

Wakefield St Johns Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108255
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	309638
Inspection date	20 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Eaton

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev P Dowling
Headteacher	Mrs L Hanson
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 1998
School address	Belgravia Road Wakefield West Yorkshire WF1 3JP
Telephone number	01924 303715
Fax number	-

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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: pupils' personal development and well-being; the quality of teaching and learning; and the impact of leadership and management on school improvement. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation; national published assessment data; the school's own assessment records; school documents and observations of the school at work. Discussions were held with pupils; representatives of senior staff and the governing body. The views of parents were taken into account through the parents' questionnaires. 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 form were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized primary school. A very small minority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups or are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Very few pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is also below average. The school has gained Investors in People and Investors in Pupils status. It holds the Healthy Schools award and Basic Skills Quality Mark, Artsmark Gold and Activemark. At the time of the inspection, a programme of major building work had just commenced, temporarily reducing the school's accommodation and outdoor space.

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 good school with many outstanding features. 'It's a great school' announced one girl, 'because of the people!' Her comment aptly illustrates the excellent relationships pupils have with each other and with the staff. The headteacher is entirely successful in ensuring that the school achieves its mission to promote tolerance and respect for one another. Pupils are extremely happy at school and this enjoyment is just one facet of their outstanding personal development. They take pleasure in all manner of activities, often listing art among particular favourites. Pupils are justifiably proud of their very high quality work in this subject. For example, the entrance to the school is currently dominated by a stunning version of Antony Gormley's 'Field for the British Isles'. Each pupil created one of the small clay figures after being inspired by examples of the original pieces. The arts form a strong element of the exceptionally rich curriculum. The school works tirelessly to seek out opportunities to enhance its work through a huge range of visits and visitors. These help to bring learning to life and support pupils' personal development significantly. For example, Year 4 pupils' visit to a Hindu temple strengthened their work in religious education and provided a very meaningful context for report writing in English lessons. Instructions such as 'You must be respectful and sensible' reflect pupils' sensitivity to the rights of others and the school's wholehearted commitment to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is outstanding.

The school provides an outstanding level of care, guidance and support. Pupils say that they feel safe in school because 'teachers look after you'. Government safeguarding requirements are met in full. A very small number of parents are concerned about pupils' behaviour. Pupils themselves are adamant that bullying is not a problem. They concede that they do 'fall out' from time to time and describe a few pupils as 'naughty'. Importantly, they are certain that staff deal promptly with any problems and sort out disagreements, for instance, in a 'making up corner'. On the playground, pupils are lively and energetic. Nevertheless, behaviour overall is frequently exemplary and allows the school to give pupils responsibilities that contribute significantly to its daily life. For example, 'Fit Bods' are on hand at lunchtimes to organise games and draw in pupils who feel they have no one to play with. Pupils appreciate keenly that exercise is an important aspect of keeping healthy. The school is at the heart of the parish and pupils are regularly involved in the life of the church, reading their poems at its Remembrance Day service, for instance. Although the school gives very high priority to keeping them safe, for example, during the current building work, pupils gain an extremely good understanding of how to maintain their own safety. Work on the dangers of alcohol abuse, courses in road safety and visits by fire-fighters all help to raise their awareness.

During their time in school, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Standards have risen steadily over the past few years and are above average. In the Year 2 and Year 6 national tests, pupils are more successful in mathematics and science than in English. In particular, fewer pupils than average reach the higher levels in English, especially in writing. Similarly, progress is slowest in writing. The higher-attaining pupils tend to achieve less well than others in this aspect of their work. The school is acutely aware of this weakness and is tackling it with energy. For example, senior staff have begun to rigorously examine pupils' written work, identifying ways in which teachers can accelerate learning. The recent scrutiny revealed that thorough marking that aids pupils in improving their work is one reason why the quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils confirm that teachers plan interesting tasks, 'lessons are fun', they report. They particularly appreciate the songs and games often used to help them learn in

mathematics. Teaching assistants' skills make strong contributions to learning. Their work, alongside specialist agencies such as those for pupils with sensory impairments or who are learning English as an additional language, ensures that boys and girls with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as other pupils. Pupils are strongly encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. They reflect on their performance and set personal targets, for example, to 'learn my times tables' or 'not rock on my chair'.

In recent years, changes within the school's senior team meant that the headteacher bore the brunt of strategic responsibilities. Leadership and management are good overall, but the headteacher's outstanding leadership enabled the school to maintain its successes and move forward during this difficult period. As the new team establishes itself, developments are accelerating because key tasks are delegated. For example, the new deputy headteacher has introduced a programme of social and emotional aspects of learning, which pupils enjoy and value. The school's self-assessment is thorough and leads to an accurate view of strengths and areas needing further improvement. The governing body contributes to these monitoring systems well, for instance through its members' links with particular subjects. All those involved in the school share the determination to keep it moving forward, contributing to the good capacity to improve. By upholding its values and striving to achieve its very high expectations, St John's ensures that pupils leave as well rounded and confident young citizens extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

At the start of the Reception year, children's skills are broadly in line with the expectations for their age. They make good progress during the year and achieve well. By the time they enter Year 1 they have nearly all met or exceeded the national expectations for their age. Children's use of language and their physical development are particular strengths, because the curriculum provides plenty of opportunities for them to practise their skills. For example, using a net to capture model creatures during water play prompted a pair of children to break spontaneously into a round of 'Incy Wincy Spider'. Children are successfully encouraged to become independent learners. While staff are working with some groups, others choose from meaningful and enjoyable activities such as taking on roles in the classroom garage or practising writing in an office area. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed and assessments of children's learning are accurate. The outdoor space is used well to augment the limited classroom accommodation. This enabled the girl representing the 'gingerbread man' to pretend to run away as children retold the story and enjoyed the wintry sun. Good teaching ensures that children develop very positive attitudes to learning and have fun in the process.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement in writing, especially for higher-attaining pupils.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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	2
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	1

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?	1

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

Inspection of Wakefield St Johns Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior and Infant School,
Wakefield, WF1 3JP

Thank you for being so welcoming when I visited your school. The school council members were particularly helpful, so special thanks go to them. I really enjoyed my short time with you and now I want to let you know what I found out about the school.

You told me that you think it's a good school, and I agree with you. It also has some outstanding features. Your own personal development is one of these. I was very impressed by how well you behave and your enthusiasm for lessons and other activities. You do an enormous amount to help each other and the staff and you play an important part in the local community, for example, through the school's links with the church. One reason why you enjoy school so much is the exceptional curriculum. Brilliant opportunities, for instance, for you to go on visits and meet visitors, help to make your learning such good fun. You told me that you feel safe in school. This is owing to the exceptional way in which the staff care for you.

You make good progress in your learning and reach above average standards. This is because teaching is good in your school. You do better in mathematics and science than in English, especially writing. In particular, those of you who learn fastest in other subjects don't do as well in writing. I have asked the school to find ways to improve your writing. You can help by continuing to work hard and by following your teachers' advice.

Your headteacher and the staff and governors all work hard to give you such a good education. I would like to send my best wishes to them and to each of you for the future.