

West Meadows Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106609
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	309173
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	John Rutherford HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms June Hawkins
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Marsh
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	West Street Hoyland Barnsley South Yorkshire S74 9ET
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average and it serves an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is well above average. There are very few pupils from a minority ethnic background or whose first language is not English. The proportion of pupils with a learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD) is well above average. The school has the Healthy Schools Silver Award and the Junior Safemark Award.

West Meadows opened in April 2004 to replace Hoyland Market Street Primary School, where the building was unsuitable for health-and-safety reasons. Since then, there has been considerable disruption due to long-term staff absences, which are still not fully resolved. The headteacher was appointed in September 2006 and she has only had the support of a deputy headteacher and leadership team since the spring term 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. This represents considerable improvement in recent months, following a long period of disruption. In the short period of its existence, the new leadership team has worked very hard to improve the use of assessment and the teaching of writing to increase the rate of pupils' progress. This work has been very effective and, as a result, pupils have made much better progress since September 2007 than was previously the case.

Results from the most recent national tests and assessments show that standards are well below average. However, because of recent improvements, pupils' achievement is now satisfactory overall. The achievement of lower attaining pupils and those with LDD is good, because they receive good support, especially from teaching assistants. In a small proportion of classes, higher attaining pupils are not achieving enough and this is particularly evident in mathematics.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved this year, as staffing problems have almost all been resolved. It is now satisfactory overall. All teachers have introduced the school's new methods for using assessment to accelerate pupils' progress. However, they are not all yet using them to the same good effect. In around half of the classes, for example, work does not always meet the needs of all pupils. The curriculum has recently been re-organised and it is good. Pupils enjoy learning new skills through first-hand experiences within interesting topics. They are provided with many good opportunities to improve their writing.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy coming to school and, following recent improvements, their attendance is satisfactory. Their behaviour is good and they have positive attitudes to learning. These strengths are the result of good care, guidance and support from the staff and the calm, attractive environment that has been created in the new building. Most pupils know what they need to do to improve their progress because teachers give them clear targets and useful information when marking their work. Pupils develop good skills in independence and taking responsibility which, combined with their improving progress in literacy and numeracy, give them a sound preparation for their future lives.

The headteacher gives a strong direction to improving pupils' achievement and personal development. With the support of recently appointed leaders, she has established good teamwork amongst all the staff and the school is now improving rapidly. New leaders are still at an early stage of developing their skills. However, the improvements they have already made demonstrate that they have good capacity to raise standards further. Governors have given good support for recent improvements. They recognise that they now need to increase their monitoring of pupils' progress so that they can both support and challenge the school to help it improve further. The school provides satisfactory value for money. It has the full support of the majority of parents. A significant number comment that their children enjoy school and make good progress. Parents of pupils with LDD are particularly satisfied with the quality of the school's provision.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Nursery and Reception classes are combined to form a Foundation Stage unit. All the staff work very well together to meet the needs of the children, who have skills well below those typical for their age when they start. Children make good progress in most aspects of their

learning, but it is especially evident in their independence and language skills. This is because they are given good opportunities to choose their activities and staff encourage them to talk about what they are doing. There is an appropriate balance of adult-directed activities, which help groups of children to make good progress in such topics as mathematical shapes and other cultures. Staff use a well-planned and safe wildlife area to make outstanding provision for developing children's understanding of nature and for stimulating their imaginative play. Parents help staff with this outdoor activity, which reflects the good partnership that exists between the Foundation Stage and families. Staff have a good system for collecting information about children's progress and using this to plan future activities. The Foundation Stage is led very effectively. The coordinator rigorously evaluates the work of the unit and, on the basis of this, has good plans for further improving the daily use of assessment and for ensuring a smooth transition when children move into Key Stage 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve consistency in the effective use of assessment to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Ensure all higher attaining pupils are achieving as much as they can, especially in mathematics.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are well below average in Key Stages 1 and 2. When pupils start in Key Stage 1, their skills are below those typical for their age and, in recent years, they have not been making sufficient progress during their time in school. However, inspection evidence shows that this situation has changed since September 2007. Pupils' progress is now satisfactory overall and, in about one third of the classes, it is good.

Lower attaining pupils and those with LDD make good progress because their support is skilfully planned and they receive good teaching, often from well-trained teaching assistants. Middle and higher attaining pupils generally make satisfactory progress. However, in a small number of classes, the higher attaining pupils could be achieving more, particularly in mathematics. Most pupils make good progress in writing because teachers identified that weak skills were holding pupils back, so they are putting much effort into developing more effective ways of teaching it. Pupils are also making good progress with their speaking skills because many teachers include discussion in their lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Pupils behave well and they consider the well-being of others. They understand the importance of rules and good relationships in a community. The school is aware that pupils have insufficient knowledge and understanding of the other cultures within Britain.

Pupils enjoy their lessons because they find them interesting and they want to learn. A typical quote from pupils is, 'Teachers will help us so we learn more.' They understand how to keep safe and they feel secure in school. Many take advantage of the 'one-to-one box' and the

'feelings wall' to tell adults about any worries they have, knowing that they will be dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of diet and exercise, which has contributed to the school receiving the Healthy Schools Silver Award. Many pupils volunteer for additional responsibilities in school and they take part in activities to contribute to the life of the wider community. Pupils' personal qualities and their progress in basic literacy and numeracy skills are providing a firm foundation for their future education and prosperity.

