



**Office for Standards  
in Education**

**Inspection report**  
**Woodfield Primary School**

**Doncaster Education Authority**

Dates of inspection: 29 and 30 November 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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## **Basic information about the school**

Name of school:	Woodfield Primary School
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Headteacher:	Mrs B Nicholson
Address of school:	Gurney Road Balby Doncaster South Yorkshire DN4 8LA
Telephone:	01302 853289
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, at the above address
Chair of governors:	Mr C Watson
Local education authority area:	Doncaster
Unique reference number:	106733
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr J S Hardwick HMI
Dates of inspection:	29 and 30 November 2004

## Introduction

1. Primary School serves an area of local authority housing on the outskirts of Doncaster. The school is larger than average, with 283 full-time pupils, and 36 part-time pupils in the nursery. Thirty six per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is around twice the national average and reflects low family incomes in the area. The school has identified 49 pupils as having special educational needs, including 15 pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Need. The latter figure is unusually high, partly because it includes eight pupils from a unit for pupils with speech and language difficulties that is housed in the school. There are nine pupils who speak English as an additional language.

2. When Woodfield Primary School was inspected in February 2002, as part of the national programme of inspections, it was judged to have serious weaknesses. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) visited the school in March 2003 and found that too little progress had been made. The school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of March 2003. The school was visited by HMI on three occasions to monitor the progress being made.

4. In November 2004, three HMI inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of December 2001.

## Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- standards are rising with more pupils on course to reach the expected level by the time they are in Year 6. However, the picture is uneven across the school and this is reflected in the school's national test results for 2004. The oldest pupils made good progress in their final year and the results at Key Stage 2 improved when compared with the previous year, particularly in mathematics. At Key Stage 1, however, the results were poorer than in 2003, especially in reading. The school's results and the standards in lessons, though improving, are not as good as they should be: raising standards remains the school's major challenge;
- the pupils were well behaved in class and around the school. They have responded well to the higher demands in lessons and the better opportunities to exercise responsibility. Most pupils have learned good work habits, building on their social development in the Foundation Stage, which has long been a strength of the school. With a few exceptions the pupils were attentive, did as they were told and settled readily to individual and group tasks;

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- improving the pupils' attendance has formed a key issue following the school's last two inspections. Initiatives over the last year have proved successful and recent attendance figures have been similar to the national average for primary schools;
  - the quality of teaching has improved considerably since March 2003, when it was unsatisfactory in a third of the lessons. The teaching was at least satisfactory in all but one of the 26 lessons, and it was good or very good in more than a half of them. All the lessons were well planned and organised, and based on clear learning objectives. The teachers have responded well to advice and training and their expectations have been raised over what and how much the pupils can achieve. Much effort is devoted to making the pupils' tasks interesting and the teachers convey their enthusiasm for the different subjects. The considerable number of classroom assistants make important contributions to the learning;
  - the curriculum meets national requirements, with due regard given to promoting the pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Cross-curricular themes are being successfully introduced, often supported by a visit to provide the pupils with a first-hand experience of what they are studying. The provision for the pupils who have special educational needs meets the national code of practice, and the work of the speech and language unit is good, enabling these pupils to increase in confidence and make good progress;
  - the leadership and management of the headteacher, who joined the school just before it became subject to special measures, have been very good, and she has been well supported by senior staff and the governors. She directs the school energetically and has united the staff in a determination to improve. Training and careful recruitment have considerably broadened the management expertise within the school and tasks have been delegated successfully, based on clear lines of accountability;
  - there is a thorough programme for monitoring the school's performance and gauging the effectiveness of initiatives. A particular strength has been a willingness to adapt approaches, taking an objective view of what has worked and what has not. The action plan has run its course, and appropriate priorities have been set for the future, though further strategic plans are not fully complete;
  - the local education authority (LEA) has fulfilled its commitments, and played an important part in enabling the school to make good progress. It has facilitated changes of staff, supported developments in literacy and numeracy, and helped co-ordinators to expand their roles. The level of support has rightly been reduced over the last two terms, in recognition of the school's ability to act with autonomy.

## Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- raise pupils' standards of attainment, maintaining the focus on literacy and numeracy;
- continue to improve the quality of teaching;
- fully establish a new strategic plan.

