

Yorke Mead Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117130
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312504
Inspection date	26 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Roderick Passant

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	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Emma Royal
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Moss
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Dulwich Way Croxley Green Rickmansworth Hertfordshire WD3 3PX
Telephone number	01923 778420
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. Issues investigated were: the overall effectiveness of the school; pupils' achievement and aspects of personal development; the accuracy of the school's judgements about the quality of teaching and learning; how well the school's leadership promotes high standards. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, the pupils' work, discussions with pupils, some staff and the chair of governors, and a scrutiny of some school documents and parent 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. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school. Children join either in September or January depending on when their birthday falls. Most have had playgroup or nursery experience and enter the school with knowledge and skills broadly similar to those usually seen in children of that age, except for communication language and literacy skills, which are often somewhat below those normally seen. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average although the percentage of pupils with a statement detailing their specific needs is below average. The percentage of pupils learning English as an additional language is below average as is the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. Children come from a mixed but relatively advantaged background. The school has gained national recognition for its work in physical education and as a healthy school. It also has the Investors in People award.

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. This judgement is echoed by the parents' inspection questionnaire responses. Parents stressed how happy their children are and the good progress that they are making. One parent described how her child has 'thrived' because of the 'good teaching and working in a friendly environment.' Pupils achieve well academically and extremely well in their personal development. This is because teaching is good and care and support are outstanding. The school has recently experienced several staff changes but careful leadership and strong management, together with the school's strong underlying values, have ensured that new staff settle quickly into the school's ethos and the effect on pupils is minimal.

Standards were above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in the 2007 assessments. Standards dipped in science in Year 6 in 2007 but the school has carefully analysed the reasons and taken appropriate steps. There has been a steady trend for improvement in Year 2 standards over the past three years. This is the result of the school's work in developing the curriculum between the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. As a result, pupils show particularly good attitudes to learning, are able to work more independently and have improved language skills. Increasingly, pupils across the school make good progress. Pupils in the current Year 6 are building successfully on the standards they gained in Year 2 and those in Year 5 are on track to be well above average in their tests in two years time. This improvement is largely the result of the enhanced level of challenge to more able pupils, something that has been one of the school's key priorities. However, some girls still do not have high enough academic aspirations.

Pupils enjoy school immensely. They like the teachers who are both 'fair and fun' and lessons are enjoyable as a result. Attendance is good. Pupils feel that they have a say and are listened to, and the School Council is growing in importance in the life of the school. Teachers have very good listening skills, valuing what pupils have to say in lessons and, as a result, they foster pupils' growing confidence. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle and know how to look after themselves. Behaviour is excellent. Almost all pupils behave extremely well for most of the time and have a mature understanding of the difficulties that some pupils face. This is because adults are consistent and skilled in using positive approaches to managing behaviour. Pupils make a very strong contribution to the local and school community. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Staff are vigilant in their concern for pupils' welfare and all required safeguarding and child protection procedures are carefully implemented. Pupils say they feel safe in school because there is very little unkindness or bullying. They confirm that any such incidents are taken extremely seriously by the headteacher and feel able to turn to an adult if they have a problem. The school's success in developing key academic and life skills provides a good foundation for pupils' future economic well-being.

Teaching is good. Classrooms are calm and there is a strong work ethos. Relationships between staff and pupils are very strong. There is also a very strong sense of team work in most lessons between staff and teaching assistants so that class management is effective. Lessons are carefully planned to build progressively on each other and to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they too make good progress. The school development plan rightly identifies the need for additional consistent challenge for quicker learners. Pupils generally know how to improve their work because assessment is good, and careful monitoring ensures that those who require an additional boost or who are having difficulties are identified early.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is very experienced and leads the school extremely well. She monitors closely the work of the school and the quality of teaching in order to sustain the focus on raising achievement. The school has a strong caring ethos, recognised within the community as a major strength, and it demonstrates a very real commitment to meeting the needs of individual pupils. Its self-evaluation is accurate and identifies clearly the school's relative strengths and what it needs to focus on to improve further. There is a strong sense of teamwork amongst staff. Because of the changes in staffing, some staff have undertaken leadership roles on a temporary basis but nevertheless, the school is managing this period of transition extremely well so that the impetus for continuing improvement has not been lost. There are strong links with specialist agencies and other schools, careful analysis of data and challenging targets for staff. Governance is good and improving as they gain in confidence and experience. Finance is monitored carefully and the school gives good value for money and has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

At the time of inspection, the Reception class was operating with the September intake. Children achieve well and demonstrate a good level of development. This is because teaching is good and activities are carefully planned. Children show good independent skills and good attitudes to learning. The Reception class provides a calm and safe environment in which children concentrate on the various activities, which have been carefully set up. There is a good balance of adult and child initiated activities. Children's progress is tracked carefully and compared to national data. This analysis is used to modify and refine the learning opportunities, leading to ongoing enrichment of the curriculum. Leadership is good because it is very reflective and the depth of planning is demonstrated by the seamless way the class operates. Strong teamwork is evident. There are strong links between the Nursery, reinforced by the developing use of an assessment profile, and Year 1 so that the Foundation Stage is extremely well integrated into whole school. This also enables it to provide additional support for very young children in Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that more able learners are consistently challenged.
- Raise the academic aspirations of some girls.

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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	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	2
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	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?	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Yorke Mead Primary School, Croxley Green WD3 3 PX

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school. My particular thanks to those of you who gave up some of your lunchtime to talk to me. What you had to say was extremely helpful. I thought I would share my findings with you.

This is a good school. You make good progress in your work and standards are above average. You also develop extremely well as individuals. You make a very real contribution to the school's success because you help make the school the friendly place it is. Your behaviour is excellent. You are very grown up in the way you recognise that some children have problems. You like school because teachers are 'fair and fun' and lessons are enjoyable. This is the reason you make such good progress and I recognise that adults spend a lot of time planning your lessons. You were very clear that you felt safe in school and that you would turn to an adult if you had a problem. A particular strength of the school is the way all adults care about you and provide you with the support to do well. Mrs Moss thinks that those of you who pick up new ideas quickly need to be given more challenges. I agree with her. I have also suggested to Mrs Moss that there are some girls who need to be encouraged to push themselves a bit more in their work too.

Clearly, the school is going through a period of staff changes for a whole range of reasons. I think Mrs Moss is making every possible effort to manage this smoothly and you are demonstrating how grown up you are in the way you have welcomed new staff to the school. Mrs Moss leads the school extremely well. She and the staff are very clear about what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve further. I hope you continue to give your teachers all the support that you can.

Sincere good wishes for your future school careers.

Yours sincerely

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector