

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **YORKMEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Hall Green, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103284

Headteacher: Mrs G Penman

Reporting inspector: Mr David Carrington  
15414

Dates of inspection: 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> June 2003

Inspection number: 246279

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Junior and infant

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 – 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: York Road  
Hall Green  
Birmingham

Postcode: B28 8BB

Telephone number: 0121 464 4477

Fax number: 0121 464 6793

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr D Naden

Date of previous inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> January 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
15414	Mr David Carrington	Registered inspector
13762	Mr Norman Shelley	Lay inspector
1189	Mrs Sharon Brown	Team inspector
3751	Mrs Trudy Cotton	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Schools Inspection Unit  
School of Education  
University of Birmingham  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham  
B15 2TT

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school serves an ethnically diverse community and is located in the Hall Green district of Birmingham, about four miles south of the city centre along the A34 Stratford Road. There are 214 boys and 200 girls in school, with another 51 children who attend the nursery on a part-time basis. About half the pupils live in the ward where the school is located and the other half live in the ward closer to the city centre to the north of the school. Nearly 90 per cent of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and most of these speak English as an additional language, which is a very high proportion. About a quarter of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. Just over a tenth have special educational needs, which is below average, though the proportion with statements is average. When children start school their level of skills and knowledge is well below average.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Yorkmead Primary School is a very effective school with very good quality teaching and learning based upon very good management systems. The headteacher gives an outstanding lead to the school. She works in excellent partnership with the highly effective deputy headteacher and together they have built a united and very successful team of staff. All adults in school work very effectively to ensure strengths are promoted and built upon and shortcomings are corrected promptly. Pupils make good progress regardless of their backgrounds, and standards are rising rapidly. The school gives good value for the above average amount spent on each pupil.

#### **What the school does well**

- The curriculum has a richness and relevance not often found in primary schools and offers high quality learning experiences for all pupils.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Pupils make good progress, reaching average standards from the well below average levels when they start school. Standards are improving well.
- The pupils are developed into very pleasant children who are very well prepared for adult life.
- The overall quality of leadership and management is a significant strength of the school.

#### **What could be improved**

- Work to encourage independence and initiative in learning and the development of spoken English does not yet have full impact on pupils' learning.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made good progress with improvement in the two key areas identified in the 1998 inspection report. It has raised standards in information and communication technology (ICT) by ensuring the curriculum is delivered in full and has improved the quality and use of ICT resources well. Secondly, the school has improved teaching, especially in Years 3 and 4, and the development of pupils' skills and knowledge is now much more systematic.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	E	B	C	A
Mathematics	C	C	C	A
Science	C	D	C	B

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

*Similar schools are those schools with between 20 per cent and 35 per cent of the pupils entitled to free school meals.*

In 2002, the standards attained by Year 6 pupils were average in English, mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools, standards were well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. In Year 6, the proportion achieving the higher level 5 last year was average in English, mathematics and science. Standards in the Year 2 national tests were average in writing, below average in reading and well below average in mathematics. These results were above average in writing, average in reading and well below average in mathematics compared to similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher level 3 in Year 2 in 2002 was well below average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing.

There have been some differences in the attainment of girls and boys in Year 2 during the last three years with the boys doing better than the girls in reading and writing but girls doing slightly better than boys in mathematics. These trends are different from those found nationally overall. However, in the juniors there were no significant differences between boys and girls in English and science during the same period. In mathematics, boys did better than girls over the last three years, which is the same as the national trend.

Inspectors judge that this year, standards have continued to improve and are average overall in Year 6, which demonstrates clearly the good progress made from the well below average starting levels of these pupils. There are some strengths in standards in music, art and design and ICT. Standards in Year 2 are below average overall, though improvement is evident across all subjects, and in creative work and writing pupils are attaining average standards.

Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress and their use of English improves well during their time in school. However, pupils' spoken language skills are not as well developed as in most schools and this has a significant impact on standards.

