



Old Earth Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107530
Local Authority Calderdale
Inspection number 287841
Inspection dates 10–11 October 2006
Reporting inspector Marie Cordey

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

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| Type of school | Primary | School address | Lower Edge Road |
| School category | Community | | Elland |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 | | West Yorkshire HX5 9PL |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01422 375316 |
| Number on roll (school) | 350 | Fax number | 01422 370584 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Ms Kate Thornton |
| | | Headteacher | Mr Paul Reynolds |
| Date of previous school inspection | 19 March 2001 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Old Earth is a larger than average school close to the town of Halifax. Most children's attainment is broadly average when they start school. The vast majority of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school holds many prestigious awards including: Investor in Pupils status and Activemark Gold as well as being a Healthy Eating School. The school has gone through a troubled patch with tragic circumstances affecting the headteacher and several staff prior to the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Old Earth is a good and improving school. Following tragic circumstances that significantly affected the school, the trend of underperformance in 2003 to 2005 has been halted and standards are now above average. This has happened because of the inspirational leadership of the headteacher who is very well supported by the deputy headteacher. He has united the school community in his drive for improvement. Parents overwhelmingly support the school and recognise his significant contribution. He has 'changed this school out of all recognition' and 'is just as fantastic with the parents as he is with the children' were just some of their comments. A small number of parents want to see further improvements for higher-attaining pupils and the school recognises that this is a high priority.

Pupils in the Foundation Stage make good progress and get a very good start to their school life because they are well taught, looked after and nurtured. Broadly average skills when children join the Nursery improve to above average when they leave Reception. Outstanding teaching in the Reception class results in children gaining high levels of skill. They can analyse rhyme schemes in poems and find examples of alliteration. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils continue to make good progress and build effectively on the skills previously learned because of effective teaching, focused lesson planning and an innovative, good curriculum. Work is generally well matched to the needs of pupils and they thrive on the attention paid to them as individuals. Small numbers of higher-attaining pupils do not achieve as well as others because they are insufficiently challenged.

Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development. The school is a warm, welcoming and inclusive community that produces confident, thoughtful and considerate pupils by the age of 11. It succeeds in its aim of 'placing children at the centre of learning, where they feel safe, work hard and are happy'. The school's memorial garden is typical of the school's family ethos and of being a community that values and celebrates its heritage. Most pupils are aware of their individual learning targets but are not sure exactly how to go about improving their work. The tracking of pupils' progress is in the early stages and the school is beginning to provide accurate analyses of pupils' achievement. Consequently, care, guidance and support are good and not outstanding as the school judges.

The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection and gives good value for money. The school understands its strengths and weaknesses and has good capacity to improve still further. Governance is strong and governors are very involved in the life of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more challenging activities and targets for the higher-attaining pupils to improve their performance.
- Help pupils to understand what exactly they need to do to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

After a period of underachievement, standards are now above average and progress is good. Pupils in the Foundation Stage make good progress compared to their starting points. Their standards are above those usually seen for pupils of their age. Standards for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 have improved to above average from an average starting point and have exceeded their challenging targets. Although pupils' skills in writing are lower than those in reading they have improved significantly in the last year. Standards for higher-attaining pupils in English, mathematics and science fell short of the school's targets in 2006. This is a key focus for school improvement and is included as a priority in the school's planning. Support for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well deployed and ensures that pupils make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school's ethos provides excellent spiritual development and an outstanding personal, social and health education programme ensures that social, emotional and cultural development is also of the highest quality. All pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons as demonstrated by the enthusiasm they bring to their work and their consistently good attendance. The school's outstanding gymnastics club and choir are typical examples of how pupils work together individually and in teams. In an assembly, Year 3 pupils gave an exceptional performance about the Ancient Greeks that delighted the many parents who witnessed it. The school's links with parents and the wider community are outstanding. As one parent commented, 'I am always made to feel welcome and important whenever I visit school.' Pupils are given an active voice in the work of the school and the Investors in Pupils award recognises this. The capable and conscientious school council has helped improve the school playground facilities. Outstanding contributions to the community include significant charity fund-raising.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good, including some outstanding teaching. The school's focus on raising standards in writing across the school is proving successful. Lessons are well planned to build on pupils' previous learning and teachers make it clear at the start of lessons what pupils are expected to learn. Staff at all levels have enthusiastically embraced the opportunities provided to extend their skills and expertise. Teaching and learning are also good in the Foundation Stage. The youngest children learn happily and enjoy their lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress. The school encourages pupils

to work together in groups and develops pupils' independent learning skills from an early age. By age 11, the majority of pupils are confident and resourceful in their learning. Higher-attaining pupils are not always provided with work that is sufficiently challenging and this slows their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. That for the children in the Nursery and Reception classes is very good and firmly based on the recommended areas of learning for children of that age. The school is innovative in continuing this approach for older pupils in Years 1 to 6. This results in a curriculum that promotes enjoyment and achievement well. Pupils in Year 2 enjoyed learning about washday in the past, practising both history and writing skills. The curriculum ensures good achievement in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. There is now good provision for information and communication technology, an improvement since the previous inspection. Because of good support, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their classmates. There is sometimes not enough challenge for higher-attaining pupils. The curriculum is well planned to ensure that pupils learn how to be physically, socially and emotionally healthy and to avoid potential risks. A particular strength is the secure and solid approach to beginning to learn about the world of work and managing money, preparing them well for the future.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good with some outstanding features. The interior of the school provides an outstandingly stimulating, warm and welcoming environment for its pupils. All pupils are clear about who they can turn to when they are upset or troubled and the school knows its individual pupils very well. Many older pupils act as 'Befrienders', forging friendships with younger and vulnerable pupils in the playground. Displays of pupils' work are beautifully presented and celebrate their achievements at all ages and abilities. The school has appropriate procedures for child protection and for safeguarding its pupils. Vulnerable pupils and those with additional needs are provided with good support. Not all pupils are aware of the standards they are working at and exactly how to improve their work. The system for tracking pupils' progress is beginning to provide reliable information about the progress they make.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and contribute to improved standards and high quality care for the pupils' well-being. Since their appointments, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked with all the staff at Old Earth to build up the performance of the school. This has been successful and is due to the outstanding ethos of respect and value deliberately fostered by senior staff. Parents overwhelmingly

support the school and praise the headteacher's contribution to the rise in standards. The headteacher and deputy headteacher continue to work effectively with all staff to create a collegiate approach and there is a good team spirit. Largely accurate self-evaluation has sharpened the school's focus on raising the pupils' standards. The performance of higher-attaining pupils, in particular, is at the heart of the school's improvement planning. Tracking of the pupils' progress is developing well and the school is well supported by the local authority. After a period when there were unfilled gaps, the governing body is now fully represented. Governors are challenging and keep the welfare of the pupils at heart.

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Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
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Overall effectiveness

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |

The quality of provision

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

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.

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we came to your school. You were very friendly and obviously delight in being at school. We think that this is a good school. The things we found to be good about your school are:

- the good teaching and progress you make
- the way the school is run by your headteacher and deputy headteacher
- that you are well looked after and excellently behaved; you and your parents think this is a very good school
- there are lots of activities to help you to learn.

To make your school even better these things will help:

- the school needs to make sure that you all know how you are doing in your work and what you need to do to make it better
- teachers need to give some of you more difficult work so that you can reach higher standards.

We hope you help your school to make these two changes.