Attendance is improving and is now broadly average. This is the result of recent improvements in teaching and learning and, for some pupils, a rigorous approach to monitoring, using rewards and seeking help from outside agencies.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It has good features, especially in Key Stage 1 and at the end of Key Stage 2. As a result of the recent drive by the leadership team, there is a consistency across the school in the methods for using assessment to accelerate pupils' progress. However, these methods are not being used to the same good effect in all classes. Where teaching is not yet of good quality, teachers are insufficiently skilled in identifying the learning needs of their pupils and adapting their teaching to meet these needs.

In the classes where pupils make the most rapid progress, teachers use their assessment information well to plan lessons that build on previous learning. They provide activities at the correct level of challenge for all pupils and ensure that pupils know what they need to do in order to improve their work. The introductions to lessons are stimulating and there is sufficient time for independent activity to consolidate new skills. Teaching assistants make a very good contribution by ensuring that pupils with LDD can learn alongside the rest of the class and also by teaching new skills to both lower and higher attaining groups of pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It provides pupils with an appropriate range of subjects, carefully adapted to meet their needs. There is, for example, a strong emphasis on physical activity and social and emotional development because the school identifies these as priorities for improving the health and well-being of pupils. The range of subjects is enhanced by German teaching and sports activities, made possible through a partnership with the neighbouring secondary school.

The curriculum has recently been redesigned to promote greater development of independent learning skills through first-hand experience and investigation. Pupils' work and displays around school show how much this is enriching their learning. In particular, it is helping them to improve their achievement in writing because they have more interesting things to write about. Pupils' views on the curriculum have been sought through questionnaires and their responses show a high level of enjoyment. Many also talk enthusiastically about their visits to places of interest and to adventure centres.

The curriculum for lower attaining pupils and those with LDD is very well planned to ensure that each pupil's needs are met by a suitable programme of support. Pupils' progress is monitored

very closely to identify when this support needs to be changed. The monitoring records show that most of the pupils make good progress and, for a small number, it is outstanding.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Safeguarding systems meet national guidelines and risk assessments ensure the health and safety of pupils. Very rare incidents of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with quickly and effectively. Staff care very much for pupils' well-being and have good arrangements to provide expert support when any pupils are anxious. They make a point of boosting pupils' self-esteem whenever possible and this is helping the pupils to enjoy school more and try harder.

The school has recently developed a good system for tracking pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This allows teachers to identify any pupils whose progress has stalled and to provide them with the additional support they require. Teachers give good guidance to all pupils on how they can improve their progress by setting them very clear personal targets and by giving them constructive comments when marking their work. This is particularly noticeable in the teaching of writing. The most vulnerable pupils and those with LDD are very well cared for and supported by highly competent and experienced teaching assistants.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quality of leadership and management at all levels is satisfactory. It is rapidly improving as recently appointed leaders are developing their skills and having a greater influence on the quality of teaching and learning across the school. The headteacher provides a strong drive for raising standards and the staff support her, willingly accepting their share of the responsibility for this. Her evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate and this forms the basis of an effective school improvement plan.

Action taken so far by the leadership team, to improve the teaching of writing and the use of assessment, has increased the rate of pupils' progress considerably. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the team and its good capacity to bring about further improvements in the future. The senior leadership team and governors are now setting much more ambitious targets for the future than they have been able to in recent years, especially for the percentage of pupils who will reach the highest levels in national tests.

The governors have supported the school well in regaining stability, particularly by ensuring that good appointments have been made to key leadership posts. They now need to concentrate more on monitoring the quality of work in the school and holding the school to account for pupils' progress towards challenging targets.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	3

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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Your headteacher and one of your members told me that you helped the school to get ready for the inspection that I carried out this week with my colleague, Stefan Lord. Thank you very much indeed for this. You, and many other pupils, gave us much valuable information while we were in your school and we are very grateful for this as well. We are now asking for your help again. Please could you let all the pupils know the outcome of the inspection. The main points are below.

Mr Lord and I judge your school to be satisfactory. We can see that there has been a great deal of progress recently and your school is moving forward in leaps and bounds. The headteacher and staff are helping you to make much better progress than you have done in the past and you are enjoying this. You are doing very well in your writing and we would like you to keep this up. The staff look after you carefully and make sure your school is a peaceful and welcoming place. You are very fortunate to be in a 'telling school' where you can share your worries with an adult and know that they will help you. You understand how important it is to eat healthy food and to take plenty of exercise.

You are playing your part as well and helping the staff by being well behaved and by working hard in your lessons. You know your targets and do your best to achieve them. Your confidence in speaking and your ability to work hard on your own are good. Many of you are eager to help by doing jobs that help to keep your school running smoothly. Please tell the children in the Foundation Stage that I learned many interesting things when I joined them on their 'wild walk' and I hope those bears that they have been hunting stay well away.

We have asked your headteacher and staff to keep on improving the school and to help you achieve much more in your English, mathematics and science. They need to make sure that, in every class, all the pupils are given work that helps them to make good progress, especially the pupils who are capable of achieving high standards. We would like you to help the staff by continuing to work hard to reach your targets, even when they become harder.

Best wishes for the future.