



West Vale Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107573
Local Authority Calderdale
Inspection number 287857
Inspection dates 25–26 September 2006
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 address	Stainland Road
School category	Foundation		West Vale, Greetland
Age range of pupils	4–11		Halifax, West Yorkshire
			HX4 8LS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01422 372804
Number on roll (school)	140	Fax number	01422 311330
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs L Lynch
		Headteacher	Mrs P Tymchak
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–11	25–26 September 2006	287857

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school whose numbers vary considerably from year to year. A higher proportion of pupils than usual join or leave midway through their schooling and four of the six classes include pupils from two year groups. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Broadly average numbers have learning difficulties and an average proportion is eligible for a free school meal. Since the previous inspection the school has had to undertake much maintenance work on the building and forced reductions in staffing. The school gained the Active Sports Mark in 2004 and both the Healthy Schools Award and Investors in Pupils status in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

West Vale is a good school. It is particularly successful at helping each pupil to grow in self-esteem and, therefore, develop into a confident, mature young person. As a small school, its costs are relatively high and it provides satisfactory value for money. Pupils are extremely happy at school and understand how to make the best of the opportunities it offers them. They have a strong voice in all its developments, run their own clubs and show a mature understanding of others' needs. Those who know the school well have been very impressed by the impact that this empowering of pupils has had on helping to raise academic standards over recent years. With small numbers, the attainment on entry of different year groups varies considerably but overall, it is broadly average. For some years pupils did not achieve as well as they could but it is now quite a different picture. Pupils throughout the school make good progress and standards are broadly average. This is due to increasingly focused assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress which leads to swift action, providing extra support or challenge according to need. The good support for those with learning difficulties is mainly given in class which ensures that they do not miss out on vital aspects of the curriculum. There are very good systems in place to support the many pupils who arrive partway through their education.

Good quality teaching helps pupils develop good attitudes to learning and the skills to support their future education. They are very clear about what is expected of them and how to improve their work. The curriculum is good and firmly based on developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and personal skills; it is enriched with extra activities such as residential visits, school performances and clubs, as well as French for all. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is particularly imaginative but pupils of all ages find lessons interesting and they are keen to learn new things. With recent additions to resources, much helped by parental fundraising, teachers are making increasing use of information and communication technology (ICT) but they do not yet track the development of pupils' skills in this subject. Outstanding levels of care from all staff mean that every pupil knows that they are valued and have a contribution to make. Excellent relationships and a strong ethos of teamwork create a very positive atmosphere for learning. Clear-sighted and sensitive leadership, which combines strong management systems and high expectations with a sense of fun, have successfully led the school through difficult times. The school is far from complacent and has a very accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement, based on careful analysis of the current situation. It works in close partnership with a variety of agencies to enhance its provision and has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish systems to assess and monitor the development of pupils' skills in information and communication technology to make sure they achieve as well as they can.-

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception year with a very wide range of skills; some can already recognise numbers to ten or write their name independently, whereas others are just beginning to make marks and learning how to listen. The vibrant Foundation Stage environment encourages them to build well on their natural curiosity and to establish good learning habits that stand them in good stead for the rest of their education. During the school's unsettled period pupils in Years 3 to 6 failed to make sufficient progress. Now, in response to the focused efforts of all staff, those of different abilities are achieving well and the gap is narrowing between the levels gained by boys and girls. Test results and the school's ability always to reach its challenging targets are adversely affected by the unusually high mobility of pupils. However, pupils' work shows that, while standards are still broadly average, they are rising throughout the school. There was good improvement in the 2006 test results, particularly in the number of pupils gaining the higher levels in mathematics and science at the end of Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

In the happy, supportive community of West Vale, pupils develop as self-confident, thoughtful individuals who are very well equipped to contribute to the success of their future lives. Excellent relationships based on mutual respect ensure that pupils enjoy each other's company and behave very well. Playtimes are joyful, energetic occasions. A strong team spirit pervades the school, underpinned by pupils' excellent spiritual, moral and social development. Their cultural awareness is good. As their letters of thanks to helpers after their recent residential visit demonstrate, pupils are very self-aware and appreciative of others' efforts. 'Thank you for boosting my confidence,' wrote one, while another opened with, 'Thank you for giving up your time.' Pupils of all ages are proud of their school. They readily take on responsibilities, whether as 'sports leaders' or environmentally aware 'emerald greens', and the care shown to each other helps to create the family atmosphere that typifies the school. Most pupils' attendance is good. However, despite the school's vigorous efforts, overall levels are adversely affected by the frequent absence of a very few pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good quality teaching ensures that from the youngest upwards, pupils are very clear about what is expected of them and therefore learn well. Classroom routines are consistent throughout the school and highly effective management of pupils ensures that no time is wasted. Lessons usually run at a swift pace and skilful questioning encourages pupils to think hard. They listen and concentrate well and have the

confidence to ask for clarification if they do not understand. They find lessons interesting and comment that, 'you learn new things every day because teachers do not cover old ground unnecessarily'. Careful assessment of pupils' work and close monitoring of their progress in English, mathematics and science combined with very good support from teaching assistants means that work is well suited to different pupils' needs. Occasionally in lessons, teachers do not pick up sufficiently quickly on individuals' fundamental mistakes. Marking is regular and gives clear guidance on the next steps to take. Pupils are fully aware of how to improve their work and they make good use of the opportunities to assess their own and their neighbours' efforts.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is regularly reviewed to ensure that pupils in mixed age classes develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in a logical manner and in a way that is best suited to their needs. Good quality information provided for parents helps them to become involved in their children's learning. The Foundation Stage provision makes excellent use of the outdoor area, complete at this time of year with enticing cherry tomatoes and swelling pumpkins, to develop children's skills in all areas of learning. Elsewhere the strongest focus is, rightly, on literacy and numeracy but personal and health education forms a prominent part of every day, as demonstrated by the school's many awards. The provision for information technology has improved markedly in recent years but there is no framework yet to chart pupils' progress in this subject.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

'My children could not be cared for and educated in a better place.' This comment made by one parent typifies the delight, expressed by many, in the individual attention given to their children and the good levels of communication with staff. Procedures to ensure child protection and safety are firmly in place. Even the youngest children carefully hold the handrail when climbing the stairs. Older buddies thoughtfully support those in need. The warm welcome given to the many newcomers to the school helps them to settle swiftly. Lunchtimes are a delight with tasty, healthy food served by pupils at team tables and friendly midday assistants who supervise very well. The exceptionally high standards of care and support provided by all staff, including the good academic guidance for individuals, underpin the school's success, creating an environment in which pupils thrive.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Clear-sighted leadership combined with strong teamwork and a determination to provide the best for each pupil have guided the school through a difficult period to its current success. Good progress since the last inspection has been achieved despite the problems caused by an ageing building, forced reductions in staffing and the

intermittent arrival of some challenging pupils. All the school's work is founded on the principle that every child matters. Actions are only taken after careful evaluation of the current position and consultation with all those who have an interest. The school is very open to advice, for example, that offered when establishing its systems to monitor pupils' progress. These are now firmly embedded and helping to raise standards and achievement. The school is also sufficiently confident to use the information gained from its own self-evaluation and knowledge of pupils' needs to decide its course for future development. Recent improvements in the standards in mathematics justify its chosen methods to support pupils' learning in this subject. Curriculum leaders contribute fully to school improvement and carry out their responsibilities well. Governors are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, providing good support and challenge for the school. Administration and financial management are highly efficient; the school is sparklingly clean and runs like clockwork. This is because of the great value that is placed on the contribution that each member of the community can make and open communication that means everyone knows what is expected. One staff member's evaluation that the school is 'getting to a place where it can improve things, not just sort them out' is entirely accurate.

Inspection judgements

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

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?	2
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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

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	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	1

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?	1

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

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	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

I thoroughly enjoyed my recent visit to your school and would like to thank you for the very warm welcome that you gave me. Your openness helped me to build up a good picture of what it is like to be a pupil at West Vale and why it is that you are all so happy there. Here is a list of the particularly good things about your school.

- Your teachers take very good care of you and help you to understand that each of you is special and has something to contribute to the community.
- You like each other's company and behave very well.
- Playtimes and lunchtimes are really enjoyable with lots of healthy things to do and eat.
- Your teachers make very clear to you what they expect and you understand how to improve your work.
- You try hard and are making good progress with your work so standards in the school are rising.
- Lessons are interesting and pupils in Class 1 have a particularly good time in their outdoor area.
- Your headteacher and other staff have a very clear understanding of what needs to improve and how to make it happen.
- Everyone works together extremely well, making a good learning environment.

This is what the school needs to do next to make it even better.

- Make sure that your ICT skills are developing as well as those in English, mathematics and science.

Your job will be to continue to make the most of all the opportunities that the school offers you.