



Kirkstall St Stephen's Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108043
Local Authority Leeds
Inspection number 288009
Inspection date 8 November 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	Morris Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Leeds
Age range of pupils	4-11		West Yorkshire LS5 3JD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0113 2144630
Number on roll (school)	181	Fax number	0113 2144631
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Sue Brear
		Headteacher	Mr Ian Blackburn
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The independently run pre-school and before and after school clubs were inspected at the same time but have different reports.

Description of the school

This is a small school that serves a built up area of mixed housing. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is higher than average. Broadly average numbers have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or belong to minority ethnic groups. Unusually high numbers of pupils arrive at or leave the school partway through their education. In September 2006, the school received an influx of pupils from a neighbouring school that had closed. It holds the Activemark, Basic Skills Award, Healthy Schools Standard Level 1 and Investors in People Award. The headteacher took up his post in September 2006 after one year as deputy headteacher and one year as acting headteacher. The deputy headteacher joined the school in October 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 and improving school. It operates as a harmonious community where people get on well together, care for one another and learn to respect differences. Children greatly enjoy their time in school and are eager to share their experiences with others. They are tolerant and thoughtful of others' needs and very keen to offer help. However, despite the great majority of parents' support for the school, attendance levels and the punctuality of a small number of children are not good enough.

Children achieve well to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6, although until recently progress has been patchy through the school. Standards are also affected by the relatively high mobility levels. The youngest children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage but the great majority still enter Year 1 with skills, particularly in their personal development and ability to communicate, that are below those expected for their age.

Lively teaching across the school, with very good use of information and communication technology (ICT), means that pupils are interested in learning and try hard, which helps them to make good progress. They say that work is fun. Teachers' marking is supportive but until very recently there have been no effective systems in place through which to assess the standards at which pupils are working or to monitor their progress. The school complies with requirements about assessing children's attainment on entry, but the assessments are not sufficiently secure to provide a useful basis to inform planning or establish children's progress while in the Reception class.

Staff provide good role models for children and give them good quality care, guidance and support. One boy commented that the best thing about the school is that the teachers are happy! The interesting curriculum, that is particularly strong in physical education and relevant to the children's own experiences, helps them to make sense of their learning.

The headteacher has only been permanently in post since the beginning of September. Over the past year, with no acting deputy headteacher to provide support, he has moved the school forward, basing his actions firmly on good evaluation of the current situation. He leads the school well and brings out the best in both staff and children while being prepared to take hard decisions. The school has a very accurate view of its strengths and where it needs to improve. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. With strong governors and a deputy headteacher who in her short time in post has already made a difference, the school provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish secure on entry assessment procedures for the Reception class and act on the findings.
- Put to full use the newly created systems through which to assess and track children's progress.
- Work with parents to raise attendance levels and improve punctuality.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children's skills when they enter the Reception class are below average overall and particularly weak in their mathematical understanding and their ability to communicate and relate with others. Very few children have skills that are above those expected for their age. The end of Year 2 results in 2005 and 2006 were below average in reading, writing and mathematics, although children made good progress while in Year 2. Children of all abilities are currently achieving well throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 because teachers have high expectations and make children want to learn.

The 2005 Year 6 results were above average in all three subjects with a spectacular improvement in English standards that placed the school among the top 10% in the country for pupils' achievement in this subject. However, after a steady rise over the previous five years, standards dropped to broadly average in all three subjects in 2006. This decline was predicted by the school and is accounted for in part by the poor attitudes to work of some pupils and above average levels of both pupil and staff mobility. Pupils have good skills in information and communications technology because they use it as an integral part of their learning in all subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children correctly highlight the school's friendliness as one of its strengths and they appreciate the fact that, as one commented, 'everyone helps each other'. They are polite, thoughtful and behave well both in lessons and around school. Playtimes are happy times, despite the difficult outside layout, because they are well organised and older children involve younger ones in active games. Children of all ages are happy to take on responsibilities and the school council plays a prominent part in school life. Members' requests have led to, for instance, the availability of water during lessons and refurbishment of the toilets. Children show interest in and respect for others and the environment, for example, automatically disposing of fruit peel in the compost bin. Discussions in lessons, such as that of Year 5 when learning about racism and the power of the individual to effect change, help them to grow in tolerance and understanding of their place in the community. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, underpinned by the school's strong Christian aims and staff's good role models. They are generous supporters of charity and through, for example, devising ways of raising funds to buy playground equipment, have good economic awareness.

