

Westhoughton Parochial CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105237
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	287169
Inspection dates	19–20 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	192
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Bernadette Reynolds
Headteacher	Mr P Naylor
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2002
School address	The Fairways Westhoughton Bolton Lancashire BL5 3NZ
Telephone number	01942 634717
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is slightly smaller than average. It serves a socially mixed population in a small town to the west of Bolton. Smaller proportions of pupils than usual are eligible to receive a free school meal, have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or belong to minority ethnic groups. Since March 2007 the school has been part of the government-funded urban leadership programme.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Pupils are not achieving as much as they are capable of doing and the school's leadership has failed to take sufficient action to stem the downward trend in standards. These are broadly average at the end of Year 6 but this represents inadequate progress and achievement in relation to the well-above-average standards these pupils achieved at the end of Year 2. In 2006, standards at the end of Year 2 fell from above average to average and pupils here are currently working at broadly average levels. The main reason for the underachievement at Key Stage 2 and falling standards in Key Stage 1 is that senior leaders, subject coordinators and class teachers have failed to use the information that they gain through assessing pupils' work to monitor the progress the pupils are making and then take any necessary action. The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate because, too often, all pupils carry out the same work and therefore it proves too difficult for some and not challenging enough for others.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. The pupils are friendly, unfailingly polite and behave well but show few signs of independence and initiative. They act safely and understand that their health is related to what they eat and how much exercise they take. Pupils' positive attitudes and average basic skills mean they are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils and parents alike praise the pastoral care provided by the school. 'Since starting at Westhoughton Parochial 18 months ago, I feel that my child (in Key Stage 2) is genuinely cared for and is much happier and more confident,' is a typical parental comment. The school operates as a happy, supportive community but weaknesses in the academic guidance provided for pupils mean that the overall quality of care, guidance and support is only just satisfactory. The curriculum caters for pupils of all ages, including children in the Foundation Stage, in a satisfactory manner.

Leadership and management are inadequate. Until very recently, the school's unrealistic self-evaluation has been based more on the leadership's perception of its provision than on clear educational direction and analysis of the impact the school's provision had on the progress pupils were making. Purposeful guidance through the urban leadership programme has led to a growing understanding of what is required but the support is short-term and is too recent for it to be possible to judge the lasting outcomes. Consequently, the capacity of the leadership to take the school forward is not secure.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve progress to at least satisfactory levels for all groups of pupils.
- Ensure that school leaders at all levels provide clear educational direction to enable pupils to achieve as well as they can.
- Firmly establish effective systems through which to monitor and improve pupils' progress.
- Regularly review the progress that individuals are making through the year and take effective action when necessary.
- Ensure that teachers use the information they hold about individuals' standards and progress to good effect when planning and teaching lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

When children start school in the Reception class, their skills are broadly at the expected level for their age. They make satisfactory progress through the Foundation Stage so that the majority have reached the skills expected for their age by the time they start Year 1, and some exceed these. Progress is particularly good in children's knowledge and understanding of the world, which is a relative weakness when they start school. Until recently, pupils in Key Stage 1 often made good progress to reach above-average standards but now progress has slowed to satisfactory, with standards having slipped from above average to broadly average in the last two years.

After a number of years of above-average standards, national test results at the end of Key Stage 2 fell in both 2005 and 2006. The drop in English in 2006 was particularly marked, with below-average proportions of pupils gaining either the expected level or the higher level for their age in this subject. Compared to their standards at the end of Year 2, these pupils made inadequate progress between Years 3 and 6. The school failed by a wide margin to reach its targets. The current picture of standards and achievement in Key Stage 2 is similar. Standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average but a significant number of pupils do not make as much progress as they should. Of the current Year 6, in English and mathematics, around one third of pupils of all abilities have made less than the expected progress since Year 2; about half have made the minimum expected progress; and only a small minority have moved forward at a faster rate. Pupils' progress whilst in Year 6 has been stronger in mathematics than in reading or writing.

