



St Mary's Church of England Controlled Primary School Boston Spa

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107997
Local Authority Leeds
Inspection number 287989
Inspection dates 20–21 September 2006
Reporting inspector Terry McDermott

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Clifford Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Boston Spa, Wetherby
Age range of pupils	4–11		West Yorkshire LS23 6DB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01937 844395
Number on roll (school)	96	Fax number	01937 841304
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Paul Heaton
		Headteacher	Mrs J Alexander
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school is in the town of Boston Spa to the east of Wetherby. It serves an area of social and economic advantage. Attendance is above the national average. There are no children with statements of educational need. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Very few pupils claim free school meals. The headteacher has been in post since Easter 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It gives good value for money because the pupils achieve well and reach standards in English, mathematics and science which are well above the national average when they leave the school at the end of Key

Stage 2.

Its strongly Christian ethos is based firmly upon giving help and consideration to others and this creates an atmosphere of togetherness. Behaviour around the school is excellent. This is regularly demonstrated as older pupils willingly take responsibility for ensuring that younger pupils are well looked after and fairly treated in and around the school at playtimes and at lunchtime. The children's behaviour is good inside the classroom because their enthusiasm to answer questions sometimes overrides their politeness and patience. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Children speak enthusiastically and with a clear sense of wonder at their involvement in the hand rearing of a baby lamb, of their discovery of fossil remains on the North Yorkshire coast and of their exchange with pupils from an inner city multi-ethnic primary school. Links with outside agencies and other schools are good. These help the pupils to gain perspectives on the world beyond their immediate environment and give them additional access to specialist teaching for physical education and music.

Teaching and learning are good. Knowledgeable and dedicated teachers plan their work well to ensure that the learning needs of all pupils are met. This ensures that no pupils underachieve. All classes in Key Stages 1 and 2 are shared between pairs of teachers who work part time. This creates inconsistencies in the quality of marking and pupils do not always know with enough clarity what they need to do to improve. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are of high quality and prepare pupils well for transfer into Key Stage 1. A good curriculum ensures that pupils can always find something to interest them. The day to day work of the school is significantly strengthened by residential visits, trips to museums and sites of geographical and historical relevance. In addition, pupils compete to gain entry to the school choir which has a significant local reputation. The school collects reliable information on the levels at which pupils are working.

Among other strengths of the school are the very high levels of care, support and guidance that children receive from staff. These are very important features in ensuring that all pupils, including some newly arrived in this country, make good progress. Though the headteacher is relatively new leadership and management of the school are good. She is ably supported by middle managers who were prepared, as one governor said, to, 'step up to the plate', when the school experienced significant staffing issues and changes in leadership in recent times. The small size of the school means that leaders and managers have not had sufficient time in their working day to establish a process for checking directly on how effectively pupils are learning in all lessons, though this is done indirectly through well established tracking procedures. Though monitoring by the headteacher has begun recently, it is not yet systematic.

Other methods of evaluation are used, but self-evaluation is only satisfactory at present. The school is in a good position to move forward because leadership, middle management and governance are effective and knowledgeable.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that leaders and managers check directly on how well teaching is helping pupils to learn.
- Mark work helpfully and consistently so that pupils know better what they have to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school with standards which are normally above average, though this can vary significantly due to the small cohort size. All children achieve well in lessons and make good progress. By the end of the Reception Year, most children have reached the early learning goals in most aspects of learning. All children make good progress in speaking, listening, reading and mathematics throughout Years 1 to 6. This is the result of good teaching. In writing, children's progress is relatively weaker, though still above average.

In 2005, pupils in Year 6 reached standards well above the national average at the higher grades in English, mathematics and science. These results are reflected in the latest test results in 2006. Though there are no children with statements in the school, children with other learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they have well focused individual education plans. Children who join the school later, such as recent immigrants from Thailand, settle in well and make good progress thanks to the good and innovative levels of care and support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children have very positive attitudes towards school and enjoy talking about the things they do. They work hard in lessons and share and cooperate with each other very well. Children understand right from wrong and behave well in lessons, in the playground and around the school. They are polite and courteous to each other and to visitors. They understand the importance of healthy eating and the benefits of regular exercise. They learn how to work together and have recently helped to raise several hundred pounds towards the development of their excellent adventure playground. Children are proud to be members of the school council. They understand that they have been elected to help other children and suggest improvements to the school's provision. They were heard to say, 'It's because of us that we are more healthy because we eat fruit instead of crisps!' Attendance is above average and has been so for many years. The school is working towards the Healthy Schools award.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers manage the children well, and the good behaviour and excellent relationships evident in classrooms ensure that children concentrate well. Many opportunities are provided for children to discuss ideas with partners and these help their speaking, listening and learning skills, though excessive time spent 'on the mat' sometimes slows learning. Interactive whiteboards have had a positive impact on teaching and help to bring learning to life for the children, especially in motivating boys. Effective teaching assistants provide good support for individuals and small groups of children. A key strength of the teaching in the Foundation Stage is teamwork; the children receive very good help from adults, who engage them in conversation to promote their communication skills and challenge their thinking. Good systems are in place to assess and track children's progress throughout the school. However, children would benefit from being more familiar with their individual targets in writing than they are currently. The marking of work is inconsistent because almost all classes have two part time teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets requirements and is well planned and organised to meet the needs of all the children in the school. High quality plans for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are linked closely to work covered in lessons, so all children are fully included in all the activities. The tasks set for children build on what they have already achieved and promote basic learning skills as well as providing factual knowledge. The school is working successfully to link together subjects of the curriculum in a creative manner by using its very good information and communication technology (ICT) facilities to best effect. This fires the children's imagination and is beginning to help them learn independently. Pupils in Year 1 work independently on the computers to improve their phonic and reading skills. Work in the classroom is complemented by the wide range of other activities that enrich the curriculum well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's care for its children is good. It takes its responsibilities in safeguarding pupils very seriously. All staff are sensitive to children's feelings and anxieties, particularly those of the most vulnerable. They take particular care to include all children in every aspect of school life. This is clearly demonstrated through the effective use of the 'worry box' and a step out facility, 'the Rainbow Room', for pupils who feel disturbed. Teachers and other adults strongly promote learning in groups and pairs so that children take and demonstrate joint responsibility for what they do. Children are supervised well both in and out of school, with detailed risk assessments available

where needed. The school provides a secure, healthy working environment, ensuring that external agencies are promptly referred to as and when required. A long standing and well understood system records and tracks the progress that pupils make, but this is not used well enough in making changes in the curriculum or in the planning of teaching.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. The new and dynamic headteacher has inherited an able group of middle managers and has quickly reinvigorated their enthusiasm. The whole team sets the tone for the school and provides very good care, support and guidance for the children. The school's procedures to check on how well it is doing, both through observation of teaching and whole school self-evaluation, have only recently been introduced. School improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory; the impressive developments in ICT have not been matched with improvements in developing pupils' writing. Parents rightly have very positive views about the school, which seeks their views through formal consultation and informal face to face meetings. An active Parents Association makes significant contributions to improving the environment for learning. The governing body is knowledgeable and dedicated, and members give their time generously. They provide good challenge and support for the headteacher through their streamlined committee structure. They meet their responsibilities well.

The school has good capacity to improve because it has dynamic leadership, effective governance and dedicated and caring management.

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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	3
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	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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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

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 very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I was really impressed with your friendliness and good behaviour, your very sensible and helpful attitudes towards each other and how well you do in your work.

Here are some more of the really good things I found about your school:

- the adults in school look after you very well and make sure that you are safe and happy
- lessons are good and your teachers work hard to give you interesting and exciting things to learn about
- those of you who have difficulty in learning are given very good help and support to make progress.

However, I think that some of you could do even better, particularly by not getting over excited in lessons and calling out answers. I think the school can also help you to get better by:

- being more consistent in marking your work so that you know more clearly how you could get better.

I could see that you work hard already, but you must continue to do so. Thank you once more for the help you gave me and for your warm welcome. I wish you all good luck for the future.