

Old Town Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107524
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	309423
Inspection date	21 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Robert Robinson

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Alan Fowler
Headteacher	Mr Tristan Walker
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2003
School address	Billy Lane Old Town Hebden Bridge West Yorkshire HX7 8RY
Telephone number	01422 842859
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, teaching, the Foundation Stage (Reception), and leadership and management. The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, examination of pupils' work, assessment data, interviews and relevant documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school situated in a rural community. Almost all pupils are of White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has gone through a period of significant changes in staffing. The headteacher has been in post since September 2006. A senior teacher was appointed at the start of this academic year and the Foundation Stage leader returned after an unavoidable long-term absence. Current standards on entry to the Foundation Stage are similar to those normally expected of children of this age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Old Town Primary School provides a good education for its pupils and serves its local community well. A strength of the school is the care it provides for all groups of pupils. As a result, pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils are well behaved. By Year 6, pupils are confident, mature and articulate. They show a good example to younger pupils in their attitudes to work, relationships and consideration for others.

Pupils' achievement is good. They enter Year 1 with standards broadly at expected levels, though because of the small size of year groups there is variation in standards from year to year. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Standards at the end of Year 2 in 2007 were well above average. Almost all pupils reached the nationally expected level in reading, writing and mathematics and a good proportion gained the higher level. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 to 6. In most years since the last inspection standards by the end of Year 6 have been significantly above average. Current standards follow this pattern of attainment.

The quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes outstanding in Years 1 to 6. Teachers plan lessons well and gear learning to pupils' capabilities. The atmosphere in classrooms is calm and pupils enjoy learning. Relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils are harmonious. The pace of learning is brisk. Staff and voluntary helpers are used particularly well to assist all groups of pupils. Vulnerable pupils thrive because of the effective support they receive from staff. Pupils read regularly to adults and they have plenty of opportunities to write in different styles in English lessons as well as in other subjects. Increasingly, information and communication technology (ICT) is assisting learning. Staff generally question pupils well to check their understanding. Throughout the school there is a strong emphasis on neat presentation which helps pupils to have a pride in their work. Teachers' marking assists pupils to appreciate how well they have done and what they must do to improve.

The headteacher has built on the strengths of the previous leadership as identified at the time of the last inspection. Members of staff feel valued, supported and encouraged. Parents and pupils have a high regard for the school. Management roles are increasingly being shared with teachers who are taking greater responsibility for their subjects and the checking of standards. The school continues to move forward at a good pace because it is very aware of its priorities and takes effective action to address areas for development. For example, in 2006, standards in reading in Year 6 were much higher than those in writing. A whole-school approach to developing pupils' writing skills during last academic year resulted in writing standards improving to match those in reading in 2007. Pupils continue to make good progress in writing.

The leadership, including governors, actively seeks ways to improve the accommodation. For example, the school is understandably seeking ways to increase the amount of space for physical education for older pupils. The strengths in the leadership of the school, at all levels, and its success in maintaining pupils' good achievement provide it with good capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage (Reception) is satisfactory and children make satisfactory progress. Standards at the end of Reception in 2007 were broadly in line with

national expectations, but in personal, social and emotional development standards were lower than those in other areas of learning. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but the lack of a suitable outdoor area immediately adjacent to the classroom limits children's opportunity for personal development through play. A substantial grant has already been obtained to tackle this issue, but it is too soon to see any results in terms of improved learning.

The children are interested in learning and are cared for well by the staff. Occasionally, some children dominate discussions. The accommodation is not a particularly stimulating learning environment. Activities indoors do not always have a clear learning intention and are not linked sufficiently well to individuals' prior attainment. The partnership with parents is good. Parents report that their children settle well into school life. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Plans are well advanced to improve the provision for the youngest children at the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Plan purposeful and well matched activities for children in the Foundation Stage.
- Improve outdoor facilities for play in the Foundation Stage.

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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?	2
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	2

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 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	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	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

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

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. I enjoyed the day I spent with you and our discussions. I was pleased that you behave well and get on well together. Your school provides you with a good education because it is led and managed well. You are cared for well by the staff and your personal development is good.

Your achievement is good because you enjoy learning and are taught well. As a result, the standard of your work by the time you leave the school is above average. To improve your school further, I have asked the school to identify the purpose of activities for children in the Foundation Stage and to provide more opportunities for their learning outdoors. The headteacher and governors are keen to improve the internal and external accommodation of the school, such as the amount of space outdoors for physical education. I have urged them to continue to seek ways to do this.

I appreciated talking to you about your work and watching you learn. I trust that you will work with the headteacher and other staff to help them to continue to improve the school. I wish you well for the future.