The school predicts that the end of Key Stage 2 results will show a considerable improvement in 2007.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Consistent messages throughout the day ensure that the pupils have an understanding of right and wrong and how their actions can have an impact on others. Through the curriculum and a developing link with a nearby school that has more pupils belonging to minority ethnic groups, they are beginning to gain an appreciation of other cultures and beliefs. Pupils enjoy school, as demonstrated by their above-average attendance. They form good relationships and generally behave well but they are compliant rather than inventive. They particularly enjoy the adventure area in the grounds, where they play safely and amicably. Break-time fruit is popular and around a third of pupils in Years 5 and 6 participate in weekly extra-curricular football activities. Older pupils dutifully carry out their responsibilities as prefects and play leaders and all pupils raise funds and support those less fortunate than themselves. There is no school council but, much to their satisfaction, pupils' recent suggestions have led to the replacement of paper towels by hand-dryers to help keep the toilets tidy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The overall quality of teaching is not sufficiently strong to raise the levels of pupils' achievement. Teachers plan lessons diligently but, throughout the school, most do not use the extensive assessment data available to them well enough to provide challenge for different abilities. Much of pupils' work is completed on photocopied sheets. Teachers' questioning of pupils is not generally probing enough and it does not always allow pupils sufficient opportunity to extend their answers. Their marking seldom provides comments designed to move pupils' learning forward. Most teachers form good relationships with their pupils and manage behaviour well, sometimes in very cramped conditions, so that lessons run smoothly and pupils collaborate well. Teachers generally make the purpose of the lesson clear so that pupils know what is expected of them and they ensure there is time at the end for pupils to recap and consolidate what they have learnt. Pupils say they particularly enjoy opportunities to play games and this was seen to good effect in Year 1, where the teacher skilfully adapted the difficulty of questions during a fast-moving session of 'number splat'. Where teaching assistants are well informed, as demonstrated in a Year 3 reading session, they work well with pupils, but their time is not always used sufficiently purposefully.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

From the Reception class to Year 6, the curriculum is suitably planned to develop pupils' basic skills, with a strong emphasis placed on literacy and numeracy. The recent inclusion of French for Year 3, to be continued as pupils move through Key Stage 2, brings an added richness. Visitors and visits, for example Year 5's imminent trip to Llandudno in connection with their work in geography, enhance the quality of pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy a range of extra-curricular activities which involve good links with other schools. The school is well resourced to promote pupils' skills in information and communication technology skills but their use of these across the curriculum is limited. Art is a regular feature of work and pupils produce some good quality water colour pictures, such as the Year 6 work on people in motion.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are very confident to approach staff with any problems because they know that they will receive help to sort them out. These supportive relationships mean that pupils feel happy and carefree in school and, therefore, grow in confidence. This is identified by pupils, parents and staff as one of its strongest features. Systems are in place to safeguard pupils and ensure their health, safety and well-being. The recent review of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has led to more pupils than before being identified as needing extra help or greater challenge. The records held are more detailed than before but it is too early to be able to judge the impact this will have. Weaknesses in the academic guidance for pupils have contributed to the pupils' slow rate of progress. The absence until very recently of individual targets, combined with a lack of guidance in teachers' marking, means that pupils are not clear enough about what steps to take in order to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The school's leadership and management want the best for pupils but are not displaying adequate skills to identify how to obtain this. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and sound financial management ensures that current funds are spent appropriately. However, because its provision is not sufficiently strong to ensure that pupils achieve well enough, the school is not providing satisfactory value for money.

The decline in levels of achievement since 2004, especially the sharp drop in English in 2006, came as an unpleasant surprise to the school because it made inadequate use of the data it holds about pupils to highlight their slow rate of progress. Nobody has maintained an overview of progress year on year and even the individual education plans of some pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have remained incomplete. Until very recently, the senior management team met infrequently to discuss how the school should develop. Subject leaders have no clear job description outlining their responsibilities. Governors have failed to ask the challenging questions through which to hold the school closely to account.

Since the school's request to be involved in the much appreciated urban leadership programme, the understanding of leaders at all levels is growing. They are now more sharply aware of the importance of pupils' achievement and the impact that all their actions have on this. The priorities for development are clearer, as are the methods most likely to bring about improvement. However, the external support is short-term and too recent to have had an impact on pupils' achievement. Past weaknesses in monitoring, evaluation and action cast doubts upon the school's ability to move forward as it should.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

Mr Halford and I enjoyed visiting your school recently and would like to thank you for your warm welcome. Particular thanks should go to those of you who talked with us in lessons, on the playground or more formally and helped us to understand what it is like to be a pupil at Parochial.

We found that all staff work well to help you feel comfortable in school and able to share any concerns with them. Because of this you form good relationships and behave well. Those of you with whom we spoke all said that you enjoy school, and many of you particularly like playing on the tyre and pencil parks. It is good that the school takes your views into account - how sensible of you to think that having hand-dryers rather than paper towels would help to keep the toilets tidy.

We also found that many aspects of the school need to improve so as to make sure that you all achieve as well as you able to in your work. To do this we have asked the senior staff and governors to provide a clear sense of direction and to use the information they have about your standards of work to keep track of how much progress you are making and decide on future actions. Your class teachers also need to make sure that they use the information well when they are planning activities to cater for your different needs, asking you questions and helping you to understand how to improve your work.

We have judged that the school needs 'special measures'. This means that it will have regular support to make sure that you have the quality of education that you deserve. Inspectors will also return quite soon to check that the school is making progress. I expect that you are likely to be as friendly towards them as you were to us. I hope that you will work really hard with your teachers so that your rate of progress speeds up and you learn all sorts of interesting new things.

Please accept my very best wishes for the future.