

Poplars Farm Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107247
Local Authority	Bradford
Inspection number	309353
Inspection dates	21–22 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Ronald Cohen

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	252
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Thiara
Headteacher	Mr John Davison
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2004
School address	Poplars Park Road off Kings Road Bradford West Yorkshire BD2 1LQ
Telephone number	01274 307490
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Poplars Farm is an average sized primary school close to the centre of Bradford. The school serves a multicultural community: a large majority of its pupils are from minority ethnic groups. This is much higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average, as is the proportion which is entitled to free school meals. The school has very recently changed its management structure. The acting headteacher's appointment to the substantive post, with effect from the beginning of the new academic year, was confirmed a few weeks before the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Poplars Farm is a satisfactory school, in which pupils make satisfactory progress.

Standards at the end of the Foundation Stage indicate that children make steady progress, although the lack of permanent leadership in this key stage limits the variety of activities on offer and how they are used to extend children's learning. Pupils reach average standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 but the progress they make, year on year, is uneven, due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Pupils enjoy school. They feel cared for and valued because, as they say, 'Our ideas and views are always listened to.' Parents are equally positive: 'I'm totally happy with this school,' and 'Our children can't wait to get to school on a morning,' are typical comments. Most pupils attend school regularly and behave well, helping them to make suitable progress.

The school fosters pupils' personal development well and they mature into sensible and sociable young people with a well-defined sense of right and wrong. Opportunities to help in school are grasped with relish by pupils. Learners receive good care from all staff, making them feel safe and secure and happy in the knowledge that if they have a problem, or need additional support, someone will help them. Pupils recognise fully the importance of leading a healthy life and try hard to eat sensibly and take regular exercise. Preparation for life in the future is satisfactory, although weaknesses in their literacy and numeracy skills could prove a problem for some pupils.

While teaching is satisfactory overall, some lessons provide much better opportunities for learning than others. Most pupils find their lessons interesting, especially when they are given practical tasks to perform. Variations in the quality of teaching are often linked to the amount of pace and challenge that teachers generate and to how well lessons are organised. Teachers set targets for all pupils in their classes. Some of these are sharply defined and reviewed regularly by teachers, but others lack clarity and are not checked often enough to help pupils know what to do to improve. Consequently, opportunities to help pupils understand how to measure the progress they are making are missed. However, satisfactory whole-school systems for measuring and tracking pupils' progress are becoming increasingly effective as the quality and quantity of the data they contain build up, but their use by all teachers is not yet consistent.

A well-structured series of topics form the backbone of the school's satisfactory curriculum. This ensures that pupils are regularly learning something new. The new headteacher and senior staff are working with vision and determination to make Poplars Farm a more effective school. With support from governors, they have made substantial changes to staff and procedures. Many of these are still bedding-in but the school is moving in the right direction and its capacity to improve in the future is satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and the school runs smoothly. The role of some subject and other leaders is underdeveloped and their contribution to the raising of standards and school management is limited. Governors work closely with the school, assisting with its development and holding it increasingly to account.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter Nursery with skills slightly below those expected of children of their age. By the end of Reception, attainment in 2007 was broadly average. This means that progress over the

Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children are happy and work and play well together. The school has made good provision for parents to work alongside their children until they settle, aiding the transition from home to school. Children respond well to adults and their peers; they show respect for others and demonstrate an ability to share and take turns. They understand the rules of their classrooms and demonstrate a developing responsibility for their actions. Teachers' planning adequately covers all of the areas of learning. The range of activities is somewhat restricted which limits opportunities for children to fully extend their independent learning skills within a stimulating environment. Not all children are challenged or engaged in learning sufficiently and, all too often, they are passive. Assessment systems are inconsistent and, as a result, teaching does not always match activities to children's different needs. The recent provision of new outdoor play equipment has done much to extend opportunities to improve children's physical skills. However, access to outdoor space is restricted, especially for Reception children, and this reduces opportunities to extend learning in the outdoor environment. The school recognises the need to extend provision in the Foundation Stage, but currently there is no permanent leader and this restricts development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish permanent leadership in the Foundation Stage, in order to improve provision for children's learning and progress.
- Ensure that teaching in all lessons allows pupils to learn at a good pace and to be clear about how to improve their work.
- Develop the role, and effectiveness of, middle managers in improving teaching and learning.

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

At Key Stage 1, standards over the last three years have fluctuated but, in 2007, were close to the national average overall, although scores in individual subjects varied. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in mathematics was above the national average. Writing also improved to the national average. Standards in reading have fluctuated in recent years. Girls attained higher standards in all subjects than girls nationally. The school's self-evaluation recognises the need to improve achievement further in literacy and numeracy and identifies that plans are in place to do so, particularly by addressing aspects of teaching.

At Key Stage 2, standards in 2006 dipped and were significantly below national levels. However, the 2007 national test results showed an upward trend and were close to average, particularly in English and mathematics. Standards in science also improved but remain a little lower than those in English and mathematics. In the current Year 6, the evidence from pupils' work, both in lessons and in their books, indicates standards which are at least in line with national averages.

