

Ossett Southdale Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108246
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	309633
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Swallow

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	265
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Harris
Headteacher	Mrs Elodia Eccles
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2005
School address	Southdale Road Ossett West Yorkshire WF5 8BA
Telephone number	01924 302890
Fax number	0

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ossett Southdale is an average sized junior school in the centre of the town community that it serves. Since the last inspection an increasing number of children have joined from surrounding villages and numbers continue to rise. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportions eligible for free school meals and requiring support for learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are well below the national average. The school has Healthy Schools Status, Sportsmark accreditation and is part of a Creativity Learning Network.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a rapidly improving school that provides a good quality education. The headteacher, in partnership with the senior leadership team and committed staff, has worked hard to create an exciting and vibrant learning environment, in which all pupils feel valued and enjoy their learning. In particular, the headteacher has shown determination to address the challenges arising from significant changes in staffing and a budget deficit, to improve pupils' achievement and standards. As a result, measures to tackle the previously only satisfactory progress made by most pupils, and to respond to the fall in performance in 2007, are now successful features of the school's work. All staff are now actively involved in checking pupils' progress to ensure that none are left behind. There is a real 'can do' atmosphere spreading throughout all classrooms and a determination to support all children to achieve their very best. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and has identified the right priorities to sustain improvement. For example, the school recognises that overall teaching and learning can be improved further to reach the highest levels seen in many classrooms. Governors understand that the progress made by pupils and the standards that they attain must be considered more sharply against what schools are achieving nationally, rather than their own school's previous best. Parents recognise this good work. They say that 'the mood is up-beat which is passed on to the children in their classes,' and that, 'this positive atmosphere encourages every child to be the best they can be.'

Standards in the current Year 6 are now above average in English, mathematics and science. This represents overall good achievement, given that pupils' starting points are in line with national expectations. Pupils are now making good progress across the rest of the school, getting off to a really positive start in Year 3. This is because teaching and learning are good overall; representing an improvement since the last inspection, with a larger proportion of outstanding practice. Not all lessons, however, yet stretch all pupils to work independently and, in the more satisfactory lessons, they are not always challenged to give of their very best.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy school and their behaviour is excellent. They understand extremely well how to keep safe and healthy, and are increasingly well prepared for life beyond school because of their improving levels of literacy and numeracy, and because their attendance is excellent. The curriculum is outstanding. It is imaginative and exciting. Pupils are inspired by the many visits and visitors to the school, and by the highly creative opportunities to use their imagination and develop their artistic talents. The quality of care and guidance is good. Pastoral care is particularly strong. The school provides increasingly helpful information so that parents know how well their children are doing, and pupils understand the next steps they need to take to improve their learning.

The good leadership by the headteacher and senior leadership team, and the developing strengths of the governing body, have led to marked and recent progress in moving the school forward. Although the analysis of the impact of strategies to raise achievement and standards is not always sufficiently rigorous, the school now gives good value for money, and shows good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve further the quality of teaching and learning so that it matches the best practice in the school.
- Sharpen the focus of monitoring and evaluation so that governors can measure more effectively how well the school is doing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make increasingly good progress in relation to their starting points, reaching above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave Year 6. Overall, achievement has improved significantly since the last inspection, largely due to changes in staffing, and a greater focus by all teachers on checking the progress rates of all pupils. Following several years of average attainment, and a dip in standards in English and mathematics in 2007, progress has picked up across Years 3 to 6 of late. The school's most recent information shows that increasing numbers of pupils are set to exceed national expectations this summer. Strategies to improve pupils' reading and mathematical skills, and more targeted intervention work with pupils at risk of underachievement, are accelerating rates of progress in English and mathematics in all year groups. Achievement in art, dance and music is particularly high. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because of the extra support they receive. The school sets increasingly challenging targets to raise attainment and is now making progress towards reaching them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school amply fulfils its mission: 'To prepare children to meet the challenges of life with a positive attitude of confidence, self-respect and respect for others.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They show high levels of respect for others, including those of other faiths and cultures, and their behaviour is excellent. Pupils gain immensely from a programme of 'twinned' activities with a predominantly Muslim school, culminating in a 'Celebration Evening' together. Following a recent staff exchange visit to India, pupils thoroughly enjoyed exploring Indian artwork and dance, as well as experiencing an 'Indian style' classroom. With so many exciting learning opportunities, it's no surprise that pupils relish their time at school and attendance levels are high. They work very well in teams and show a great deal of initiative as they carry out key responsibilities, such as caring for others at the Friendship Stop or organising and running the 'Healthy Tuck Shop.' Healthy Schools and Sportsmark awards affirm that the vast majority of pupils show an excellent understanding of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Such high levels of personal development and well-being are best summed up in the pupils own words: 'We're like one big massive family here. We show a lot of respect for each other.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils' good progress is a result of effective teaching. Exemplary behaviour is a feature of most lessons and makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievement. However, the quality of teaching and learning varies throughout the school, ranging from satisfactory to outstanding. In the best lessons learning gets off to a brisk pace and activities are purposeful, fun and challenging. For example, younger children thoroughly enjoyed writing instructions to capture a troll. Older pupils worked very well in teams, planning and carrying out their own investigations on how to keep a drink warm. In these lessons teachers have very high expectations and use a