The school promotes good learning effectively and its mission of enabling all pupils to share an effective education is well met and expectations are high. The trends in school towards improved standards are better than the national trend. In all, there has been a steady improvement in standards since 1998.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are very keen to come to school; they are immensely proud of it and they work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of	Behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school. Pupils show very good levels of self-discipline. There have been no exclusions from school in recent

classrooms	years.
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Personal development and relationships	The pupils are very pleasant children, who enjoy working and playing together. They support each other very well and the level of racial harmony is very good.
Attendance	The attendance rate has improved during the last few years and is average overall.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Teaching and learning are of very good quality through the school. The proportion of good or better teaching is well above average. During the inspection there was no evidence of unsatisfactory teaching, whether in lessons or as shown by the study of pupils' past work. Teachers' subject knowledge and confidence, class management skills, expectations and the teaching of basic skills are all strengths. A key strength is in ongoing assessment, especially the very constructive marking of work. When learning, pupils concentrate well, work productively and show very good interest in their work. Teachers share targets for learning with the pupils in each lesson, and because they take time to discuss how well these have been met at the session end, pupils understand how well they are learning. Pupils are not, however, encouraged to show independence and initiative in all lessons and there could be more focus on the development of speaking skills in some sessions. However, the school successfully meets the needs of all pupils in providing a very good quality of education.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is one of the main strengths of the school. It is rich, relevant, broad and very well balanced. The school has very good strategies for literacy and numeracy, which have a positive impact on standards. Pupils' personal development is excellent and the school builds very effectively on its partnership with other schools and the community.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for and the support staff work very successfully to ensure that they make good progress towards the very carefully specified targets on their individual work programmes.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Almost 90 per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language. They develop the basic skills of English effectively because they are well supported. The bilingual support assistants play an especially successful role in this work. There could be more opportunities to talk at length in some lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well fostered overall. Particular strengths are to be found in the moral, social and cultural aspects of this work. Pupils enjoy the excellent opportunities they have to find out more about the many cultures that surround them and they grow into respectful and kind children who want others to have as much success as they have.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes very good care of all pupils and their health and safety are of prime concern. Procedures to encourage best behaviour, good attendance and high levels of self-esteem are all of very good quality. The arrangements to

	assess pupils' knowledge and skills are good and are being increasingly targeted to ensure all pupils succeed in equal measure.
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How well the school develops its partnership with parents	Parents have very positive views of the school and they are pleased they chose it for their children. The school is working very effectively to build a valuable partnership with parents and it provides them with excellent information.
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## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher gives excellent leadership to the school and her management skills are outstanding. She has built a partnership that is second to none with the highly effective deputy headteacher. Senior managers and subject leaders are developing their roles very effectively and there is very good shared commitment to improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are very actively involved in the work of the school and they conduct their business in a very efficient and effective way. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses very well and are influential in making improvements. Governors ensure that the school follows the principles of best value very carefully when it purchases supplies and services. They ensure that pupils achieve well in their work and personal development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a thorough knowledge of the school's performance and they set a very clear agenda for school improvement. Other staff have improving understanding of the success of the school and are working very hard to make sure all pupils are as successful as each other.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of all forms of resources. Although the accommodation is cramped, all staff, including the cleaners, make sure it is in good condition and the quality of displays is first class. Finance is managed very prudently and the office staff give very good service to the school. Overall, the school gives good value for money.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• Expectations are good.</li> <li>• Teaching is good and pupils make good progress.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good and their children become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The school works effectively with parents and parents feel well informed about their children's progress.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed and parents find staff approachable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few think that levels of homework are inconsistent.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with all of the positive views of parents and would reassure them that the school is building an effective and consistent homework programme.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

**The curriculum has a richness and relevance not often found in primary schools and offers high quality learning experiences for all pupils.**

*"It is all about us and not other people..."*

This was the unequivocal claim of a group of pupils as they talked about the curriculum as represented in the bright, high quality displays around the school.

1. The school has worked very effectively to develop its curriculum so that it provides cohesive and consistent opportunities for all pupils to build skills, knowledge and understanding. Sight has not been lost of the need to preserve the full representation of subjects in the curriculum and pupils learn effectively in all of them. There are a significant number of strengths in the curriculum, which are recognised equally by parents and pupils.

2. The high quality of the formal curriculum is caught in the display of design and technology work in the main corridor. Because of its sequential arrangement, this display traces effectively the development of skills and knowledge in planning, designing, making and evaluating different products from the reception class to Year 6. The Year 2 work, for example, shows careful attention to detail in making felt puppets, Year 3 construct Haida-culture style totem poles of intricate design and Year 6 pupils give good evaluation of the soup made in food technology. The display also shows clearly the links to other subjects that are a characteristic of the topics studied. In this case, Year 5 work links strongly to music where pupils design, make and evaluate their own musical instruments, and Year 4 work to produce torches relates well to their studies of light in science.