## Inspection findings

### Standards achieved by the pupils

7. Standards are rising, with more pupils on course to reach the expected level by the time they are in Year 6. However, the picture is uneven across the school and this is reflected in the school's national test results for 2004. The oldest pupils made good progress in their final year and the results at Key Stage 2 improved when compared with the previous year, particularly in mathematics. At Key Stage 1, however, the results were poorer than in 2003, especially in reading. The school's results and the standards in lessons, though improving, are not as good as they should be: raising standards remains the school's major challenge.

8. In the 2004 national tests at Key Stage 1, 60 per cent of pupils reached at least Level 2 in reading, the basic standard expected for their age, compared with 66 per cent in 2003. The corresponding figures in writing were 60 and 64 per cent, and in mathematics 82 per cent of the pupils reached Level 2 in both years.

9. In the national tests at Key Stage 2 for 2004, 67 per cent of pupils reached Level 4 in English, the standard expected for 11-year-olds, compared with 55 per cent for the previous year. There was a significant improvement in mathematics, from 43 per cent gaining Level 4 in 2003 to 62 per cent in 2004, but a slight fall in science from 77 to 74 per cent.

10. The school's results in the 2004 tests were below the national figures at both key stages. When compared with the results for similar schools, based on the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, the results at Key Stage 1 were below average, while those at Key Stage 2 were in line with the average.

11. The pupils make a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage, and most are on course to reach the nationally set Early Learning Goals. In the nursery, for example, they learn to enjoy stories, recognise letters, count objects and take pride in explaining what they know; for example, that owls are nocturnal hunters. By the end of the reception year, the pupils know the sounds that combinations of letters usually make and they read and write simple words.

12. The standards in samples of work and lessons were at, or more commonly just below, the levels expected for the pupils' ages. The pupils made at least satisfactory, and often good, progress but many have much ground to make up, particularly in writing.

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13. By the end of Year 2, the pupils enjoy books and describe the types of stories they like. They read generally accurately and with understanding, and they use some expression according to the punctuation. All but the higher attaining pupils are, however, over-dependent on recognising words on sight. When they meet an unfamiliar word, they too readily guess or ask for help, even though they know the sounds that letters make and how to turn to the illustrations for a clue. Some of these problems persist for the lower attaining pupils at the end of Key Stage 2. Only the highest attaining pupils are enthusiastic about books and authors, show insight into the text, and display their understanding through expression. The other pupils read mechanically and do not always correct themselves when what they read does not make sense.

14. The pupils' writing at the end of Key Stage 1 ranges from well below the basic level expected for their age to slightly above. The weakest pupils struggle to make their ideas clear; the average attainers sequence their work and punctuate sentences, though not consistently; and the highest attaining pupils write accurately and at length, adopting the styles, such as repeated phrases, that they have met in stories.

15. At Year 6, the pupils write for a satisfactory range of purposes. In lessons they generally meet the learning objectives associated with aspects of the National Literacy Strategy; for instance in creating realistic modern versions of dialogue and stage directions for *Macbeth*. However, their work is marred by basic, sometimes careless, errors, for example in missing capitals for proper names. Their spelling is particularly weak, though this is improving as a result of a whole-school strategy to tackle this aspect of English. At best the higher attaining pupils reach national expectations in their basic accuracy and in their use of imagery and vocabulary to convey a scene or describe an event.

16. Standards in mathematics are higher and more consistent than those in English, and the balance of the pupils' work is at the levels expected for their ages. At Year 2, the pupils show sound recall of addition facts, which they apply to subtraction and to numbers beyond 20. They give times on clock faces to the quarter hour and estimate length well using non-standard units. In Years 5 and 6, the pupils tackle an appropriate breadth of work and much emphasis is given to learning number facts such as multiplication tables. This helps the pupils calculate accurately using different methods, and they translate simple fractions to percentages, convert vulgar fractions to mixed numbers and plot points from coordinates in all four quadrants.

### **The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

17. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall, both in classes and around the school. The pupils have responded well to the higher demands in lessons and they have benefited from the consistent routines that have been established from class to class. They are generally keen and interested, attentive to the teacher and to each other, and they have learned to settle quickly to tasks and concentrate. There is little of the social chatter that previously resulted in much wasted time. The pupils learn good work habits, for example in the way they organise materials and find things out for themselves and, by the end of Year 6, they are well prepared for secondary education. There have been some exceptions to this general picture, mostly when there has been a change of teacher. This has resulted in a few pupils talking out of turn and failing to apply themselves to their work, without firm insistence from an adult.

