There is a good level of care for all pupils as individuals. As a result, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, and pupils with specific speech and language difficulties or who are still learning to speak English have the help they need.

In recent years, the school has slipped well behind most other schools in terms of pupils' progress and the standards they reach by Year 6. This is because staff took their eye off the ball for a while, and, by the time underachievement was spotted, there was an enormous job to do to get things back on track. There have been several staff changes recently, including a new deputy headteacher. This has provided the headteacher with an opportunity to renew her determination to drive up standards. There are already good signs that the firm action being taken is helping pupils to make up for their lost ground. Although pupils' achievement is satisfactory because of satisfactory teaching and learning, standards are still well below average by Year 6. Despite recent improvements in teaching, not all lessons are sufficiently interesting and challenging for pupils, particularly the more capable ones. Pupils need even more good teaching, if they are to catch up with pupils in other schools.

A particular weakness in standards is pupils' poor speaking and listening skills. The school has made a good start with tackling this problem, but pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and improve their skills. This holds standards back in most subjects. Standards and quality in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes) are satisfactory. Although they are good in Reception classes, Nursery provision is not planned robustly enough to get children off to the flying start they need.

The school owes much of its very recent success to involvement in the local authority's support programme. Another major factor is the new deputy headteacher, who, in a very short time, has injected expertise and inspiration into the school's leadership and management. Relationships are good, and the headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors work together well, with a shared understanding of how they must help pupils to do better. They know they have a difficult job ahead, but are getting on top of it. This huge 'sea change' in leadership and management suggests a good capacity to improve in the future, but it is too early to say this with certainty because so many initiatives are fairly new. Capacity for further improvement is, therefore, satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills.
- Improve teaching and learning so that it is more consistently good across the school.
- Improve provision in Nursery, so that it gives children a better start to their work in the Reception class.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When children start Nursery, their attainment is well below average, and their communication, language and literacy skills are poor. Pupils make satisfactory progress through the school and attain well below average standards by Year 6. Although there has been underachievement in recent years, particularly among girls, the school has started to correct this problem. Senior staff have devised rigorous procedures for spotting problems earlier and are taking firm action. Consequently, pupils' progress has speeded up, and most pupils are now meeting or exceeding their challenging termly targets. The school is on track to meet its revised targets for the 2007 Year 6 national tests, and staff expect a rise in standards. Nevertheless, pupils' poor speaking skills let them down in most subjects. Provision, particularly in Nursery, lacks the rigour needed to improve speaking and listening skills quickly. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those who attend the specialist unit, make good progress as a result of well organised and positive support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development, especially their enjoyment of school and their good behaviour, is quite an achievement. Pupils are very proud of their school, and many attend after-school clubs. Attendance is broadly average, and the school works hard with parents to improve both attendance and punctuality. Although pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, they have a keen sense of fair play. When asked about bullying, for example, pupils were quick to point out that there shouldn't be any in their school. Pupils' good knowledge of staying safe and healthy is because the curriculum provides many opportunities for getting important messages across. Pupils make an important contribution to their school and wider communities, for example through the playground buddies scheme, the school council and the neighbourhood forum. Although pupils run a tuck shop, enjoy fund-raising and have a say in how the money is spent, their future economic well-being is, otherwise, limited by weak basic skills in English and mathematics.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are improving because teachers now give more attention to assessing their pupils and setting them challenging learning targets. Lessons have clear purposes and teachers often involve pupils well in checking that they have learned what they set out to learn. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well by forging positive relationships with them and by providing calm and purposeful classrooms. They work closely with various kinds of support staff in order to meet the varying needs of pupils. Good specialist subject teaching, such as French lessons, increase pupils' enjoyment of learning. Good teaching and learning in the Reception classes ensure that children make good progress with learning to read, write and work with numbers. There remain inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school, however, because some lessons are mundane and lack challenge, especially for the more capable pupils. Not all teachers take fullest advantage of pupils' good behaviour to push their learning forwards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum enables pupils to enjoy their education and to make satisfactory progress. There is good provision for pupils to learn how to stay safe and healthy. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including specific speech and language difficulties, make good progress because the curriculum is matched well to their needs. Efforts to make the curriculum more enjoyable, for example by joining the 'creative partnership programme', are starting to pay dividends. Good enrichment through trips, visitors, residential visits and special assemblies increases pupils' knowledge of the world beyond school and home. The school recognises the importance of raising pupils' achievement in English and mathematics, and makes satisfactory provision to do so. Although lessons include opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their listening and speaking skills, planning is not thorough enough to ensure that pupils make enough progress. The curriculum for Nursery does not provide enough opportunities for children to make the necessary gains in their learning, especially the outdoor curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Parents are, rightly, pleased that their children are safe and well cared for at school. Procedures for safeguarding and protecting pupils are in place. There is a strong sense of knowing pupils as individuals, and having concern for their welfare. As a result of this caring approach and the firm action taken if problems arise, pupils' behaviour at lunchtime has improved and unauthorised absence is reducing. The learning mentor and the parental involvement officer make a strong contribution to creating a safe and happy place for pupils to learn, and encouraging parents to get involved in their children's education. The school's many partnerships with others ensure that pupils such as those newly arrived at the school or in the country get the help they need and make progress. The school has recently started to track pupils' progress more carefully, so that problems are now spotted and dealt with before pupils fall behind. Pupils often receive good guidance in lessons about their 'High Hopes' targets. The quality of marking of work, however, is variable and does not always help pupils to know how they need to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

It is because of improving leadership, management and governance that the school has recently started to reverse the downward trend of achievement and standards of the last few years. The new deputy headteacher is particularly influential in setting the school on a revitalised pathway towards meeting the considerable challenges it faces as a result of previous staffing difficulties and pupils' backgrounds. The school has a largely accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses, and there is a keen sense of determination and excitement among senior staff about the task ahead of them. As part of their efforts, the school is working closely with the local authority, with a clear plan for driving up standards as quickly as possible. As a result, relationships are good, and teaching and learning are improving steadily. There is further work to do, however, and, although there are signs that pupils' progress is speeding up, there has not been enough time for this to be reflected fully in the school's academic performance. Nevertheless, pupils' good personal development is a mark of how hard the school works to give them a good jumping-off point to do better.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

We really enjoyed our visit to your school. We think that it is a happy and friendly school, and we all noticed how much you enjoy coming. Thank you for talking to us and for answering all our questions so politely. Your behaviour was good all the time, especially in your lessons, and we were impressed with how much you know about keeping safe and healthy. You are right to think that teachers care about you all. They know you all well and are working hard to make sure that there is nothing that gets in the way of your learning at school.

Older children might remember that there have been a lot of changes of teachers recently, and you were sad to say goodbye to some teachers you had known for a long time. It is always unsettling for a while when this happens, but often new teachers can bring different ideas. This has happened at High Craggs, and things have started to change a lot. We were pleased to see that you now have 'High Hopes' targets to aim for and your teachers are often expecting you to work harder and do more interesting things.

Teachers are improving their work all the time because they care about you, but you need even more encouragement to learn in some lessons. You will have noticed how you now have more chances to talk to other children and adults in lessons. You still need more chances, however, so that you learn to talk about your work more confidently in all your subjects. It is really important that you get off to the very best start possible in Nursery, and we think that, with more of the right kind of help, children can do this.

We have asked the school to:

- give you more chances to learn new words and practise talking in all lessons
- make sure that even more of your lessons help you to learn as much as you can
- make sure that children in Nursery start learning new things faster.