



St Oswald's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121535
LEA York
Inspection number 281036
Inspection dates 6 March 2006 to 7 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Jim Bennetts HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Heslington Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Fulford
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		York, North Yorkshire YO10 4LX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01904 555421
Number on roll	270	Fax number	01904 555448
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Richard Dyson
Date of previous inspection	27 September 1999	Headteacher	Mr Paul Marks

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 6 March 2006 - 7 March 2006	Inspection number 281036
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Oswald's Church of England Primary School mainly serves an affluent suburb to the south of York. It has 270 pupils, of whom, about a quarter come from families attached to Her Majesty's Forces. The school has a special unit for about ten pupils with learning difficulties due to dyslexia; these pupils usually join the school's roll during the last few years of primary schooling. In total, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally. The great majority of pupils are of white British background. The school has benefited from complete rebuilding over the last two years; this major building programme has caused significant disruption to the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school judges its effectiveness as good. Inspectors acknowledge that there is much cause for celebration in having seen the entire rebuilding of the school to recent completion, meanwhile sustaining an admirable ethos. But, in view of some slippage in standards and related quality control, current effectiveness is judged as satisfactory.

The key strengths of the school are the very good relationships and the strong commitment of the headteacher and his staff. The school curriculum is good and pupils are well looked after. Much of the teaching is good and pupils often make good progress. Yet there is some variability in effectiveness and firmer measures are needed to ensure consistently high quality. There has recently been determined strengthening of planning and other procedures.

The school provides satisfactory value for money. Staff work very well as a team and strongly support the headteacher in bringing about improvement. A great deal has been accomplished since the last inspection. There is every indication that the school can improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen assessment and the tracking of progress so that any developing underachievement by individuals can be quickly identified and rectified.
- Ensure that all teaching is as good as the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that achievement and standards are satisfactory. Pupils enter the school with a broad range of capabilities that is typical of that found nationally. They make satisfactory progress in their first year at school. Most settle well and quickly acquire the skills of concentration; a few are a little slow to settle and need help in following instructions. Pupils make rapid progress in the next two years. Standards in national tests at age 7 (Year 2) are above average, and those for 2005 were higher than for 2004. By Year 2, pupils are generally mature for their age and are strong in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school has a unit for dyslexic pupils; these pupils usually join the school during the last two or three years of primary schooling. Though these pupils are often working at a low level and find it difficult to score on tests, data shows that in some recent years, they, and others with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, have sometimes made more than average progress during the junior years. Because pupils joining the school's roll through the dyslexia unit have often spent part of the time between age 7 and 11 at their earlier school, there is a small element of uncertainty in data on progress made at St Oswald's.

The standards reached by pupils at age 11 are often high in relation to the national picture, but do not always show strong progress from the generally high standards that the school's pupils had at age 7. Over the last two years, even with allowance made for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, overall progress between national tests at age 7 and 11 has been below average. In 2005, there was considerable underachievement by boys (very few of whom were dyslexic). Work that was seen during the inspection shows at least satisfactory progress for older boys and girls. The school sets well considered targets, but in 2005 these were not achieved, with some lower attaining pupils falling short of the nationally expected level. A significant factor, in the lead up to the 2005 tests, was the massive disruption to the school caused by the complete rebuilding on the existing site. Targets for 2006 are appropriately lower, in view of the high number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development at the school is very good and enriched by the inclusion and celebration of a range of faiths and cultures. Pupils are attentive and reflective in assemblies. They are generous in their willingness to help others and raise funds for international and local appeals. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent and they show respect for each other. Pupils feel safe in school and know they can always turn to an adult for help. One said: 'we know nothing will happen to us and that God is always with us'.

Pupils generally behave very well and have positive attitudes to learning. They display an impressive maturity by the time they leave the school. This is reflected in conversation with them: 'we want to do good work for our teachers, so that our families know how hard we are working'. Pupils themselves judged behaviour to be 'not bad'. Pupils know they can go to a buddy bench if they have no one to play with in the playground. Attendance is good and above the national average.

The school council takes its responsibilities very seriously. Its members are reviewing resources for personal, social and health education and acting on a healthy eating committee. This allows pupils to make a positive contribution in the school.

Pupils participate enthusiastically in the many extra-curricular activities, such as gym clubs, recorders, choir and netball. They are encouraged to make healthy choices at meal times; younger pupils appreciate the provision of fruit. Pupils enjoy physical exercise and particularly the games carousel that enables them to trial a range of sporting activities. Social development is enhanced by opportunities in Year 5 and 6 to go on residential trips.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good overall and it has many important strengths. There are very positive relationships in classrooms, and clear boundaries are set. Learning objectives are shared with pupils effectively. Explanations and questioning are good in most lessons. Information and communication technology (ICT) and other resources are used well. Pupils show good attitudes to learning.

