



Inspection report

Hebden Royd CE VA Primary School

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 107551
LEA Calderdale

Inspection number 273422
Inspection dates 11 and 12 January 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs S Øyen HMI

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.

Type of School	Primary	School address	Church Lane
School category	Voluntary Aided <i>Diocese of Wakefield</i>		Hebden Bridge
Age range of pupils	3 to 11 years		West Yorkshire HX7 6DS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01422 842821
Number on roll	105	Fax number	01422 845905
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms C Groves
Date of previous inspection	19 March 2003	Headteacher	Mrs M Cairns

Age group	Published	Reference no.
3 to 11 years	4 March 2005	273422

Introduction

When Hebden Royd CE VA Primary School was inspected in March 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on four occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in January 2005.

Description of the school

Hebden Royd is a Voluntary Aided Church of England primary school in the small town of Hebden Bridge. The school, which serves the parish of St James the Great, is smaller than average with 105 pupils on roll. Eight full-time nursery pupils and 14 reception year pupils are taught together in the Foundation Stage unit. None of the other five classes has more than 18 pupils. Nearly all the pupils are from white British backgrounds and none has English as an additional language. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. Twelve pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and two have a Statement of Special Educational Need.

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Overall effectiveness of the school

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 appointment of the headteacher in January 2004 brought stability and a renewed sense of purpose to the work of the school. Good, supportive leadership by the headteacher has boosted morale and channelled the industry and willingness of the staff to bring about improvement. Standards are close to national averages and are rising; the pupils have responded well to the teachers' higher expectations of their performance. The youngest pupils make a good start in the foundation class, where there is a strong focus on learning through first-hand experience. While the teaching throughout the school is at least satisfactory, the pupils' learning is not always as good as it should be, especially in writing and science. The pupils enjoy learning and are keen to achieve their personal targets. Their behaviour is generally good. The curriculum meets national requirements and the pupils benefit from visits and links with the church and community. There is a warm, family atmosphere.

Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of March 2003 required the school to address key issues concerned with leadership and management, pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching, and parents' views of the school. The rate of improvement has varied but, overall, there has been good progress in relation to leadership and management and satisfactory progress in other aspects.

Capacity to improve

The school has sound capacity for further improvement. With the support of the local education authority (LEA) and diocese, the governing body, headteacher and staff are committed to raising standards and strengthening the school's profile. There are robust, consistent systems to set targets, to track the pupils' progress and to monitor the school's performance. The governors and staff of the school are using resultant information to decide how best to meet the pupils' needs. There are growing strengths in the teaching, not least in touches of flair. While effective teamwork has given the teachers increased confidence in identifying priorities for action, there are gaps in the teachers' expertise in leading programmes of improvement. A weakening budgetary position threatens the school's ability to sustain current organisational arrangements.

What the school should do to improve further

The school's development plan recognises the areas where improvement is needed. The key priorities are to:

- accelerate the rate of the pupils' learning, especially in writing and science;
- improve further the quality of teaching;
- strengthen the effectiveness of subject leadership and middle management;
- compile a clear long-term strategy to ensure the school's financial security.

Achievement and standards

Standards are satisfactory and are rising, particularly at Key Stage 2, because focused teaching is challenging the pupils and accelerating their progress. The higher attaining pupils are starting to meet their potential. The good quality of some recent work by pupils of all ages in several subjects shows what they can achieve. Gaps are being plugged in the pupils' knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, there is still some underachievement. In science, for example, the pupils have had limited opportunities in the past to carry out investigations to develop and to refine their skills in forming hypotheses.

The pupils make a good start in the Foundation Stage. A minority are slow to progress and, in the past, have not done as well as they should at Key Stage 1. Throughout the school, the pupils' ready facility with language and wide vocabulary serve them well in oral work. The mature content of their writing is starting to be matched by increasing accuracy in spelling and punctuation. Similarly in mathematics, there have been recent improvements in the pupils' knowledge of number facts.

In the 2004 Key Stage 2 national tests in English and mathematics, the school's results were marginally better than in 2003 and were just above the national average. Hebden Royd did as well as schools with a similar intake. The standard rose because a good proportion of the pupils, particularly boys, made good progress and performed better than expected for their age. The standard in science fell to below the national average and well below the average of similar schools.

Personal development

The pupils are willing, self-motivated and often enthusiastic learners, especially when their interest is caught. Their attendance is good and they settle quickly in lessons. A clear code of conduct, focused teaching and varied learning activities have counteracted the pupils' passive response and the casual approach that typified too many lessons when the school first became subject to special measures. Over the last few terms the pupils have shown increasing effort and pride in what they do. They want to achieve their targets.

The school has strengthened aspects of the provision for the pupils' personal development, which is now good. The increased emphasis on praise and recognition of achievement, alongside consideration and respect for others, has lightened the atmosphere in the school. Relationships are good and there is a warm, family feel throughout the school. The older

pupils act as good role models for the younger ones in behaving maturely and sensibly. The pupils' often high level of self-assurance and individuality shines through in their lively discussions and productive, collaborative work. The previously frequent incidents of arrogant, disrespectful behaviour have gone. The school has also been more orderly and calmer since the installation of a corridor to ease access to the rooms on the first floor.

The headteacher gives a strong lead, especially in assemblies, in fostering a caring Christian ethos teamed with a desire to do well. The prayers written by staff and pupils, having reflected on the effects of the recent tsunami in the Indian Ocean, showed much sympathy and high concern for the plight of others. The pupils' views have prompted changes in school procedures and the use of the outdoor areas. The school makes effective use of its good links with the church and town to involve the pupils in local cultural, sports and social events. It is aware of the need to strengthen further its work in raising the pupils' awareness of other cultures and life in a multicultural society.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall; it was satisfactory in 11 lessons, good in six and very good in two. The teachers have responded positively to advice and training. The overall profile of teaching is stronger than in 2003, especially at Key Stage 2 where, previously unsatisfactory, there is now much good teaching. The headteacher gives a good lead in her teaching and in her practical support for permanent and temporary staff. The improvements have resulted in the pupils making better progress than before. Nevertheless, not all the pupils are learning as quickly as they might and there is scope for improvement in the teaching and learning in all three key stages.

The teachers planned and prepared their lessons conscientiously. Their subject knowledge was generally good and they were confident in pinpointing exactly what they wanted the pupils to learn. In many lessons they used their own ideas and resources to catch the pupils' interest and to support the learning. They also showed increased proficiency in matching the tasks to the pupils' differing levels of knowledge and skill. However, the teachers were not making the most of the small class sizes to tailor the work specifically to individuals, particularly to challenge the higher attaining pupils and to help those with identified needs meet the targets in their individual education plans. There was good teamwork between the teachers and support assistants, whose talents and skills have been used well to lead groups and to display the pupils' work.

Two key steps in improving the quality of teaching have been the clarification of how skills develop and the introduction of targets for learning. The teachers shared the purpose of their lessons with the pupils and often linked it to the pupils' personal targets. They missed some opportunities to review the pupils' learning during lessons but there were some good examples of marking to indicate how well the pupils had done and how they could improve. The school has developed a sound system to assess and track the pupils' progress. The teachers have analysed the results from their assessments in the autumn term and used the information to plan additional support for some pupils and extension for others.

The curriculum meets national requirements and is broad and balanced. In the Foundation Stage there is a good emphasis on learning through play and first-hand experience indoors and out. All the pupils benefit from the improved programme of personal, social and health education and the older pupils have the opportunity to learn French. Good progress has been made in developing the pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology across the curriculum. The Year 6 pupils' pamphlets in science were a good example of how these strands had been combined effectively.

The headteacher and staff know and understand the pupils well. They take time and care to listen to and respond to the pupils' concerns about their safety and well-being. Recent discussions have highlighted the need to stamp out hurtful teasing.

The school enjoys good links and support from the community, with good attendance at school events and functions. The summer sports afternoon was largely organised and run by parents and carers. Arrangements with the local high school give older pupils a chance to visit and study there.

Leadership and management

The overall quality of leadership and management has improved considerably from being poor in 2003 to satisfactory. The quality of governance has also improved and is now satisfactory. The governing body was efficient in dealing with several sensitive issues when the school was first made subject to special measures and judged to be in a fragile position. It rightly challenged some decisions, sought support from the LEA and diocese, and worked with the experienced headteacher who was seconded to the school by the LEA to support the deputy headteacher in the absence of the headteacher. There has been a clear focus on making improvements to the accommodation and on using resources and finances to the benefit of the pupils.

The appointment of the headteacher from January 2004 was a further impetus for change. Her good leadership, quiet determination and sensitivity in promoting teamwork have proved very effective in giving a clear steer to the work of the school. Morale has risen and teaching and support staff are working well together. The class teachers are taking increasing responsibility for raising standards and identifying what needs to be done. Much remains in the early stages. Although the managers and co-ordinators are aware of their roles and responsibilities, there are gaps in their skills and expertise in leading effective programmes of action to raise standards. Similarly, the systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's work are not yet firmly established. An agreed programme of further support from the LEA provides a sound opportunity to develop and refine these crucial aspects of strategic leadership and management.

The reduction in the number of pupils on roll has squeezed the school's budget. The governing body has drawn on additional funds from the LEA to sustain small classes with single year groups. While this is an effective short-term measure, the school lacks a clear strategy in the longer term to ensure continuing financial security alongside its plans to raise standards and improve the provision further.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

Hebden Royd CE VA Primary School was inspected in March 2003 by a Registered Inspector and two team inspectors under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work 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 September 2003, and in March, June and October 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of March 2003.

In January 2005, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, 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.

During the visit 19 parts of lessons and one assembly were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, a representative from the LEA and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was 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 four key issues in the inspection report of March 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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