

Western Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121399
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	313977
Inspection dates	9–10 June 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	414
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Teresa Brooke
Headteacher	Mrs C Smith
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2004
School address	Cold Bath Road Harrogate North Yorkshire HG2 0NA
Telephone number	1423 502737
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Western Primary School serves a relatively advantaged residential area in the centre of Harrogate. It is much larger than average and is oversubscribed because it is popular. The school is housed in a three-storey Victorian building with limited playground space. Most pupils are of White British heritage with 12% from other ethnic groups. A small proportion is at an early stage of learning English with Polish and Mandarin being the home languages of these pupils. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school is an Investor in People and has many national and local awards including the Activemark, Healthy Schools Award and a Leading Aspects Award for lunchtime activities. There have been considerable staffing changes in the last two years.

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 outstanding features, including an outstanding Foundation Stage. Central to its success is the outstanding curriculum, which reflects pupils' views that learning is exciting when it includes 'drama, experiments, variety, outings and lots of action'. Pupils have a say in what is planned and suggest some of the activities they would like to do. The result is confident, active and mature young people who ask pertinent questions and are extremely keen to learn. This is reflected in their extremely high attendance levels and good, sensible behaviour. Their personal development, therefore, is outstanding. A significant strength is the key role played by the class and school councils in decision making. In this school, children really matter and their views count.

Achievement is good. From above average starting points in Year 1 pupils make good progress and go on to reach consistently well above average standards in reading mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Roughly two-thirds of pupils reach the higher level expected of them for their age. This is because of the strong emphasis placed by the school on learning through investigation. Pupils have many opportunities to use their mathematical and scientific skills in other subjects. Strong links with a local high school with specialist science status give pupils access to high quality resources which challenge average achievers as well as the more able. It is a different picture in writing, at both key stages, because comparatively fewer pupils attain the higher levels at the end of Years 2 and 6. The school has tackled the problem sensibly, successfully getting boys switched on to writing by providing real purposes for writing tasks. Weaknesses in writing remain, however, partly because teachers do not always expect enough of more able writers. Pupils sometimes do not have sufficient time to write at length and expectations of presentation vary from class to class. In addition, marking does not always give precise points for improvement and so pupils are unsure exactly what they have to do to improve their work. Standards in reading are securely above average because the school gives intensive and effective support to less able readers and pupils are encouraged to read extensively for different purposes across the curriculum. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are less able make good progress because they are given good support from teaching assistants who work closely with them both in class and in small groups to push their learning on. The same is true for new learners of English who make similarly good progress.

The quality of teaching is good and improving because it is regularly checked by subject leaders and the headteacher. This means that innovative and effective practice is shared and weaknesses tackled effectively and supportively as teachers of the same year groups plan and work together. Effective teamwork by all staff leads to good management of subjects and some lively teaching methods, especially in more practical subjects where pupils learn actively. This develops their social and cooperative skills to a high level. The care, support and guidance given to pupils are good overall. Academic guidance is developing well but is not wholly effective largely because the school gathers too much information about pupils' progress in too many different ways. This makes it hard to draw conclusions about the relative progress of different groups of pupils and so set accurate targets. Results in national tests tend to vary from the school's predictions.

The school is well led by a forward thinking headteacher and managed by a strong leadership team. As a result, the school is a happy place where it is fun to be a child. Parents have positive views, commenting that their 'children blossom socially because of the excellent teamwork which helps them to form friendships'. Governors give good support and have commissioned

a feasibility study as to how to extend the school to accommodate its growing numbers of pupils.

Pupils have a good awareness of why it is important to live healthily and, consequently, the gardening and Eco clubs have a thriving membership. Pupils' outstanding contribution both to the local and national communities is exemplified by the substantial funds raised for 'School Aid' organised by Year 5 and 6 pupils at their request to support children's education in parts of Kenya.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

