



St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, West Tanfield

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121524
Local Authority North Yorkshire
Inspection number 292147
Inspection date 11 September 2006
Reporting inspector Ralph Higgs

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mowbray Terrace
School category	Voluntary controlled		West Tanfield, Ripon
Age range of pupils	4-11		North Yorkshire HG4 5JN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01677 470329
Number on roll (school)	33	Fax number	01677 470329
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr David Lightowler
		Headteacher	Mrs Julia Bailey
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small rural school, which is organised into two mixed age classes. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and many travel from outlying villages. All pupils are White British. After a significant fall in numbers the roll has recently increased, partly due to the opening of an independent nursery on the site. The school holds a Basic Skills Quality Mark, has achieved Investors in People status and a Local Authority 'Excellent' award for its provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A new computer suite is also used for community purposes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with a number of good features. This differs from the school's own self-evaluation which is somewhat more positive. From an average starting point on entry to the school, pupils achieve satisfactorily and reach average standards by the time they leave Year 6.

The school's motto, 'Where everyone is valued', is clearly evident in its ethos. Pupils have positive attitudes and their behaviour is excellent. Consequently, relationships are very good between pupils and with adults. Parents are rightly very pleased that their children develop into well-rounded individuals based on Christian values. The curriculum is good. It is well planned for the different age groups in each class, is enriched by many visits and visitors and by opportunities for pupils to take part in clubs and activities outside of lessons. Satisfactory and increasing use is being made of computers for learning and useful links are established between subjects. This influences pupils' enjoyment of school which is reflected in their regular attendance and punctuality. They feel safe, know how to keep fit and healthy and say they are well looked after.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. New children quickly settle into school and make rapid progress in their basic skills. Teaching and learning in Key Stages 1 and 2 are satisfactory. Pupils work hard and concentrate well on activities which are appropriately pitched for their age and learning needs. Teachers work hard to sustain pupils' interest and involve them in discussions but not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to develop confidence in speaking or in working independently. Pupils receive good quality care and support but guidance from teachers through marking and target setting on how pupils can improve is often not clear enough. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive sharply focused work, often taught well by teaching assistants, and their achievement is good.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has steered the school effectively through a period of falling rolls and forged a good partnership with the governing body. Governors take an active interest in the school and have had an influential role in important developments, such as the establishment of a new computer suite. School improvement priorities are based on sound systems of self-review. However, the analysis of assessment information and the tracking of individual progress are not focused with sufficient rigour on setting challenging targets. The school's view about standards and progress lacks some clarity, leading to a belief that achievement is better than is actually the case. The school has improved since its last inspection and has satisfactory capacity to improve further. It provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the guidance provided to pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 through target setting and marking in order to give them a clearer understanding of how they can do better and hence improve their achievement.

- Provide more opportunities for independent work in Key Stages 1 and 2, including a greater choice of learning activities, to raise pupils' confidence in speaking and improve their learning skills.
- Improve systems of self-evaluation so that the school has a clear view of standards and progress in all areas of the curriculum and can work most effectively to improve them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are broadly average when pupils leave the school. However, results in national tests fluctuate considerably and statistics must be treated with caution as year groups are very small, sometimes comprising only one individual. There are signs that standards are rising amongst younger pupils. The emphasis placed on establishing basic skills, coupled with high levels of support, has led to good progress in the Foundation Stage. Recent year groups have generally reached or exceeded nearly all the learning goals expected for their age. In turn, this is leading to higher standards at the end of Key Stage 1, where pupils make satisfactory progress. In Key Stage 2, pupils make steady progress in relation to the standards they bring with them at the start of Year 3. Most reach their targets, representing satisfactory achievement overall, but the lack of precise guidance about how to improve, and some lack of independence in learning, hinders better achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well due to a well-tailored curriculum and intensive support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development of pupils is good. They sustain concentration and cooperate very well with adults and each other. Their behaviour is excellent throughout the school. They acquire good work habits and the basic skills to prepare them well for their adult lives. Although attendance is average, many pupils attend regularly which reflects their enjoyment of school. Pupils can think of very few things to improve. As one girl said, 'School is fine as it is.' Their health awareness is good and they take regular exercise. They are alert to the potential dangers they may face.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They try hard to apply the values acquired through the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils have regular opportunities to contribute their ideas to the running of the school, but they lack confidence in expressing these.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with several good characteristics. Teachers have a common approach to planning, and design activities to suit all ages and ability levels. This is well developed for Foundation Stage pupils. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also met well due to the good partnership with teaching assistants. Teachers identify lesson objectives and share these with pupils, but insufficient emphasis is given to checking how well pupils have done during lessons. Teachers plan interesting activities and engage well with all pupils. However, there are limited opportunities provided for pupils to work independently or make choices about their work. This restricts the progress they make.

Assessment is satisfactory. Records are kept of progress in English and mathematics and marking is done conscientiously. However, there is not a clear view about standards and progress in non-core subjects, such as information and communication technology, to help plan the next steps in learning in these areas of the curriculum. Teachers set targets and provide guidance on how to improve but pupils do not have a good understanding of this and have limited opportunities to assess their own work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, with particular strengths in the Foundation Stage and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, whose needs are well provided for. It is planned effectively and meets national requirements. It takes good account of the rural circumstances of the school and mixed age classes. Some good links are established between subjects, which motivate pupils by giving purpose to their work. Satisfactory collaboration with other providers is beginning to extend opportunities, such as extra activities for gifted and talented pupils.

There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills from an early age and this is paying dividends, with gradually rising standards amongst younger pupils. Increasing emphasis on the use of information and communication technology is broadening learning. For example, pupils are beginning to benefit from accessing the school's website for learning in several subjects. The provision for personal development promotes pupils' understanding of health and safety well. A good range of visits and visitors, including clubs and activities outside of normal lessons, enriches learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support overall. The particular strengths in the care provided for pupils and the careful monitoring of their progress in English and mathematics outweigh some weaknesses in the guidance provided through the

individual learning targets. Staff work effectively together to sustain the school's very caring and supportive ethos. They know individual pupils very well. This underpins the good quality of pupils' personal development. Child protection and health and safety arrangements are well organised and fully observed. Consequently, pupils feel safe and secure and say there is someone to turn to if they need help. Considerable efforts are made to involve parents in their child's learning. Good strategies are in place to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, effectively utilising teaching assistants and outside agencies.

Pupils' progress is carefully tracked in English and mathematics and this ensures that they mostly meet the year group targets set for them. Although pupils are provided with information about their individual learning targets, they are not sure about how to make their work better as they find some of them difficult to understand and they are often too general. This restricts progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory with good features in sustaining a caring ethos, effective team working and relations with parents and the community. The headteacher has led the school well through a period of declining rolls and entry numbers are now increasing. Governors carry out their role effectively and use their skills to take forward various initiatives. Self-review processes are satisfactory and the school has established appropriate priorities for improvement. However, the analysis of performance data lacks rigour and the school has an inflated view of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning. This means that the targets for pupils' achievement are not challenging enough and restricts pupils' progress.

The school runs smoothly and financial management is good. The recent award of Investors in People indicates the quality of professional development which enables this very small school to keep abreast of educational change.

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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?	3
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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	1
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?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
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 welcome you gave me during my recent visit. I enjoyed meeting and talking with you. You clearly like your school and your parents are pleased that you get so much out of your time there. These are the main things I found out during my visit.

As your school motto says, everyone is well cared for and encouraged to try their best. I agree with you that school is enjoyable because teachers try to make lessons interesting, there are lots of different things to learn and everyone is friendly and helpful. The school helps the youngest pupils settle in well and you make steady progress in both classes to reach standards that are similar to most schools. This is partly because your behaviour is excellent, you work hard in lessons, attend school regularly and are punctual. You know how to stay safe in and out of school. Your knowledge of how to keep healthy and fit is also good. You take on responsibilities and support each other well. This shows there is a good community spirit.

However, there are some things that your school could do to help you learn even better. Your teachers will be helping you to understand your progress better and keep a frequent check on how well you are doing. You will have to look carefully at your targets and use them more to improve your work. Teachers will encourage you to become more independent and choose how you tackle your work. This means you will have to think hard and try to become more confident when you express your views and ideas in discussions. I have also asked your headteacher to make even closer checks on the school's work to ensure that every opportunity is taken to make things even better for you.

Once again, thank you for talking to me, I wish you every success in the future.