

Woodthorpe Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121290
Local Authority	York
Inspection number	313935
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Lesley Clark

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	431
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Barrie Ferguson
Headteacher	Dr Jonathan Hodge
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	Summerfield Road York North Yorkshire YO24 2RU
Telephone number	01904 705462
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves a very diverse area to the west of the city centre, which contains some considerable socio-economic disadvantage as well as substantial private housing. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A below average proportion has learning difficulties and/or disabilities because only those whose needs are significant are identified. An average number have statements of special educational need. A sizeable proportion of pupils are vulnerable and a small number are in the care of the local authority. Most children attend the voluntary sector playgroup within the school building before joining the Nursery part-time from the age of three. The school is part of a local Sure Start initiative and runs family learning and skills courses for parents and the local community. In 2007, the school achieved Healthy Schools status, the York Inclusive School award and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Woodthorpe Primary School provides pupils with a satisfactory education. Standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. There are some notable strengths. The provision for Foundation Stage children is good and has some outstanding features. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are well provided for. Pupils' personal development is good because the school looks after its pupils well and helps them to grow up into responsible young people. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the headteacher, senior managers and governors are well aware of what needs to be improved. They tackle issues methodically and as a result, the school has improved steadily over the last six years, despite setbacks in terms of staffing and falling pupil numbers.

The proportion of pupils reaching expected levels at the end of Year 6 is generally average or a little above. However, the proportion reaching the higher levels in English, mathematics and, to a lesser extent, in science is below average. This confirms the school's view that more able pupils underachieve in Key Stage 2 and do not always fulfil the potential they show at the end of Key Stage 1. The school's recent focus on improving writing is beginning to bear fruit; there is more to do in mathematics. Meticulous assessments of pupils' progress confirm a gradual reversal of the downward trend in English. A practical approach, with lots of speaking, listening and drama, especially in Years 5 and 6 where teaching quality is very strong, is successfully extending pupils' vocabulary and giving more able pupils the chance to show what they are capable of. The school's focus on reading and learning practically is also clearly working in Year 2 where much of the teaching quality is also good or outstanding. As a result, standards are comfortably average and, sometimes, above average at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.

With the exception of Years 2, 5 and 6, teaching quality, though satisfactory overall, is much more variable. Teachers have a tendency to talk for too long which limits the time that pupils have to work independently or to practise new skills. This slows pupils' learning, especially in mathematics, and hampers those who are more active learners, as in Year 1. Weaknesses include low expectations of what more able pupils can achieve, so teachers do not provide suitably different or challenging work, tending to teach to the middle groups of learners. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are vulnerable do well because they have good individual education plans and good support from teaching assistants. Although teachers assess their pupils' progress, evidence provided by the school shows this is sometimes inaccurate. In addition, not all teachers use information from assessments sufficiently well to help them decide what to teach and so ensure that pupils build on what they know and understand. This slows pupils' progress, especially those who are more able. They tend to work with half-heartedness because the work is too easy for them. The good practice evident in Years 5 and 6 of pupils checking their own learning so they learn from their mistakes has yet to filter through to other year groups.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and they take their responsibilities seriously, such as sorting out the recycling materials at the start of the day or organising games for younger pupils outside. Break and lunchtimes are lively, energetic occasions. The school's sanctions to prevent play from becoming too boisterous are used effectively and behaviour in and around the school is good. A number of parents think behaviour is an issue. Parents of Key Stage 2 pupils have far fewer informal opportunities to talk to staff than in Key Stage 1, consequently, they miss out on the chance to air their concerns at an early stage. Their anxieties have escalated recently

with several staff absences due to unavoidable and unforeseen circumstances. Pupils confirm there is rough play at times but the school takes a firm line on name calling and other incidents and has good procedures which safeguard pupils effectively. 'Worry boxes' in all classrooms ensure that pupils' concerns are dealt with sensitively and time is set aside at the start of three days each week for parents to be contacted if there are problems.

As a result of the school's attention to social and moral issues, and its careful monitoring of personal development, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils know why it is important to lead healthy lives and regular 'healthy eating weeks' serve as reminders to those who prefer crisps to fruit. Many walk to school and take part in extra-curricular sports. Pupils make a positive contribution to different communities. For example, the school council took the lead on fund raising to help deprived South African pupils, and discussed ethical questions concerning the amount of energy used by water coolers. Pupils respond well to responsibilities, contributing to the development of the school vegetable garden, for instance. Older pupils have a very positive response to the school's efforts to boost their achievement and are confident they will succeed, with the school's support. This determination and self-awareness is a good feature in an otherwise satisfactory preparation for their future lives.

The school is satisfactorily led and managed, with strengths in the headteacher's drive for improvement and the school's stringent self-assessment. The developing senior leadership team is now forcing the pace of change in terms of subject leadership, improving teaching effectiveness and checking pupils' progress to eradicate underachievement. This has yet to have full impact on achievement and standards. The governing body is well informed and recognises that the school has potential to improve further because, 'although all the systems and structures are appropriate and some teaching is very good, this now needs to happen right across the school'. Taking all these factors into account, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a very happy and secure start to their school life because the breadth of the curriculum promotes their enjoyment and stimulates their curiosity. Outstanding outdoor provision provides a wealth of exciting and imaginative activities which children freely access throughout the day. They make good progress because they learn through finding out for themselves and asking questions. Good leadership and management ensure that Reception children build on their experiences in the Nursery. Children are well taught. Consequently, from a broadly average starting point most children are securely within expected levels in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception year. Personal, social and emotional development is promoted exceptionally well and the very recent focus on linking sounds with letters is beginning to have a positive impact on children's communication, language and literacy. The use of assessment to evaluate children's progress and to pinpoint any areas of weakness is a real strength.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise teachers' expectations of what more able pupils can achieve, especially in Key Stage 2.
- Make sure that teachers assess accurately, use the information to determine what to teach and involve pupils in assessing their own learning so as to accelerate their progress.