The attendance is satisfactory overall. Most pupils attend well but, despite the school's efforts, the children of a small number of families attend very irregularly. Although punctuality is improving, too many children still arrive late in the morning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good quality teaching ensures that children enjoy learning and want to succeed. Some younger children in particular need much encouragement to sustain their concentration and become active participants in lessons. However, teachers have high expectations, plan a good variety of activities that capture children's interest and lessons move at a good pace so little time is wasted. They use ICT unusually well as a tool for learning. In two English lessons in Key Stage 2, images and sounds on the interactive whiteboard acted as an excellent stimulus for writing. Children's spiritual development was well promoted too, as they realised the big impact that different soundtracks could have on their own perceptions of the same scene. Teaching assistants provide good support and help to sustain the positive working atmosphere that is evident in every classroom. Teachers mark children's work supportively and provide some comments about how to improve their work that children appreciate. They provide work that is suitably adapted for children's different abilities. However, they have yet to make full use of the recently introduced systems through which to assess and monitor individuals' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum includes all the required areas and is well adapted to make it relevant to the children's needs and interests. ICT forms an integral part of learning across a wide range of subjects and there is good attention paid to personal and health education. For example, in an ICT lesson, Year 2 children used their research skills very effectively to discover a wide range of facts about the impact of diet and exercise on the body. Skilfully led small group sessions help those struggling with basic skills to make progress in an environment where they can feel pleased with their achievements. From Year 2 upwards, all children learn French. Strong sporting links with other schools, centres and professional clubs mean that provision to support pupils' physical development and health awareness is good. This is despite the lack of suitable outdoor accommodation, which also has an impact on the access that Foundation Stage children have to all areas of learning in a larger, outside context. A good range of very popular extra clubs as well as visitors and visits, including a residential experience for Year 6, make sure that children thoroughly enjoy their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

'The children are in an environment where they can blossom and air their views on even the smallest matters and know these will be listened to.' One parent's comment echoes the feelings of the overwhelming majority of those who volunteered an opinion. Children, too, feel very well supported and say, for instance, that bullying is rare

because it is quickly sorted by staff and they can express any concerns to Year 6 Problem Palz. This successful initiative was instigated by children themselves, two years ago. The learning mentor provides another good source of support for children who feel vulnerable and also for those who find self-discipline difficult to achieve. Arrangements to ensure child protection and health and safety are securely in place. Partnerships with outside agencies such as speech therapists underpin the good support provided for children with learning difficulties that helps them make progress towards the targets in their individual education or behaviour plans. Routines such as using the thumbs up sign in lessons help children to assess their own learning and some now also have class and group targets that help them understand what they need to do next to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's leadership and management has been in a state of flux over the past year but, despite this, various weaker areas have been identified and effective action taken, for example, improving the quality of teaching and children's progress in Key Stage 1. The headteacher provides very clear strategic direction, a good role model as subject leader and has the gift of helping others to take on change in a positive frame of mind. The views of all stakeholders contribute towards decision-making and, equally, staff are becoming more accountable for provision and standards in their areas of responsibility. Under the very good guidance of its coordinator, the provision for ICT has moved on significantly since the previous inspection with a new suite, interactive whiteboards in all classrooms, a regularly updated curriculum and good staff training. Much hard work has gone into developing the school's new assessment and tracking systems. However, the full potential to guide provision and teachers' planning is not being exploited sufficiently well to ensure all children make the progress of which they are capable. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis and all staff contribute to the strong sense of teamwork. Resources are used well. Governors are well informed, supportive and fully prepared to challenge decisions that they consider are not in the children's best interests. With its good powers of self-evaluation, record of effecting improvement and permanent senior management team in place, the school is well poised to improve further.

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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	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	2
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 being so welcoming towards me when I visited you recently. You helped me enjoy my day in your school and also helped me to understand what it is like to be a pupil at Kirkstall St Stephen's. You were right when you told me that it is a good school. Here is a list of some of its best features:

- you enjoy coming to school and taking part in all the activities
- you are friendly, thoughtful and behave well
- staff look after you well and you know that your thoughts will be listened to
- your teachers plan interesting lessons and help you understand how to improve your work
- everyone in school uses ICT really well so that lessons are lively and you are well prepared for the next stage of your education
- through clubs and lessons such as French, you have plenty of opportunities to learn more than just the basics
- your headteacher is very good at getting the best out of everyone and knowing how to improve things.

This is what your headteacher and staff need to do next to make the school even better:

- establish with certainty children's skills when they enter the Reception class
- use the information about your progress that they can gain from the new assessment procedures to make sure that your individual needs are catered for even more closely
- work with your parents to make sure that you all attend school punctually and regularly.

Your job will be to continue to enjoy school and learning new things, and to try your best to attend every day.