From starting points that are broadly as expected for their age children make outstanding progress. By the end of the Foundation Stage almost all are working within expected levels in all areas of learning and some exceed this. Children make excellent progress in their independence and problem solving skills. Their curiosity and attitudes to learning are exemplary. This is because they are taught extremely well by adults who know how to play with children and extend their learning at the same time. Questioning is outstanding and adults follow children's lead. For example the children devised a much more complicated large scale lighthouse rejecting their teachers small scale model saying "we do not need your help but we need a little help here." The sense of excitement and engagement in all four classes is tangible as children set about their tasks. One little group muttered as they hurried past, 'We're busy busy!' and clearly they were as they checked to see they had got everything on the lists they had written for an expedition to the seaside. Children are resourceful learners because adults support and encourage their independence. Assessment, very much based on close observations of children's learning, is used extremely well to determine what children should learn next. The leadership and management by the headteacher and Key Stage 1 leader are highly effective at producing independent and active learners.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise teachers' expectations of more able writers, ensuring that pupils have enough time to write and that marking gives precise points to help them to improve their work.
- Simplify assessment systems so as to clearly identify pupils' learning levels and set accurate targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good for all groups of pupils, boys and girls alike. Standards at the end of Year 2 have returned to above average after a dip in 2007 because teaching and the curriculum have improved. These have a positive impact on progress, though the proportion exceeding expected levels in writing is still comparatively small. Standards in Year 6 are well above average in mathematics and science with a large proportion reaching the higher Level 5. In English, the proportion of pupils reaching nationally expected levels is high whereas the proportion reaching the higher Level 5 in writing is broadly average and remains an area for improvement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are happy, articulate learners with a keen sense of pride in their school because they have a firm stake in what goes on. They develop a sense of responsibility by being on the school council or becoming 'play squad' leaders. As one said, 'It's just like having a job, you have to turn up.' Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good and their awareness and understanding of diverse cultures are extended by educational visits and visitors to the school. They work together in groups very well, amicably arguing because they are strong-minded and articulate, extremely well prepared for their future lives. They do, however, get things done and not only show empathy for others but also take action to help those who need it. Most pupils say they feel safe in school. They know who they can turn to for support and they are confident that any issues such as minor bullying will be dealt with by their teachers. They make sensible choices as to what they do at lunchtimes and this means they are relaxed and refreshed and ready to learn.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils learn well because their lessons interest them. Teachers take as their starting point what pupils know and what they want to find out and so this makes learning relevant to them. Strengths in teaching include lively material, good connections between subjects and a strong focus on active learning. In the best teaching, questioning of different groups of pupils is highly effective. Where teaching is less assured, teachers tend to talk for a bit too long which cuts down the amount of time pupils have to write or to discuss purposefully. Pupils are involved in assessing their own learning but this is more effective in numeracy than in literacy. Pupils use their targets to help them but the variable quality of teachers' marking means that pupils are not always clear about how to improve their writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The innovative curriculum focuses on developing skills through a theme which links different subjects. A strong feature is consulting pupils as to which components would make learning more enjoyable and interesting and incorporating these into the planning. The decision to extend the Foundation Stage curriculum to Key Stage 1 adds even more continuity to pupils' learning. It is having a positive impact on achievement through developing pupils' resourcefulness and skills in independence. Recent developments to literacy provision, based on motivating pupils, especially boys, to write, are proving effective. Special 'themed weeks' such as 'Eco Week' broaden pupils' educational experience as they discover just how much more power it takes to light up an ordinary bulb compared to a low energy one. Innovative lunchtime arrangements offer pupils the choice of organised activities, a range of play equipment, clubs such as computer and dance clubs which they run themselves and a 'chill out' room known as 'the colouring club' for pupils who choose to be quiet. Provision for physical education and the creative arts is equally strong.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Safeguarding procedures meet current government guidelines. Personal support and guidance are outstanding. Pupils and sometimes parents gain considerably from the support provided by staff in the 'quiet room' which brings positive benefits in terms of 'time out', raised self-esteem or just having someone to listen to problems. Social skills, turn-taking and behaviour management activities help pupils to get more out of their lessons in the classroom. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or for new learners of English is good. Assessment systems are over-complicated and make it hard to set accurate targets

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's analytical and evaluative approach has created an effective leadership team to lead innovative practice. The school improvement plan is thorough. The school has successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection but is aware that there is still some fine tuning to do in order to make assessment a more useful tool. Stringent checking of teaching quality has increased the effectiveness of teaching and heightened pupils' independent learning skills. Governors have a good understanding of areas needing further development and what needs to be done in order to achieve these. For example, they are actively seeking ways to improve the present arrangements for those pupils eating packed lunches in terms of building works but alternative solutions have yet to be explored as fully.

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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	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	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	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	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	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

Inspection of Western Primary School, Harrogate, HG2 0NA

Thank you for talking to us so readily about your school. We enjoyed meeting you all and sharing in your Eco week. Your teachers had clearly put a lot of thought into providing you with lively and indeed energetic activities! I enjoyed some of your discussions and watching you race the solar powered cars you had constructed. You go to a good school. The best things about your school are the curriculum and your personal development. These are outstanding. We are impressed at how extensively your teachers consult you so that they provide lessons which will engage you and help you to learn independently. This practical approach helps you to reach well above average standards in mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Your school takes good care of you and things like the 'quiet room' and the 'colouring club' as well as all the other clubs and activities mean you take charge of some of your learning. This helps you to develop into confident and resourceful young people. It is really good that your school takes notice of your ideas, letting you organise your own clubs, for example, or a 'School Aid' fund-raising day. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is also outstanding because children learn so much so quickly through playing and trying out their own ideas. You are well taught and your headteacher gives good help and support to everyone.

It is part of our job to tell the school what it needs to do to improve further. This is what we have asked your school to do and these are the reasons why.

- We have asked your teachers to expect more of those of you who write well and give you more time to write and more help as to how to improve your writing. This will help more of you to do as well in English as you do in other subjects.
- Your teachers collect lots of information about your progress. We have asked them to do this more simply and to use the information better to help them set accurate targets.