However, there are still some important areas for improvement to raise pupils' learning and progress. There is a lack of pace or challenge in a minority of lessons, especially for more capable learners. Closing plenary sessions are not always used well to assess pupils' learning.

The school has a good range of data on pupils' standards. However, this information is not used effectively to track pupils' progress and to tackle underachievement, by groups or individuals. As a result, its use is not as effective as it should be. Whilst there is some very good marking, this is not a consistent feature.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall. The Foundation Stage provides pupils with a sound start to their learning.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, with an important emphasis on practical and creative activities, which enhance the access and enjoyment of all pupils. The use of literacy and ICT skills across the curriculum is a positive feature. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is strong. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those in the dyslexia unit, is good. The learning environment is rich in terms of adult support, the quality of the new accommodation and in learning resources.

Participation levels are good in out of school activities, centred around sport but also including music and drama. There is a good range of visits and visitors, which play an important part in opening pupils' eyes to the wider world.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care for pupils. Child protection requirements and health and safety procedures are well established and understood by staff. Risk assessments are secure. Pupils confirm that they feel safe and well cared for. Every pupil is well known and treated as an individual and with dignity. Effective links with parents mean little time is lost in supporting pupils who are upset or experiencing short-term difficulties.

Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Learning support assistants are used effectively to help these pupils and track their progress. Pupils are becoming more involved in assessing their own learning, aided by personal targets, but this is not yet a consistent feature.

Adults use praise well when pupils show positive attitudes, politeness and consideration. These qualities serve pupils well in preparation for the next stages in school and the wider world.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school considers leadership and management to be good. Inspectors recognise that it has many strengths, but consider it to be satisfactory overall. This is a school where relationships are very good and where pupils develop impressive attitudes to learning in preparation for the next stages of education. Pupils enjoy school life and the good experiences that the curriculum provides; they like their teachers and take a pride in their work. Parents strongly endorse this positive view. The headteacher, staff and governors have worked hard to establish and maintain this strong ethos. The dyslexia unit enables a steady stream of pupils who join St Oswald's from other schools to gain self-confidence and make headway despite their difficulties. The school has taken effective action on points for improvement from the last inspection, particularly in up-grading ICT provision. Enormous improvement to facilities and the quality of life in the school has been achieved through the just completed total rebuilding. Staff and pupils are to be congratulated on their perseverance in living for a long time with the continuing disruptions of a building site. The headteacher has been tireless in bringing this project to fruition.

Many lessons are good and pupils make good progress at times. But both teaching quality and progress can be a little uneven. Over the last few months there have been improvements in planning teaching; for example, in mathematics for older pupils. Senior staff monitor lesson planning and teaching quality. Recently introduced assessment and tracking procedures are intended to identify pupils who are not achieving well enough. These quality control systems need strengthening.

The school takes the views of parents and pupils, and gives them due weight. Much of its analysis of its own strengths and weaknesses is securely based. Staff are working in close harmony to bring about further improvement. There is every indication that this will be successful.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We enjoyed our visit to your school and we are grateful to you for all the help you gave us when we visited lessons, talked with you in discussion groups, or met you around the school.

There are a lot of good things about your school. The headteacher and staff work really hard to do their best for you. You usually behave very well. You are keen to learn and, as you move through the school, you become very mature. You are well looked after by the staff. The way lessons are arranged is good: for instance, the afternoon of games for the older pupils and the extra work that some of the oldest get in mathematics. Teaching is usually good.

The excellent new buildings should enable everyone to do really well. Staff, governors, and particularly the headteacher have done their best to keep things running smoothly during the long period of rebuilding. St Oswald's has continued to be a happy school with a lot of progress being made in many lessons. But, in 2005, standards dropped a bit in the tests at age 11. We actually saw some good work in lessons for older pupils and in their books. But there are just a couple of things we would like the school to do to make sure that standards always stay as high as they should be.

- The school already keeps a check on how well you are doing; we think this could be improved.
- Most of the lessons we saw were good and the school is already doing quite a bit with the planning of lessons; we think a little more could be done to make sure that all lessons are as good as the best.

You are fortunate in being at such a happy school with excellent new buildings, and where most of you do nicely most of the time. We wish you well in the future.