Given pupils' attainment on entry to the school, progress is satisfactory overall, although this masks uneven progress year on year. Pupils make particularly good progress in Years 2 and 6, which goes some way to ameliorating the varying progress in other years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are proud of their school and they enjoy learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and are respectful of others, showing an appreciation of different beliefs and cultures. Relationships between pupils are good throughout the school and there are few instances of disagreements or racial disharmony. Instances of bullying are rare and pupils are confident that they are dealt with effectively and fairly. Care and consideration towards others are very strong features of the school. Behaviour is good, generally. However, in a minority of lessons, when pupils are not challenged, there can be minor disturbances of conversation and activity which impact negatively on the learning of others. Pupils understand the need to eat healthily and take exercise. They have a good understanding of safe behaviour and draw attention to areas where they believe children are at risk. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils develop a sense of responsibility from their work as classroom monitors and in their roles of elected members of the school council. They use the ideas of classmates to identify areas for development and initiate successful actions for the school and to help the wider community. For example, they are presently working on the development of a healthy tuck shop, on a recycling project and on identifying a range of charities to support. Pupils' preparation for the next stage of their education and the world of work is satisfactory as they exhibit a strong capability for responsibility and are confident with their good interpersonal skills. However, not all pupils have the expected skills in literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with some good lessons, resulting in pupils making satisfactory progress. However, a small number of inadequate lessons were also seen during the inspection. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and most classrooms have a lively and productive atmosphere. The best lessons are stimulating and interesting, with strong pace and challenging tasks. Pupils show a genuine enthusiasm for learning in these lessons and try hard to answer the questions they have been set. Variations in the quality of teaching and learning, however, detract from this otherwise positive picture. In some lessons, poor organisation wastes time and pupils have insufficient opportunities to practise and develop what they have been taught. This sometimes leads to pupils losing concentration and, as a result, their progress slows. Most lesson objectives provide a clear focus for pupils' learning, but others are too broad or overly complicated. Not all teachers use assessment information effectively in daily planning and so do not consistently match work to individual needs, particularly to challenge those pupils of higher abilities. Support staff work well with teachers to address the needs of different groups and individuals, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language, so that these pupils can participate fully and make progress. Teachers' marking often gives pupils an idea of how well they have done but does not always provide clear guidance as to how they could improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. All the required subjects are taught with appropriate emphasis on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The curriculum is enriched effectively by visitors, including poets, musicians and artists, and by trips to the Tropical World and Scarborough. School clubs, including an information and communication technology (ICT) club, sports and drama enhance learning opportunities for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. There is some good practice in making greater links between learning in different subjects, which helps pupils to develop their skills in different contexts, but this is not yet firmly established in the school. Provision for ICT is satisfactory and is starting to assist learning in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory, which differs from the school's evaluation. Pastoral care is good and parents are pleased with the good level of care their children receive. Adults in the school know pupils well. They listen to their concerns and have their best interests at heart. Documentation for ensuring pupils' health and safety, including child protection, is in place. The school considers the needs of vulnerable pupils carefully and provides them with good personal support to promote self-confidence and social skills. Pupils with particular physical or medical needs play a full part in all aspects of school life.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. Attention is now given to the process of setting targets, and the monitoring and tracking of pupils' achievement are starting to improve their progress. However, information gained from monitoring the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is not shared consistently. This limits the understanding of all staff about how to assist the progress of these pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly appointed headteacher has a clear vision for the future direction of the school. The comparatively new senior management team is developing a good professional relationship and shares the same vision for the school. They have the right priorities for the school and have introduced good initiatives which are already improving pupils' progress. These include, for example, the more rigorous tracking and targeting systems. However, these are not yet sufficiently embedded to show their full effect on pupils' learning.

The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. The school is aware of its strengths and most of its areas for development. However, the new action plans, which are based on shrewd analyses of weaknesses, have not been in place long enough to have raised standards and achievement. Although core subject leaders are involved in monitoring and evaluating standards in their subject areas and provide written feedback and support for staff, this is not consistent. Not all middle managers evaluate the quality of the school's provision by its outcomes. For example, the effectiveness of teaching tends to be judged on teaching skills rather than on the level of pupils' learning and achievement. The school recognises that this is an area for greater

development. Governance is satisfactory. The chair of governors is committed and knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses and works hard and gives valuable support in times of need. However, the school finds it difficult to recruit governors and new governors are, by their own admission, 'on a steep learning curve'. The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire think highly of the school. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Capacity for further development is satisfactory.

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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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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	3

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	3
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Poplars Farm Primary School, Bradford, BD2 1LQ

Thank you very much for the very friendly greeting you gave us when we inspected your school recently. Lots of you smiled and chatted to us, which made us feel comfortable and welcome. We thoroughly enjoyed finding out about the work you do and a special thanks to those who talked with us about the school.

Poplars Farm is a satisfactory school with a pleasant atmosphere. We were pleased to hear that you enjoy school and feel that your ideas and views are listened to. Your behaviour in and around school is good. The many things you volunteer to do around school are a big help to staff and the pupils who help in assemblies and participate in the school council, do an important job. You clearly understand how to keep yourselves fit, healthy and safe and have a strong sense of right and wrong. You grow into sensible and friendly young people who get on well with others. From the attendance figures, we could see that the number of pupils who attend school regularly is growing. This is good and needs to continue so that everyone benefits as much as they can from school.

We all know how important it is to get off to a good start in anything we do and that is why we have asked the school to pay particular attention to the Nursery and Reception classes. Most of you are making satisfactory progress in the things you learn and the skills you develop. We think that you can do even better. It is important that teachers give you opportunities to improve your own progress and we have asked the school to make sure that all your teachers show you how to do this and to help you to know what to do to improve. We have also asked your school to find ways for your teachers, who are subject leaders, to gain greater experience to help them contribute to the school's future improvement.

Thank you once again for a very enjoyable two days and I wish you well in the future.