3. Work to promote basic skills is equally well planned and delivered. The curriculum for English gives good emphasis to the skills and knowledge of reading and writing. Parents praised the work to develop good reading habits in their discussion with inspectors. They said that there is systematic development of skills and knowledge and that, overall, reading skills are promoted very effectively. The word 'excellent' was used by several parents in this context. The evidence from lessons, and past results in national tests, support parents' views fully. Writing skills are developed most effectively and in general, the standard of writing is one of the school's main strengths. Again, the link with other subjects is strong and pupils have some excellent opportunities to write at length and for different purposes in science, religious education and history, for example. Presentation skills are developed well and staff promote good spelling consistently. The aspect of English that is ripe for development is speaking and listening. Although pupils have the necessary listening skills, many have restricted speaking skills. This is related to the fact that almost 90 per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language. This element of English is explored in detail at the end of this report.

4. The curriculum for mathematics is also well focused on skills and knowledge. Year 6 pupils' books show well-structured progression in the complexity of the work over the past year. The starting point for the higher attaining pupils, for example, was at a broadly average level and focused on the basics of place value and arithmetic. By November, elements of work at the higher level 5 were introduced including the use of negative numbers in practical contexts. In the work completed in February, the emphasis on developing strategies to solve complex problems is evident. Solving problems related to the perimeter of irregular shapes, straightforward probability and much more complex work on ratio followed, so that by the time these pupils took their national tests, they were working at level 5 consistently. Parents

cite mathematics as a strength of the curriculum and they are not mistaken as pupils have good opportunities to investigate and apply mathematical ideas and adapt their knowledge as shown in the third example above.

5. The school's strategies for literacy and numeracy are very effective and have had a major impact on standards. However, they are not compartmentalised. The strategies have been developed most effectively from the original national frameworks and they take much account of the needs of the pupils at Yorkmead Primary School. Staff have not been afraid to make changes to the structure of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies; these amendments have been carefully evaluated for success and show great wisdom. Both literacy and numeracy pervade the whole curriculum, enabling the development of basic skills and knowledge to be efficient, far reaching and very effective.

6. Work in science is investigative and enables pupils to develop the skills of enquiry, fair testing, prediction and evaluation well. As for other subjects, good assessment opportunities are built into the science curriculum. The curriculum for ICT has been improved well since the previous inspection identified it as a key issue. The school has equipped a suite of computers, provided very good staff training and enhanced the curriculum to cover all strands of the subject in a logical and systematic order. ICT links well to other subjects. During the inspection, work was observed in Year 6 to process mathematical data using professional spreadsheet software and in Year 5 to design a pamphlet about Stratford-on-Avon that linked geography and history. In the Year 4 lesson, pupils worked with a publishing package to produce a booklet on mittens that was linked to their work in design and technology. Pupils' past work and displays around the school show similar links to other subjects, including science, art and design and religious education.

7. Parents say that the curriculum for religious education is a particular strength of the school. The study of a number of major world faiths in the curriculum is warmly welcomed by parents who are pleased that the school celebrates the backgrounds and traditions of the pupils in this way. The pupils themselves also report they enjoy religious education lessons. The theme that runs through the work is that everyone in school is a human being and that everyone should work and play together. Pupils know that they can apply what they learn from religion to their own lives, particularly in forming friendships. The curriculum for religious education is planned to use the pupils as experts on their own religion and they respond fully and effectively to this opportunity. The display on weddings in different religions in the main entrance to the school is an arresting example of how the school draws on pupils' own experiences in order to show the significance of specific celebrations and other religious events and beliefs for everyone, including adults. Such an approach makes a significant contribution to the personal and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

8. The arts and creative subjects are a central part of the curriculum. This is promoted by an emphasis on first-hand experience. During the inspection opportunities to work with an artist in residence were provided for Year 6 pupils. A project to design a mural to decorate a wall in the nursery play area was well under way. The pupils had chosen the theme of the jungle for their designs and were working their ideas up in their sketch books and, subsequently, on large sheets of paper, ready for the selection of the final design. Meanwhile, the other Year 6 pupils were working with two visitors to prepare their contribution to a concert. In this lesson there was enthusiasm, exuberance and effective development of skills in a fun scenario, such as breathing exercises to quicken the pulse of singing. The rich programme of visits and visitors makes a valuable contribution to the development of the curriculum, particularly in relation to the arts and creative subjects, and standards benefit, being above average in some lessons.

