



Skelton Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121335
Local Authority York
Inspection number 292084
Inspection date 6 February 2007
Reporting inspector Wendy Ripley HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Brecksfield
School category	Community		Skelton, York
Age range of pupils	4–11		North Yorkshire YO30 1YB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01904 470344
Number on roll (school)	104	Fax number	01904 470344
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Eileen Wilks
		Headteacher	Mr Mark Halliday
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
4–11	6 February 2007	292084

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Skelton is a smaller than average primary school in a village to the north of York. Most children join the school with positive attitudes to learning and skill levels that are broadly in line with national expectations. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Nearly all pupils are of White British background. The proportion of children from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below that found nationally and there are no pupils who have English as an additional language.

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 which provides a warm, welcoming and supportive environment for its pupils. Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher leads by example and, supported by the leadership team, governors and the local authority, he has provided a clear focus and strong vision which has had a major impact on raising the quality of provision. As a result the school has a justifiably high reputation within the local community. The overwhelming majority of parents are supportive and appreciative of the school which provides good care and support for the pupils and prepares them well for the future.

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, attain high standards. They achieve well as they progress throughout all stages of the school. The school has high expectations but recognises that a very small number of more able Key Stage 2 pupils are still not being challenged sufficiently to make as much progress as they might, particularly in English and mathematics. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good with some exemplary features and as a result children progress to Key Stage 1 with a love of learning. Teaching is good overall with some elements of outstanding practice. This maintains pupil's enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning although the outdoor play area as a learning environment for the Foundation Stage children is underdeveloped. Rigorous assessment and tracking of pupils' progress are strengths of the school. Pupils are clear about their own progress and learning goals. Teachers' marking of work clearly indicates where they might improve. The curriculum is well planned to cater for mixed age classes because it takes account of pupils' individual learning needs.

Pupils' personal development is good and the high quality of the provision and the care, guidance and support they receive contributes hugely to this. Pupils are confident and polite and they show great concern and consideration for others. Their attendance and behaviour in lessons and around school is good.

Pupils report that they enjoy coming to school because they like learning and playtimes when they are with their friends. They feel safe and trust the adults in their school. They also say that they know that their teachers work hard to make sure they do as well as they can in lessons and to make sure that they have different activities to do after school. Sports, music and gardening club were reported as particularly popular.

The school has satisfactorily addressed the area for improvement raised at the last inspection. The large surplus budget has been used prudently to ensure improved provision for pupils. Some of the surplus was used to enable more teaching assistant time to support groups of pupils and individuals in the classroom. The impact of this can be seen for example, in the good and sometimes exceptional progress pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make. Some of the surplus was used to enhance the accommodation, so that from September 2006 pupils have benefited from enhanced security and safeguarding arrangements, a new entrance, new classrooms and resource rooms as well as a dedicated medical/care facility. Pupils are proud of these new facilities and reported how much they have improved the school. Like the staff, pupils

are also keen to see their parents and the local community make use of these new facilities in the near future and can see the benefits this will bring to their learning and to Skelton.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure more able pupils are challenged in their learning, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Improve the Foundation Stage outdoor play area so that it provides more learning opportunities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are high throughout the school. Children enter the school with positive attitudes to learning and skills levels that are broadly in line with national expectations. Children get off to a good start in the Reception Year. This is because teaching and support for this age group promotes and encourages learning so that children make good progress throughout the Foundation Stage. Attainment levels on entry to Key Stage 1 are above local authority and national averages in all aspects of the Foundation Stage Profile.

All groups of pupils continue to make good progress as they move through the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and /or disabilities make good, and in some cases exceptional progress, particularly in mathematics, because of the effective use of teaching assistants, targeted support and booster provision.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are good and show an improving trend since 2002. Pupils achieve above national and local authority expectations in reading, mathematics and particularly in writing. More able children perform well overall, although the school has identified a need to raise the performance of more able pupils in mathematics and has introduced a number of strategies to address this which is beginning to have an impact.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are good and pupils make good progress. In recent years pupils have consistently exceeded local authority targets and national expectations. Results in 2006 were in line with expected levels although there was a slight drop in the schools' performance compared to previous years. This reflects a larger than usual number of children identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities in this group.