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18. Improving the pupils' attendance has formed a key issue following the school's last two inspections. Initiatives over the past year have proved successful. When the school became subject to special measures, attendance for the last complete year was 91.8 per cent, whereas the most recent figure is 93.8 per cent. Attendance in the last two terms has been similar to the national average for primary schools.

19. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and in some respects good. Assemblies are well conducted and allow time for reflection and the consideration of moral issues. Different faiths are studied and the pupils learn to enjoy art and literature. Multicultural work, which had been underrepresented in the curriculum because the school has had more basic priorities, is being given appropriate emphasis. The school offers a range of extracurricular activities, such as drama, computers and cookery, and visits are regularly used to underpin themes in class work.

20. The pupils' social development has long been a strength of the Foundation Stage. The pupils quickly learn to share materials, play together adopting different roles and to choose carefully from the range of activities on offer. Previously, the school failed to capitalise on this good start, but in the last two years there have been increasing opportunities for the pupils to demonstrate how they can accept responsibilities. Each pupil has a planner, which they use daily as a diary and to record targets and achievements. The older pupils take pride in undertaking school-wide jobs, such as looking after younger pupils at break time. The benefits of this approach are apparent in the many worthwhile games that pupils organise for themselves on the playground and in the way they subsequently enter school in an orderly fashion but without the need to line up.

### **The quality of education**

21. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since March 2003, when it was unsatisfactory in a third of the lessons. The teaching was very good in three lessons, good in 12, satisfactory in ten and unsatisfactory in one. The teachers have responded well to advice and training and their expectations have been raised over what and how much the pupils can achieve. As a consequence the pupils are making faster progress.

22. All the lessons were well planned and organised, and based on clear learning objectives that were shared with the pupils. The work was carefully prepared, allowing for the pupils' different levels of attainment. Much effort was devoted to making tasks interesting and the teachers conveyed their enthusiasm for learning and for the subject in hand. The teachers' explanations were clear and the considerable number of classroom assistants made important contributions to the learning.

23. The good and very good teaching was characterised by careful checks on pupils' understanding before moving forward, challenging pace and tasks, and ensuring that all the pupils contributed throughout the lesson. Where the teaching was satisfactory, some pupils were allowed to remain passive at times when the class was being taught as a whole, allowing a few to dominate by answering the questions. The unsatisfactory teaching stemmed from setting work that was at too high a level for most of the pupils in the class.

24. The curriculum meets national requirements, with due regard given to promoting the pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. The latter is a particular strength of the Foundation Stage, for instance in the rapid way in which the reception pupils are taught how to use letter sounds to build words and to enjoy using numbers.

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25. Cross-curricular themes are being successfully introduced to bring coherence to the pupils' learning. These are commonly supported by a visit to provide the pupils with a first-hand experience of what they are studying.

26. Provision for the pupils who have special educational needs meets the national code of practice. The pupils' individual plans contain appropriately specific targets and are reviewed each term. The work of the school's speech and language unit is good, enabling these pupils to increase in confidence and make good progress. The staff in the unit form an effective team and know the pupils well. A measure of the effectiveness of the unit in intervening early is that, over time, about 90 per cent of the pupils return to mainstream primary schools after spending on average just over two years in the unit.

27. Under the leadership of the deputy headteacher, the system for assessing the pupils' standards and tracking their progress has been overhauled. Regular assessments are made in the core subjects and the information is analysed to determine how well each pupil is faring and what needs to be done if the expected gains are not being made. As a consequence, groups have been set up to boost some pupils' performance, and the teachers group pupils and set tasks according to the pupils' different levels of attainment and their targets. This approach is supported by marking of the pupils' work that is clear over errors and about what needs to be done to improve.

28. The care taken over the building and resources exemplifies the standards to which the school aspires. The rooms and corridors are clean and bright, with attractive displays of artefacts and pupils' work. Books and equipment are of good quality and they are well organised and stored to provide ready access for the pupils.

