

Pontefract Orchard Head Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108173
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	309607
Inspection dates	28–29 February 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	297
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	
Headteacher	Ms Dobson
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Orchard Head Lane Pontefract West Yorkshire WF8 2NJ
Telephone number	01977 723495
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Orchard Head School serves a large housing estate in North Pontefract. It was built in 1952 for a mining community serving surrounding collieries. The decline of the coal-mining industry has affected the socio-economic status of the area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the local average overall, but some classes have a high proportion of eligibility. The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin. The new headteacher took up her post in January 2008.

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 which has some good features. A strength is the quality of the care, guidance and support that pupils receive. Parents are understandably pleased with the pastoral support given to pupils. One parent summed up the views of many by commenting, 'My child has settled into school life very well and this is mainly down to the excellent friendly atmosphere.' The school works particularly closely with outside agencies to safeguard pupils' well-being. Parents and pupils comment how teachers work very hard and are friendly and approachable. Pupils make informed choices about healthy lifestyles and by Year 6 are mature and ready to move on to secondary education.

Despite a good start in the Foundation Stage, pupils' standards are below average at the end of Year 6. This represents satisfactory achievement throughout the school but masks uneven rates of progress within and between key stages. Pupils make the most progress in Year 6. There are also variations in the standards between subjects. In Year 2, standards are much lower in mathematics than reading and writing. In Year 6, standards in science are significantly lower than those in mathematics and English. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because they receive appropriate support from teachers and teaching assistants.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but inconsistent. There is some good teaching, but often teaching leads to satisfactory rather than good progress because teachers do not fully challenge pupils or capture their interests to fully engage them in their learning. Additionally, in some lessons the pace of learning slows because some teachers do not manage the behaviour of a small minority of pupils effectively. The curriculum is satisfactory overall with a good range of extra-curricular opportunities to develop pupils' skills in sport and art.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher provides a good direction for the school and is building an enthusiastic and effective leadership team. However, initiatives introduced by senior staff to improve standards and progress are too recent to have had a significant impact. Senior staff recognise that they must now use information about pupils' progress even more sharply in order to check that initiatives are impacting on pupils' improved performance. Middle managers do not have sufficient opportunities to evaluate the success of plans for improvement in their subjects. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive and are being encouraged by the new headteacher to challenge the school's performance more rigorously.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Children join the Nursery with skills that are well below those expected for their age, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy skills. The school recognises that each child has different needs and provides individual help and support. Children are encouraged to grow in confidence and self-esteem, enabling them to enjoy their learning and to care for each other. The skilful Foundation Stage leader has planned and put in place a range of activities to enable children to quickly develop their basic language and mathematics skills. For example, the recent introduction of a new way of teaching letter sounds excites and motivates children. There is a strong focus on developing children's speaking and listening

skills and on promoting their independence. Detailed records are kept of each child's progress and these are used carefully to match work to their needs and abilities. By the time children leave the Foundation Stage their skills are still below those expected nationally, but they have made good progress in their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and pupils' achievement particularly in mathematics at Key Stage 1 and in science at Key Stage 2.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching, with particular reference to the way teachers engage and challenge pupils in their learning and manage inappropriate behaviour.
- Develop the roles of middle managers to enable them to have more impact on raising standards and helping pupils to make better progress.

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

Achievement throughout the school is satisfactory overall. Over the last three years standards at the end of Year 2 have risen from well below average to broadly average. However, standards in individual subjects vary. In writing, where pupils made the best progress, standards improved significantly in 2007 to above average. Standards also improved in reading to broadly average but remained below average in mathematics. Boys and girls did better than their peers nationally in reading and writing but not in mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 3 in mathematics was also considerably below average.

In 2006 standards at the end of Year 6 declined significantly to well below average. In 2007, there was an improvement but standards overall remained below average. Achievement was satisfactory although the pupils made the best progress in English where standards were highest. Standards were much lower in science. In the current Year 6, standards are showing signs of improvement particularly in English and mathematics. There is, however, considerable variation in how well pupils progress between year groups especially in Years 3 to 6. The consistently good progress pupils make in Year 6 helps to compensate for the uneven progress in earlier years. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because they have extra help in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are confident and enjoy coming to school. Pupils' comments included, 'Most lessons are interesting. We all learn and have fun'. Pupils say they feel safe and are well looked after by adults. They get on well with their teachers and feel valued. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall, but varies according to the quality of teaching they receive. In less stimulating lessons, some pupils exhibit challenging behaviour. Pupils say that bullying is rare and quickly dealt with. Attendance is slightly below the national average due to a small minority of poor attenders. Pupils have a good understanding about the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and most choose to eat healthily. They participate in a variety of physical education and sporting activities and enjoy the daily morning routine of 'wake up shake up'. Many older pupils take responsibility