9. The youngest children in school benefit from a well designed, planned and executed curriculum. The nursery is a bright, welcoming place for the children and they quickly adjust to the routines and expectations of, often, their first steps in education. Many nursery children are not used to mixing with others at home but they are quick to learn and the focus on small step-by-step development of confidence, skills and knowledge is well fostered in the nursery. Thus, the skills of communication, language and literacy are promoted strongly. This was seen in a session observed where the teacher took one group of pupils to tell the story of *The Caterpillar who Roared*, and the bilingual support assistant worked with a group of children with very little command of English to tell them their own story. In both cases, the children enjoyed what they heard and listened carefully, and a few were confident enough to share their ideas about the mini-beasts they had been studying in their work to develop better knowledge and understanding of the world. Overall, provision in the nursery is a great strength of the school and this is in large part due to the tireless drive and high expectations of the teaching assistant in charge of the Foundation Stage.

10. Parents rate the development of physical skills in nursery and reception as an example of good curricular provision. The evidence from the inspection supports this viewpoint. There is some imaginative adaptation of the curriculum for reception children, as in the case of the 'cow hunt' that created tremendous fun and a thirst for learning. When the registered inspector first visited the school he was led by a group of reception children to their computer, where they proudly showed him the cow-hunt software devised by their teachers. During the inspection itself, there was evidence on display of the children's good quality work on the more familiar story of the 'bear hunt' and an inspector observed another group use the cow-hunt software. The children's own voices are used to retell the story and their faces feature in the program. The children were most excited about this starring role and they showed good dexterity in dragging and dropping icons across the screen to move the story sequence on.

11. The cow-hunt software is just one example of the way in which staff have adapted the curriculum to focus on the pupils themselves. The sense of involvement in activities is palpable as pupils talk and show what they know and can do. Progress and standards are very much influenced by the enthusiastic response that pupils give to the curriculum.

### **The quality of teaching and learning is very good.**

*"The lesson is fun...we have learned new ideas and put sounds together."*

Year 3 pupils in an aside to the inspector in their music lesson to compose a piece of music for percussion instruments.

*"We have the chance to make our own problems and pass them on to our friends."*

Year 6 pupils talking about their mathematics lesson to investigate how shapes fit together to make a rectangle.

12. Inspectors judge that the overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. This also applies to teaching in the three different stages in school, for nursery and reception, infant and junior pupils and in all the subjects of the curriculum. The proportion of good or better teaching during the inspection was above that usually found in primary schools at just over 80 per cent. Indeed, the proportion that was very good or excellent, at almost 20 per cent, exceeds the level found in most schools. There is no evidence of unsatisfactory teaching, whether in lessons or as represented in the work completed in the past year.

13. Given this profile of teaching, it is not surprising that there are many strengths. Teachers' subject knowledge and confidence are both very good. They have clearly been

improved greatly in ICT, but are also very well established in subjects such as art and design, music and physical education, all of which have been affected by temporary absence of their subject leaders in the period since the previous inspection. During such absence, teaching and learning quality has been sustained in these subjects and the quality of provision, especially in arts and creative subjects, is very good.

14. Teachers' expectations are very good and support staff also expect very much of their pupils. The marking of pupils' work shows these high expectations and is constructive and questing. Teachers set clear targets for improvement in the work and marking identifies precisely how far these have been attained. Other initiatives, such as pupils' self-evaluation in the *Good pupils, getting better* assessment books, ensure that pupils know exactly what is expected of them and they themselves contribute well to the evaluation of personal success. There is time set aside in most lessons for the discussion of the targets or learning objectives for that lesson; in one session the pupils challenged their teacher because the sharing of learning outcomes in this way had been overlooked. At the end of most sessions, teachers allow time for pupils to self-evaluate what they have learned, though in a few lessons this is done by the teacher rather than by the pupils.

15. As identified in the previous section, provision for basic skills is very good and this extends to teaching and learning in this area. For very much of the time, basic skills are a close focus of the work, which pervades all lessons, regardless of subject. The relative exception is the promotion of speaking skills, which is not as adept as the development of other aspects of English, though it is sound at least.

16. The management of pupils is another strength. Lessons are very orderly sessions where the conditions for learning are conducive to good progress. Because this is coupled with the fact that pupils are very interested in their tasks, concentrate well, try hard and maintain good levels of productivity, learning is promoted effectively. In many lessons there are good levels of collaboration, as shown in all three ICT lessons observed, a buzz of activity, excellent relationships and very good levels of racial harmony.

17. Most pupils take a pride in their work and present it neatly. They work hard to improve their handwriting, spelling and punctuation, assisted by well-focused comments which teachers add to the work during marking. They are also keen to share the fruits of their efforts with others. There is a real sense of celebration in the assemblies where pupils are given awards for good work and on several occasions during the inspection, pupils broke into spontaneous applause to celebrate the achievements of other pupils.

18. Key managers have identified that within learning, measures to improve independence and initiative in lessons are a priority for continued improvement. This is a very relevant priority now that, in other respects, effective learning has been established throughout the school. The school's quest for excellence will be bolstered by this priority and hence it is part of the only key issue of this inspection.

**Pupils make good progress, reaching average standards from the well below average levels when they start school. Standards are improving well.**

*"We feel the vibrations with our eardrums that are in our ears."*

*"The string (on the guitar) is shaking."*

Year 1 pupils discussing the sounds of vibrating musical instruments heard during a science lesson.

19. The school has a good track record for improvements made to standards. Official statistics show that the rate of improvement to standards in Year 6 has outstripped that in the country as a whole. The school has an impressive list of awards that acknowledge its work to improve standards and during the period of the inspection it was announced that it had just been given the National Primary Award for Writing.

20. The improvement to standards can be tracked through its results in national tests for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. Last year, Year 6 pupils attained standards that were similar to the national average in English, mathematics and science. When compared to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, standards were well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Standards in the Year 2 national tests last year were average in writing, below average in reading and well below average in mathematics. These results compared well to those in similar schools in writing, as they were above this average. They were average in reading and well below average in mathematics compared to such schools. However, the evidence gathered during this inspection shows that the school's very relevant and rich curriculum, coupled with very good teaching and learning, is having a very positive influence on standards and progress in all subjects. Yorkmead is not a conveyor belt to good test results. The vibrancy and scope of educational provision ensure that pupils achieve well across all their learning experiences.

21. Whilst there were some differences in the attainment of girls and boys in the Year 2 and 6 national tests during the last three years<sup>1</sup>, inspectors found little significant difference between the two genders in lessons or when examining pupils' past work. Boys and girls are more than likely to show the same interest and motivation in their learning and to give the same effort to their work. Only in a very few lessons do a few boys take a more vocal role in learning, but this is not usually to the detriment of the girls, who tend to be quieter workers on the whole.

22. The school does an effective job of educating different groups within school. So, the higher attaining pupils are challenged well by their work and they are often set separate work that takes their learning beyond that achieved by the other pupils in class. There is an impressive record of achievement by gifted and talented pupils. The school can point to the success of ten pupils who took their GCSE mathematics examination whilst in Year 6 last year. All were given positive grades and several achieved a grade C or better. Similarly, there is evidence of some very good attainment in music, as shown by the work of a visiting specialist instrument teacher with a Year 3 pupil learning to play the violin. Several pupils are entered for national awards in instrument playing and they do well in these examinations. Given that the overall starting level of children is well below average, the school succeeds in pushing the higher attainers on in their work. Thus, by Year 6, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level 5 in the national tests is similar to the national average.

23. Pupils with special educational needs also do well in their work. This is much to do with the clarity and precision of their individual work programmes that specify carefully the small steps to be taken in learning and the criteria for meeting these very measurable targets. Teachers and support staff together write the work programmes, with good guidance from the co-ordinator for special educational needs. The quality of support by non-teaching staff is very good and the pupils respond very positively to them. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy their work as much as the other pupils do.