### **Leadership and management**

29. In the period prior to being made subject to special measures, the school had been beset by staffing difficulties, particularly at the senior level; there had been four different headteachers in less than two years. There was a dearth of expertise to take the school forward at management level or to act as models of good teaching, and first-hand knowledge of classroom practice rested largely with the LEA's advisers. The position is much changed. Since her arrival, the headteacher has provided very good leadership and management. She has shown energy and determination in uniting the staff to see the school improve.

30. Training and careful recruitment have considerably broadened the management expertise within the school. Tasks have been delegated successfully, based on clear lines of accountability. The senior staff have provided good support to the headteacher and they work well as a team, taking responsibility for key aspects of the school's work and providing good models as teachers and leaders of different phases. The measures that have been introduced have brought much-needed cohesion to the school's routines and procedures. The teachers, whether new or longstanding, have worked hard to implement changes, recognising the benefits these were bringing to the pupils. The co-ordinators for literacy and numeracy, for example, have acted positively on advice about teaching, while undertaking a much wider role in leading developments and reviewing the outcomes.

31. A thorough programme has been introduced for monitoring the school's performance and gauging the effectiveness of initiatives. This has involved, for instance, analysing test results, making perceptive judgements on the quality of teaching, and scrutinising work. Resulting reports by senior staff represent a clear evaluation of the

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strengths and weaknesses. A key factor has been a willingness to adapt approaches, taking an objective view of what has worked and what has not.

32. The action plan, following the inspection in 2003, has run its course and appropriate priorities have been set for the future, though further strategic plans are not fully complete. The headteacher inherited a considerable budgetary surplus, which has been well used to support developments.

33. The governors have worked closely with the headteacher to remedy the school's weaknesses. Committees have been streamlined to improve the efficiency of meetings, and different governors have had oversight of work on the key issues within the action plan, feeding back their findings to the full body. Some of the governors have made first-hand observations of the school's work and the parent governors have provided their perspective on matters such as improving attendance. While the governors have raised their profile in the school's affairs, and fulfil their responsibilities, their role in strategic planning is underdeveloped and the good aspects of monitoring they have adopted need to become part of a systematic approach to measuring the school's performance.

34. The LEA has fulfilled its commitments to the school, and played an important part in enabling the school to make good progress. It has facilitated changes of staff, supported developments in literacy and numeracy and helped co-ordinators to expand their roles. The level of support has rightly been reduced over the last two terms, in recognition of the school's ability to act with autonomy.

### **Implementation of the action plan**

35. The inspection of March 2003 required the school to address six key issues. These related to: raising standards, particularly in literacy and numeracy; improving the quality of teaching; establishing effective management; setting up a system to track the pupils' progress; improving the pupils' work habits; and raising attendance. There has been good progress overall, but standards vary too greatly and are still not as high as they should be.

36. Much effort has been directed towards raising standards. Actions have included: support from the LEA's consultants; establishing booster groups; analysing test papers and acting on the findings; setting targets for the pupils to increase their rate of progress; and restructuring the classes. Careful recruitment of skilled staff and the ability of the teachers to act on advice, training and on the outcomes of monitoring have considerably improved practice in the classrooms.

37. There is an effective management structure, which includes staff who have the experience and leadership skills to work as a team, tackle weaknesses and take the school forward. The collection of data on the pupils' performance is systematic, and the information is carefully analysed and acted upon to help raise standards.

38. The pupils initially completed a questionnaire to provide a baseline view of the school. Since then a new code of conduct has been introduced, the pupils have many more opportunities to exercise responsibility and a school council has begun to meet. There has been a considerable improvement in the pupils' approach to school work, and this is also reflected in the successful measures taken to raise the level of attendance to the national average.

## **Appendix – Information about the inspection**

The school was inspected by HMI in March 2003, having previously been designated as having serious weaknesses in February 2002. The inspection was carried out under the School Inspections Act 1996, section 3, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in November 2003, and in March and July 2004 to assess the progress it was making to address the key issues in the report of March 2003.

In November 2004, three HMI returned to inspect the school for two days to check the progress being made. The inspection was carried out under the School Inspections Act, section 3; it was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Twenty six parts of lessons and an assembly were inspected, and pupils' conduct was observed around the school and at playtime. A sample of pupils in Years 2 and 6 were heard reading and their work over the year was examined. A range of documentation was scrutinised. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the leader for Key Stage 1, and the co-ordinator for special educational needs and with a group of older pupils. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of March 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.