- Adjust the balance between taught and independent activities to give pupils greater opportunities to learn both practically and on their own.
- Provide more opportunities for parents with children in Key Stage 2 to meet staff informally so as to allay any concerns at an early stage.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as 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

While most pupils achieve satisfactorily, more able pupils underachieve especially in the lower junior classes. The value the school added to pupils' performance between Key Stages 1 and 2 dropped significantly in 2007 because of teachers' low expectations of more able pupils. The school missed its targets in 2007, especially at the higher levels in English and mathematics. A concerted drive to raise achievement is beginning to work and the school is on course to meet its targets in 2008. Vulnerable groups make good progress because they receive good support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school. They arrive punctually and several pupils from each class come early so they can help get the classroom ready before school begins. They enjoy being helpful and are polite and friendly. Attendance is broadly average and improving, though holidays in term time have a negative impact. Pupils are happy and feel safe. They respect each others' views and get on well together. They have good relationships with their teachers and other adults. They work well in groups and on their own. When their work interests them they become completely engrossed, concentrating for long periods of time. Sometimes, though, more able pupils daydream and learners who find it difficult to sit and listen for a long time become a little restless. They respond well to challenges and enjoy discussions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils learn better in some classes than others. They learn best in those lessons where teachers match activities carefully to different ages, needs and abilities so as to challenge all learners. In these lessons, teachers give pupils sufficient time to work on their own, ask questions and learn from their mistakes. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, a swift five minute task quickly established which more able pupils understood how to measure angles so they could then move on to solving more complex problems while the others consolidated their skills. Pupils' learning slows in classes where they have too few opportunities to try things out for themselves and where they are unsure how to improve their work because they are not involved in checking whether they have met their targets. In all classes up-to-date interactive technology is used well to enliven learning and make teaching points clear. The use of video clips in literacy lessons is a particular strength.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The broad, balanced curriculum gives due weighting to the skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). Currently, pupils in Year 1 do not have enough opportunities always to learn through discovery and play, because the curriculum is too formal for their needs. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular clubs enriches pupils' learning but these are not open to all. The popular homework club provides valuable support for children, including those who find it hard to work at home. A real strength is the good provision for art and music. Good links with secondary schools enrich the curriculum with extended sporting activities as well as French in Key Stage 2. The school is at an early stage of making connections between subjects and, therefore, times are limited for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects or to research information.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and meet current government guidelines. Good systems ensure that learners are well cared for and this is why pupils enjoy school. In this supportive environment, vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities thrive and all pupils mature into sensible young people capable of taking responsibility, debating ideas and making decisions. Tight systems for analysing standards and achievement provide a good overview of pupils' progress, ensuring that help can be targeted where it is needed. This is why the school was able to identify precisely areas of underachievement and put in measures to help. However, some inaccuracies in teachers' assessments and their use of these to help them plan relevant lessons are weaknesses.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher gives clear direction which is sharply focused on raising standards and eliminating underachievement. He has kept the school on track, despite various setbacks, and is well supported by a new leadership team. This has some significant strengths and its impact is already evident on Foundation Stage provision and the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Detailed action plans to raise standards in literacy, numeracy and science are based on stringent assessments of pupils' progress and senior leaders' exemplary classroom practice. The school is poised to move forward but it is too soon to measure the full impact of these initiatives and underachievement of more able pupils in Key Stage 2 remains an issue. Teachers' performance reviews are now linked closely to pupils' progress and this increased accountability is proving fruitful but there is still some way to go before the school achieves its full potential.

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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?	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?	3
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	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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Woodthorpe Primary School, York, YO24 2RU

All the inspection team enjoyed meeting you and watching you work and play. Thank you, especially to those of you who spent time talking with us and showing us your work. We are pleased that you enjoy school and we were impressed with your politeness, helpfulness and willingness to take on responsibilities. You behave well.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education overall. This means that it does some things well and there are some things it could improve on. Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start and they have excellent outdoor facilities to help them learn well. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities also do well because they get plenty of support. Your personal development is good and this helps you to become sensible and mature young people by the time you leave school. Your headteacher and teachers know exactly what your school needs to do next and they take good care of you.

Most pupils make satisfactory progress and reach expected levels by the end of Year 6. However, those of you who find learning easy tend not to reach the higher levels because some of the work you do is not hard enough. It is not the same in all classes and those of you in Years 5 and 6 are working extremely hard at the moment. So we have asked your school to make sure it does the following four things to help you all and improve the quality of education you receive.

- Make sure that teachers set harder tasks for those of you in Key Stage 2 who find learning easy so you reach the highest standards you can.
- Make sure that teachers work out carefully what you need to learn next so you build on what you know and understand. We want all of you, not just Years 5 and 6, to be involved in assessing your own learning so you make faster progress.
- We have asked teachers to give you more time in lessons to work on your own so you have time to practise what you have been taught.
- Finally, we have asked your school to make it possible for parents with children in Key Stage 2 to meet teachers informally like they do with younger children at the beginning and end of the school day. If there is something they need to talk to a teacher about they can do it there and then. This will help your parents who worry about you sometimes.