The school has high expectations and recognises that a very small number of more able Key Stage 2 pupils are still not being challenged sufficiently to make as much progress as they might.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, is good and it is a strength of the school. This is because of the wide range of opportunities the school provides for pupils to develop their personal skills and the positive ethos it promotes. The result is a warm and welcoming atmosphere throughout the school, good attendance, good behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, and very good relationships between all members of the school community. Pupils' self-esteem is high. They are confident, courteous and friendly when talking to adults and each other and have a very clear sense of care, concern and respect for others. Pupils' enjoyment of school is demonstrated by their positive attitudes towards learning. They are attentive in lessons, work hard and have a clear understanding of their own progress and goals and what they need to do to improve.

Pupils know about the importance of keeping fit and have developed an understanding of what is required to live a healthy life. Pupils report positively and enthusiastically about the very good range of sports available to them. In addition they can choose to do a range of other activities such as gardening club and music lessons.

Pupils make a positive contribution to the school and are supported well so that they develop into mature, well balanced and responsible young people. They welcome opportunities which enable them to make a contribution to the life of the community. This is exemplified by their enthusiastic preparation for the 'pyjama day', raising funds for the charity the pupils themselves chose to support through the school council. A number of older pupils were observed volunteering to help younger children participate in the 'golden mile' challenge at lunchtimes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good in all respects and there are some significant examples of exemplary practice in all stages. As a result teaching is mostly very effective, pupils thrive and enjoy learning. The pace of lessons is well-judged to maintain attention and interest. Lessons are well planned and prepared and activities are tailored to suit most pupils' needs and abilities. However some higher attaining pupils are not set activities that challenge them enough in English and mathematics. Explanations and instructions in lessons are very clear and highly effective in promoting learning, developing pupils' understanding of language and widening their vocabulary. Teachers use questions very effectively to enable pupils to think and to check on what they have understood. This ensures that any problems are quickly tackled. Interactive whiteboards and other aspects of information and communication technology are used appropriately to make lessons interesting and exciting. Marking is consistent and of a high quality. It is used effectively to guide the pupils to improve their work. The management of pupils'

behaviour is very good and leads to a lively, enthusiastic and purposeful working atmosphere.

Tracking childrens' learning and development throughout the Foundation Stage is systematic and robust, ensuring individual progress is monitored closely. This enables children's strengths and weaknesses to be identified and addressed through well targeted activities. Very good quality teaching and carefully planned work ensure children achieve well in all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum and develop a love of learning, although the outdoor play area as a learning environment is underdeveloped.

There are good transition arrangements between all the stages of learning because of the close and effective working relationships throughout the school. This ensures that children feel secure and ready to move on so that they enter the next stage very well prepared for subsequent learning.

Rigorous approaches to assessment are robust and well embedded throughout the school. Class teachers and subject coordinators assess pupil progress rigorously on a termly basis. This supports progress monitoring in all subjects and ensures that each pupil receives personalised learning and individual targets. Individual education plans are attractively illustrated, highly personal to each pupil and written in language with they understand. As a result each pupil is clear about what their plan is for, what they and adults supporting them need to do, and ensures they can contribute meaningfully to their own reviews.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curriculum provision is good. It is broad, well balanced and meets statutory requirements. Personal, social and health education, citizenship and 'good works' assemblies cater well for pupils' personal development. There is a consistent whole school approach to curriculum planning as well as to monitoring, tracking and evaluating its delivery. This ensures that both curriculum content and delivery are flexible and responsive to the demands of the mixed age classes the school operates. As a result teachers are very effective at fine tuning their lesson content to meet the needs and interests of each individual pupil including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers ensure that pupils experience the full range of subjects and they provide a very good range of additional activities. Good use of financial resources enables the school to buy in specialist sports and music provision. Extra-curricular activities vary throughout the year, so that despite the small number of staff in the school to run additional activities, there is usually something that most pupils would like to join in with. Parents and pupils report being very appreciative of the range of opportunities the school provides and know that they have such choice because of the dedication of the staff.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Adults carefully monitor pupils' personal development and academic progress. Staff know their pupils well and are equally quick to identify and support academic and personal needs, working well with other agencies when appropriate. The recently appointed learning mentor provides good, targeted, additional support for pupils' academic and personal needs. The voluntary support provided by the able, gifted and talented mentor, who is a qualified accountant, makes a good and highly valued contribution to the development of skills to underpin the future economic well-being of higher ability pupils.

Academic guidance is rigorous and consistent. The marking of pupils' work is good. Teachers provide guidance which helps pupils to understand how to improve. Pupils are increasingly being involved in evaluating their own work. The use of data and information is a strength of the school and is making a strong contribution to raising standards. Pupil tracking is very effective. This enables the school to review the performance of individual children in considerable detail and to plan their work accordingly. Arrangements for safeguarding, including those for child protection and to ensure that adults in contact with pupils are suitable, are satisfactory. The recent changes to the school building and grounds have enhanced pupils' safety by restricting vehicular access to the grounds and securing entry and exit points from the building.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher is outstanding: leading by example and setting exacting standards. He has provided a clear focus, a strong vision and has had a major impact on raising the quality of provision. This is particularly well demonstrated by the attention to detail paid to the analysis of pupils' progress at an individual level. The headteacher and the staff team are quite rightly held in high regard by the overwhelming majority of parents according to the parental questionnaire.

The senior leadership team is strong and members work well together and include all staff in school planning and decision making. As a result morale is strong and teamwork is effective. School self-evaluation involves the whole staff. It is honest, reflective and accurately identifies the key areas for improvement. The level at which individual actions are identified and targeted is impressive and demonstrates the attention to detail and accuracy that the school management systems enable, as well as the deep understanding and knowledge of the school that the staff share.

The combination of robust analysis and strong use of assessment and tracking of pupils' progress and attainment means that the school is able to measure the impact of interventions well and with increasing levels of accuracy and sophistication. This successfully supports and informs future planning, feeding seamlessly into the school improvement plan and results in a very reflective and self critical evaluation of the school's performance.

Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They demonstrate high levels of commitment and support and hold the headteacher robustly to account. Governors are knowledgeable and well-informed about the school and educational developments in general. Many members bring specific talents to the governing body and overall their contribution to, and involvement in, the life of the school is a strength.

The school promotes equal opportunities well because of the personalised learning it provides. This ensures that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, can participate in the full range of provision and activities. Financial management is secure and resources are effectively deployed to meet the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. It has satisfactorily addressed the areas for improvement raised in the last inspection report.

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	1
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	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?	1
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	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

As you know I visited your school recently. I am writing to say a big thank you to you all for helping me and making me feel so welcome. I enjoyed meeting you and seeing you in your lessons. I was very interested to hear about all the things you do and what you thought about your school. You told me that you think Skelton is a good school. Your parents, through their replies to the questionnaire I sent them, told me that they also think Skelton is a good school. I am very pleased to be able to tell you that I agree with you. I think that Skelton is a good school because all of the adults look after you so well, teach you very well and provide lots of interesting things for you to do. These all help you to enjoy your learning and make lots of progress. You all help too because you are so well behaved and polite. You are also keen to take on responsibility and make decisions about your school as well as caring very much about each other and the adults.

The changes to the buildings and new classrooms you have are great and I know you are very proud of them and will look after them. The extra security around the school is also money well spent because it means the adults can ensure you are safe. You have a brilliant headteacher and fantastic teachers, support staff and governors. Mr Halliday and all the adults in your school know every one of you very well and work hard to make sure you are able to achieve as much as you possibly can. Your teachers know how well you are doing in your work and what needs to be done to improve it: all of you are getting much better at this too.

Mr Halliday and all the staff are going to keep on trying to make things even better in your school because they do not just want you to have a good school they want you to have an outstanding one. They are going to try to achieve this goal by making sure that the youngest children in Reception have more to do and learn when they are outside and by making sure all of you learn as much as you possibly can.

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful. I liked you, your staff and your school so much I left with a big smile on my face.