wide range of effective strategies, including information and communication technology (ICT), which motivate pupils to explore new ideas and work things out for themselves. A small amount of teaching is less effective. The pace of learning slackens because activities are not so well matched to all pupils' needs, and many pupils are not given enough opportunities to learn independently. The best practice is not shared sufficiently between teachers in order to improve the consistency of high quality teaching throughout school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is inclusive, creative, contains all that it should and provides immense enjoyment through its abundant variety. It successfully and increasingly links subjects together to ensure that pupils steadily develop key knowledge and understanding. Strong emphasis is placed on the development of skills in English, mathematics and ICT, which prepares pupils well for their future lives. Pupils are rightly proud of their achievements in art and design, music and ICT. Membership of a regional Creativity Learning Network means that imaginative learning experiences are especially high profile, with outstanding quality, such as Remembrance Day poppies and clay tablets of local churches are much in evidence. All pupils have weekly Spanish lessons and visitors to the school, concerts, performances and visits out of school, including residential for many pupils, are the norm. This innovative curriculum encourages pupils' self-confidence, develops self-esteem, promotes effort and achievement, and brings learning to life. Excellent personal and social development lies at the heart of the school's work. A kaleidoscope of enrichment activities such as a 'World War Two' Day, and an 'Inspire Day' in which parents work alongside their children, makes the school 'buzz' with interest and enthusiasm. The many, popular clubs, such as classical ballet, choir, art and football, help pupils to broaden their horizons and develop healthy and varied lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents very much appreciate the strong pastoral support provided. Very positive relationships throughout the school help pupils to feel very safe and secure, typically commenting: 'The staff are always kind and caring. They will listen to you if you are upset.' Safeguarding procedures meet Government requirements. Academic guidance is improving and helps pupils to make good progress. Pupils are becoming increasingly involved in assessing their own learning and say their targets are helpful in showing them how they can improve their work. Systems to identify and support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effective. Skilled support staff work in close partnership with teachers to provide effective support for these pupils. The school is well prepared to meet the whole range of pupils' needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's passion for stimulating and enriched learning experiences for every pupil is central to the successes of the school. The recently refocused systems to track more closely the progress of every child, and the provision of more bespoke support programmes, have brought about rapid improvements in achievement and standards in a short period of time. Staff share the headteacher's vision for developing the talents of all learners, and speak very highly of the way that she involves them in all aspects of the school's work. The senior leadership

team supports fully her drive to develop enthusiastic and independent young people. Subject leaders are increasingly involved in assessing the quality of pupils' work. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and action plans identify the correct priorities, based on a thorough audit of performance. Nevertheless, they do not always precisely describe intended outcomes, against which the school can evaluate whether major initiatives have had sufficient effect. While there are regular procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching, the analysis of the impact of teachers' work on pupils' learning is not quite as strong as it might be. Governors are very supportive of the school and carry out most of their responsibilities effectively. However, systems are not fully in place to enable them to assess how well the school is performing and to determine whether overall achievement is high enough.

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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?	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1
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	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

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful during the recent inspection of your school. All the inspectors were very impressed with how polite and welcoming you are to visitors, and how well you get on with each other. Your behaviour is excellent and the staff look after and care for you well. There is a real 'buzz', yet calm atmosphere, in school. We feel sure that this motivates you, at the same time helping you to concentrate, and achieve as well as you do.

You go to a good school and you obviously really enjoy the many interesting things that are on offer. We were really pleased to see how many of you take part in sport and musical activities, classical ballet, the many visits to local places of interest, and the recent links with Barcelona and India. We were amazed by the high quality art and design work on display. We can see why you like your teachers so much and why you attend school so well. Most of your lessons are stimulating and challenge you to produce some really interesting outcomes. We think that all of your lessons should be like this and have therefore asked all your teachers to make sure that this happens. For those of you who find learning quite easy, this means giving you the opportunity to work more by yourselves and to really think hard. For others, it means helping you to learn at your own speed and making sure you really understand what you need to do. We have also asked the governors of your school to be even more ambitious for you and to check all of the information they have about your work to make sure that you all achieve the very best that you can. As a result, we think that you will enjoy lessons even more and do even better.

Your headteacher, staff and governors want the best for you. The equipment and facilities they provide are of a really high quality. You can help by continuing to work really hard and by always responding positively to the suggestions your teachers make to improve your work.

Thank you again for helping us with this inspection. I hope very much that you will carry on enjoying life at Ossett Southdale.