24. Pupils who speak English as an additional language account for all but ten per cent of the pupils and many of the youngest are at the early stages of English acquisition. In general,

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<sup>1</sup> See the summary of standards on page 7 for full details of gender differences in national tests.

all these pupils make good progress and their command of English increases considerably whilst they are in school. The bilingual support staff play an important and very successful role in work to help pupils who speak English as an additional language progress well. In some lessons pupils' speaking skills could be promoted more rigorously but, overall, they make good strides in learning because the staff know their needs well and assessment and evaluation of skills are sharp.

25. Children in nursery start their education with limited skills and knowledge, especially in communication, language and literacy. They enjoy a very rewarding curriculum during their first two years of school and some very good teaching, both of which contribute to the brisk progress made. The trend in school is for attainment to improve as pupils move from class to class. By the age of seven, overall standards are just below average and by the age of eleven they are average overall.

26. There is some good attainment in music, art and design and ICT. It is in the creative element of work and in writing where standards are at their best, with above average standards being attained in some topics. Overall, the school promotes good learning effectively and it meets its mission to enable all pupils to benefit from an effective education. The trends towards improved attainment have been good and all evidence suggests the school has a bright future as it strives for even higher standards.

**The pupils are developed into very pleasant children who are very well prepared for adult life.**

*"You can be a friend with anyone...it's nothing to do with religion."*

A group of Year 4 pupils were adamant about this as they reflected with inspectors about how the school promotes the appreciation and tolerance of different cultures and religions.

*"The children in my class are kind, helpful and sensible...like a family of brothers and sisters."*

Letter from a Year 6 pupil to the governor linked with her class.

27. Inspectors agree with governors, parents, visitors and staff, all of whom maintain that the chief strength of Yorkmead Primary School is its pupils. Time and time again, the pupils impressed inspectors with their approach to other people and to their work. They converse confidently and in a friendly manner, behave very well, are polite and act in a civilised and responsible way about the school.

28. Initiatives such as the School Council, 'Star for a Day' awards and Playground Squad promote pupils' personal development considerably. Many pupils told the inspectors that their friends gave them help and encouragement if they were struggling with anything. To the pupils, all other pupils are friends, regardless of background and they see the school as "one big happy family" (Year 6 letter). It is evident from pupils' past work that personal development runs through the whole curriculum, though the emphasis on initiative and independence in learning, whilst strong, is not always as rigorous as it could be. Despite this, the governors' claim that pupils grow in personal stature is accurate.

29. The quality of behaviour is very good. As in any school, there are times and places where behaviour of a few pupils is not up to the mark. At lunchtime, for example, there is some boisterous behaviour and a few nooks are not patrolled as effectively as they might be. However, the pupils themselves recognise that these are pinch points in behaviour and they know what to do if they feel threatened. Year 6 pupils, for example, were unanimous in telling inspectors that they would talk to a teacher if there was any bullying. When pressed further,

they said that in fact there was not much bullying anyway and that they had confidence in the school's measures to tackle any instances that might arise. In lessons, learning takes place in an orderly fashion with very good conduct being the norm. Assemblies and other activities also show the pupils' behaviour as very good. The school has a file of testimonials to very good behaviour given by adults who have visited the school or worked with pupils when they paid visits to different places of educational value.

30. Pupils get on really well with each other. The ethnic, religious and cultural mix of the school is diverse and the very good level of racial harmony is a testament to the effectiveness of measures to build on this heritage. All staff are very good role models for the pupils and, because of their links with individual classes, governors provide similar aspirational models. This is enhanced because governors represent very well the different traditions present in school. The degree of co-operation, collaboration and shared enjoyment in lessons is very marked, which enhances pupils' social and moral education to an excellent degree.

31. School managers emphasise pupils' self-esteem as a critical focus in their work. There are a number of very successful initiatives to build pupils' self-confidence and self-image, not least the out-of-hours Self-Esteem Club, a lunchtime activity that is a popular choice amongst pupils as it helps them build confidence and success in their work. The process of target setting, sharing and tracking and pupils' self-evaluation of their successes are other significant elements in this programme.

32. By the time the pupils leave school they are well equipped to meet the challenges of secondary education and life outside school. They have become mature and sensible learners who relate very well to other pupils and adults and who possess the valuable assets of conversation, self-discipline and confidence. Their time in school has taken them from their starting point of apprehensive, inward-looking children in the nursery to one of eager anticipation of life away from Yorkmead. This journey starts during the first day in nursery and is promoted thoroughly from then on.

**The overall quality of leadership and management is a significant strength of the school.**

*"This is a good school...they (staff) look after us well."*  
Year 6 pupils talking to an inspector.

*"We are really looking forward to showing you our class. You will be most welcome."*  
Letter from a Year 6 pupil to the governor linked to the class.

*"Do you like being in our school like we do? Do you think it is a good one? I do."*  
Questions asked spontaneously of an inspector by a Year 5 pupil as they passed in the corridor.

33. The pupils are not wrong in their evaluation of the effectiveness of the school, apart from that of degree. Inspectors judge that Yorkmead Primary School is a very effective school that is led and managed excellently by the headteacher.

34. The headteacher sets the tone and expectation of the school most succinctly and successfully. 'Second best is insufficient' is the clear message to parents, pupils, governors, staff and visitors. Pupils and adults respect her authority, judgement, commitment and prowess, all of which are exercised with sensitivity, humour and encouragement, but most of all, dogged determination. The headteacher works hard to draw other people into the leadership and management of the school. She has formed an excellent partnership with the

highly talented deputy headteacher. Together, they have accurate and wide-ranging insights into school performance and they know exactly what they want the school to be. They communicate a message of 'Going for gold' in what they do and they are working most successfully to ensure others join this mission.

35. There is very good delegation to other members of staff. Senior managers are very capable, astute and conscientious people who also know much about the school's performance. Subject leaders are influential in leading and managing their subjects and they have a good role in the monitoring and evaluation procedures designed to ensure that all pupils are succeeding according to capacity. Collectively in discussion, the staff showed their understanding of the school's priorities and conveyed forcefully their commitment and determination to continue the process of improvement.

36. The governors play a pivotal role in school. They are very well informed and involved in the school. Their links with subjects and, particularly, individual classes are impressive and, very much like the pupils, they are immensely proud of their school. Governors conduct their business efficiently and effectively and they ensure the school meets its statutory responsibilities. They work in very effective partnership with the staff in judging whether the school is following the principles of best value. They are not afraid to study complex statistics to check how well the school is doing and they keep school managers alert by asking probing questions about school performance. The governors enjoy their work and are very committed to the school. The staff recognise and value this service.

37. The office staff are cheerful, conscientious and most effective in their work to keep the school running efficiently. They have very good understanding of finance and provide detailed information for key managers, governors and staff to enable the budget to be very well planned, managed and controlled. The budget is tightly bound to the priorities of the school improvement plan and all resources are used in the interests of the pupils. All staff go out of their way to make the imperfections in the amount of accommodation invisible to the pupils. The school is kept in very good shape by the team of cleaners and the standard of display is excellent in its variety, content and quality. The catering and lunchtime staff also work well to give pupils positive experiences at meal times. One Year 4 pupil told inspectors that the school dinners were "scrumptious!"

38. The very many qualities of the school reported in this report are down to the high calibre of leadership and management. The curriculum has a richness and relevance not often found in primary schools and offers high quality learning experiences for all pupils because key managers attach great importance to equal opportunities and full educational inclusion for pupils, regardless of background. The quality of teaching and learning is very good because staff development, performance management and induction procedures are successful in ensuring that strengths are shared and weaknesses eliminated promptly. Pupils make good progress, standards are improving steadily and pupils reach average levels from their well below average starting point in school because managers have implemented a powerful system of target setting, sharing and tracking that involves the pupils fully in gauging their own success. Finally, the pupils are developed into very pleasant children who are very well prepared for adult life because they are put first by everyone. The overall quality of leadership and management is justly considered a significant strength of the school.

## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

**Work to encourage independence and initiative in learning and the development of spoken English does not yet have full impact on pupils' learning.**

*"How am I an independent learner?"*

Title of piece of writing in Year 6 English books

*"If you be bad..."*

A Year 4 pupil explaining the rewards and sanctions system.

*"He got on his boat and wented home."*

A Year 1 pupil explaining the story line of the book *Where the Wild things are* in a design and technology lesson.

39. The pupils are given many opportunities to succeed, but in two linked areas, there is room for further improvement. The school improvement plan focuses squarely on the need to improve pupils' independence, responsibility and initiative in learning and the need to promote basic skills in all aspects of the school's work. In general, the school is meeting with success in these things, though there is a need for continued work.

40. Children start school with well below average degrees of self-confidence and skills of communication with other people. Many have not been used to working or playing with other children at home and some have very limited skills in spoken English. For these pupils, nursery is an alien world. However, it is one that they settle quickly to, and very good work is done to bolster their personal and social education. Within a few weeks, the children play happily together and join in the rich variety of experiences with interest. Many still do not say very much as they engage in these activities. The staff continue these valuable efforts to improve confidence and security for reception children, most of whom are thrilled with their learning at school.

41. Infant children continue to develop the skills necessary to take full advantage of their education but they still show signs of insecurity at times and a dependence on the adults in class. They respond willingly to questions and teachers' instructions, but many do not answer in detail, preferring simple spoken sentences, often of questionable grammatical accuracy.

42. The juniors develop well as children and the excellent quality of relationships stands them in good stead as they communicate with others. However, there is a significant proportion of children who do not know or use Standard English. In some lessons throughout the school there is insufficient follow-up to brief, grammatically incorrect or otherwise imperfect spoken responses. Teachers and support staff do not always ask enough supplementary questions to encourage greater fluency, expression and accuracy in speech. School managers recognise the need to improve the modelling of good speaking skills by adults in school and are determined to make the necessary changes to bring about higher standards of speaking.

43. There have been some good initiatives to promote greater independence in learning, as seen in investigation work in mathematics and science, and research in English, history and ICT. The procedures to involve pupils in the self-evaluation of progress towards their individual targets for learning are substantial evidence of the determination to improve independence and self-reliance in learning. However, some pupils are still dependent on adults by the age of eleven. In some cases, pupils do not adjust well enough to the required

learning styles. The school has good evidence to show, for example, that in some classes pupils find listening for lengthy periods very demanding, whereas they respond much more successfully to hands-on learning. Some teaching methods demand pupils sit listening for a relatively long time. The school is part-way to a solution to this situation, as more and more teachers are planning activities that place the onus on the pupil to work practically and productively. There remain a few lessons where taking the initiative is not at the heart of learning.

44. There are bright prospects for the necessary improvement to these aspects of learning and the inspection team has every confidence that governors, key managers and staff will pursue the resulting key issue with determination and success.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

45. Yorkmead Primary School is clearly on the way to excellence. There is sterling leadership and management by the headteacher and everyone is focused on work to ensure pupils do as well as they can. There are far many more strengths than weaknesses. The school can already show success in improving pupils' learning, but key managers recognise that there is more to be done. The school improvement plan rightly targets independence, initiative and speaking skills for continued development. With this in mind, the school should:

#### **Maintain efforts to encourage independence and initiative in learning and the development of pupils' speaking skills, by:**

- ensuring all pupils have ample opportunities to develop progressively the skills of speaking clearly and at length;
- reminding pupils, as appropriate, of the need to speak in good English;
- giving pupils consistent opportunities to take part in practical work, investigation, research and self-evaluation in all subjects;
- continuing work to plan activities that take maximum advantage of pupils' learning styles.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	37
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	6	23	7	0	0	0
Percentage	3	16	62	19	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents nearly three per cent.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	25.5	414
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	-	100

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	5	48

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	367

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	36	22

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	29	30	25
	Girls	17	21	16
	Total	46	51	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	79 (73)	88 (78)	71 (90)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	28	29	29
	Girls	19	17	15
	Total	47	46	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (77)	79 (87)	76 (77)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	34	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	30	25	31
	Girls	20	20	22
	Total	50	45	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (86)	76 (71)	90 (85)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	30	29	32
	Girls	20	21	23
	Total	50	50	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (58)	85 (69)	93 (76)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	60	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	103	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	154	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	14	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

*The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

### ***Financial information***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR - Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	18.05
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	30

#### **Education support staff: YR - Y6**

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	291.7

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.5
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	52.3

Financial year	2002-3
	£
Total income	1,029,938
Total expenditure	1,040,571
Expenditure per pupil	2,341
Balance brought forward from previous year	59,763
Balance carried forward to next year	49,130

Number of pupils per FTE adult	9
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	465
Number of questionnaires returned	291

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	30	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	41	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	37	5	1	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	48	35	12	3	3
The teaching is good.	66	31	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	59	35	4	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	29	5	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	29	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	63	29	5	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	66	29	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	37	1	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	36	9	1	9