within the school, for instance, as playground buddies. The school council has a proactive role. It has initiated improvement to the school such as repairing the school fencing.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have a sound understanding of other cultures and assembly times provide them with opportunities to reflect. The school's reward system enables pupils to make sensible choices between right and wrong. Pupils are keen to raise money for local charities, organising and running fundraising events themselves. Pupils' skills at working together to solve problems are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but ranges from unsatisfactory to good. Clear expectations are set in most lessons and the good relationships established with staff give pupils the confidence to contribute in lessons, particularly when answering questions and giving opinions. Where teachers challenge pupils to think and discuss their ideas they become actively involved in their own learning and the pace is brisk; however, this good practice is inconsistent. In some lessons the pace is slower because teachers do not manage effectively the misbehaviour of a small minority of pupils. The newly introduced behaviour policy has yet to fully impact on this. Work is carefully planned and in most lessons is matched well to pupils' abilities. When work is marked effectively, teachers' comments show pupils how to improve their work and what they should do next. This is not, however, consistent practice throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum gives a strong focus to mathematics and English. However, pupils have too few opportunities to apply their basic skills in literacy and numeracy across a range of subjects. Teachers develop pupils' skills in personal, health, social and citizenship education (PHSCE) satisfactorily. Recent initiatives such as regular visits from the Police, Road Safety Officers and the Fire Brigade are beginning to enliven the curriculum and raise pupils' awareness about keeping safe. The curriculum provision for meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have particular gifts and talents is satisfactory.

Assemblies, circle time and PHSCE are important factors in pupils' spiritual and cultural development. The school provides a good range of popular out-of-class activities both sporting and arts based. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn French from Year 2 onwards and whole-school events such as the Multicultural Arts Week have a positive impact on pupils' cultural development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Robust systems are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils. These meet statutory requirements. The new headteacher has swiftly addressed the poor state of repair of the school boundary fence which had concerned pupils and parents. Strong links with a range of outside agencies ensure that the welfare of vulnerable pupils is given priority. New systems are in place to promote good behaviour and a range of strategies, including celebration assemblies,

encourage the vast majority of pupils to adopt a sensible and considerate approach to their classmates.

Newly introduced systems to track pupils' progress, together with setting targets in mathematics and English, are being used well to improve achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are now quickly identified. This follows a recent review of arrangements to identify and support those pupils who require additional support. Staff carefully check the progress these pupils make. The consequent, appropriate support provided for them by class teachers and teaching assistants enables them to achieve satisfactorily. A good range of intervention programmes, carried out by a skilled group of support staff, enables other more vulnerable pupils to be involved in all aspects of the school's provision. Most parents are supportive of the lengths the school goes in looking after their children. The school involves and supports parents in its efforts to improve pupils' attendance. It also organises family learning in mathematics to help parents support their children at home.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. There are some strengths, most notably the determination of the new headteacher to improve pupils' achievement. Many of the changes already instigated have increased the ambition among staff, parents and pupils to raise standards. Many parents describe the immediate impact of the headteacher on the school as outstanding. However, it is too early to establish the impact of recently introduced strategies for quickening pupils' progress and to improve the quality of teaching. The school's senior leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have a clear plan for improvement. The roles of the middle managers in raising standards and improving pupils' progress are underdeveloped. Governors fulfill their responsibilities satisfactorily. The headteacher has encouraged a more robust approach by governors when they evaluate the school's performance. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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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
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	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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	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	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

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

Inspection of Pontefract Orchard Head Junior and Infant School, Pontefract, WF8 2NJ

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work. You were very polite and friendly. We really enjoyed talking to the school council who told us a lot about the school.

We think the school is giving you a satisfactory education. You make good progress in the Nursery and in Reception and quickly learn many new things. You make satisfactory progress as you move through the school but we think that you could do better, especially in mathematics in Key Stage 1 and science in Key Stage 2. Most of you behave well, enjoy school and like to have jobs to do around the school. The school council works very hard and is doing a really good job by getting the school fence mended. Your parents and carers said that they are pleased that you come to this school, because the adults look after you well and help you if you have problems.

There are some things that could be improved. We have asked the headteacher and teachers to make sure that you make better progress in all subjects by ensuring that you get the best possible teaching in all your lessons. We would like all teachers to make learning challenging and interesting. We have also asked the teachers to make sure that everyone behaves well in lessons. Finally, we would like the teachers who are in charge of subjects to have the chance to help you improve your learning so that you all achieve well.

You can help your teachers by coming to school regularly and trying really hard with your work. Some of you can also help your teachers by trying harder to behave really well in class.

We really enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn.