

Clarksfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133711
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	316207
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Marie Cordey

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	440
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martyn Potts
Headteacher	Mrs T O'Donnell
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2004
School address	Grasmere Road Oldham Lancashire OL4 1NG
Telephone number	0161 6651376
Fax number	0161 6247350

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Inspection number	316207

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large school close to the town of Oldham. Most pupils are of minority ethnic heritage and are at an early stage of learning English when they enter the school. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and that of those who are eligible for free school meals, are above average. The school has gained the Eco School and Healthy School awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Clarksfield is a satisfactory and improving school. It is improving because of the headteacher's very clear vision for driving up standards as well as caring for pupils' well-being. A new staffing structure has placed teachers in classes that match their areas of strength. As a consequence, teaching is based on subject and age related knowledge and standards are improving. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. There is good capacity to improve because of the significant improvements that have already taken place and the clear planning and focus of the headteacher in spurring both staff and pupils to raise their performance.

Low and declining standards in Year 2 have been halted and pupils now make satisfactory progress to maintain broadly average standards. Results for the Key Stage 2 national tests in 2007 showed significant improvement. Evidence from pupils' current work and information provided by the school about pupils' progress show a sustained improvement in all year groups. Standards in Year 6 are now broadly average, but are above average in science. Pupils' achievement across Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. Pupils of a minority ethnic heritage and those at the early stage of learning English also make satisfactory progress. This is because of improved teaching quality, though there is more to do to ensure pupils' learning is effective at all times. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve equally as their peers as a result of the targeted support they receive.

Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Whilst there are significant strengths in the quality of teaching and learning, some lessons are less effective. In the better lessons teachers develop pupils' literacy, numeracy, and speaking and listening skills in planned work which carefully matches the needs of the pupils. In these lessons learning is made enjoyable to help develop crucial skills. For example, in a Year 1 literacy lesson, role play enthusiastically involved the pupils and provided an excellent foundation for learning about word and sentence work. In the weaker lessons, pupils occasionally have to listen for too long and so become restless. They are not sufficiently involved enough in their learning and teachers do not always make it clear what pupils need to do to improve their work.

The personal development and well-being of pupils is satisfactory. They understand well how to stay safe and have a clear awareness of right and wrong. They are welcoming, polite and helpful reflecting the good relationships between pupils and with adults. The school council has begun to play an active role in decision making, although pupils in Key Stage 1 are not as involved. Pupils are proud of being part of an 'Eco School' and are aware of global and local environment issues. They usually behave appropriately in lessons and around school, although punctuality is an ongoing problem for a significant minority. Attendance overall is satisfactory thanks to the school's concerted actions to improve it. Despite the school's best efforts, however, there are still a small number of families who persist in removing their children from school for extended holidays.

The good curriculum is rich and broad, providing a range of experiences in order to improve literacy and numeracy skills. The introduction of themed blocks of lessons linking many subjects is beginning to improve standards. This is because the curriculum is more relevant and enjoyable and in these lessons pupils are involved and enthusiastic. The school provides good care for pupils through effective systems for their safety and well-being. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and meet national requirements. Those pupils with additional needs are sensitively supported to ensure they make satisfactory achievement. Inconsistencies in the quality of

marking and the guidance pupils receive mean that some are not sure how well they are doing in their work or how to improve it. Consequently, care, guidance and support overall are satisfactory.

Overall, governance is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive of the school and are increasingly holding the school more to account.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good provision in the Foundation Stage enables children to make a good start to their school life. Their overall skills are below expected levels when they join the Nursery class and their communication and social skills are lower. Vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified quickly and well supported by skilled staff. Children who are at an early stage of learning English are well taught by staff, including a number of bilingual teaching assistants. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. A team of staff nurture the children's personal, emotional and social development through planned provision to develop their self-esteem and confidence. Good teaching and learning are underpinned by effective planning and good teamwork. A new programme to teach letters and sounds is improving standards in the Reception class. The outdoor area is well equipped, although it is not covered and this prevents all-weather use. Children's physical skills are less developed as a result.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the overall quality of teaching and learning in order to raise standards.
- Improve the quality of marking to ensure that pupils understand how well they are doing in their work and what they need to do to make it better.
- Set pupils clear achievable targets and involve them in checking their progress towards them so they know how to reach higher standards.
- Improve the attendance and punctuality of a small minority of pupils.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will have a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in English and mathematics but above average in science. Pupils make satisfactory progress from their broadly average starting points in Year 1 and challenging targets throughout the school are met. Standards in English and mathematics are broadly average by the end of Year 2 and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the progress expected of them because they are quickly identified and their needs are carefully met by knowledgeable and sensitive support staff. Higher attaining pupils are identified carefully and monitored to ensure that they reach their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles which is reflected in the school's 'Healthy School' status. There are good opportunities for pupils to be active which include regular

swimming lessons in the school's swimming pool. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and is supported by a strong personal education curriculum. Consequently, pupils are very clear on how to keep safe and have good links with the local community. For example, they are keen fund-raisers for local charities and contribute well to improvements in the local environment. Parents come to school for coffee mornings, assemblies and to support their children. Pupils are aware of a range of world faiths and cultures and they delight in the chance to go on visits. Their behaviour is satisfactory generally, although there are times when pupils become restless and less focused on their work. Pupils are not as well prepared as they should be for their future lives because there are limited opportunities to develop business and enterprise skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers plan work to make learning enjoyable and to ensure that crucial skills are developed. Information and communication technology has provided an exciting dimension to the pupils' learning. In a Year 5 lesson, digital photographs of the previous day's trip to Bramall Hall stimulated pupils' planning of a review of the day.

Teachers and support staff plan the support for pupils who have learning difficulties and those who are at an early stage of learning English. This teamwork and prompt response to meeting needs ensures that these pupils make satisfactory progress. In some lessons instructions are not explicit enough and a small number of lively pupils rush too much to get from one place to another. Teachers' subject knowledge is good except for some aspects of spelling. This affects how pupils present their work. Inconsistencies in the quality of marking mean that some pupils are not sure how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is good provision in the curriculum to engage pupils in learning and nurture their inquiring minds, for example, through the investigation of animals' natural habitats. Learning is made interesting and exciting with many opportunities to develop the pupils' speaking and listening skills. It is further enriched by the many educational visits linked to learning in the classroom. Pupils enjoy learning Spanish and say it is 'muy bien'. Good links with other primary and secondary schools, both locally and in Pakistan, broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of life beyond their school. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are at an early stage of learning English is satisfactory and pupils make appropriate progress. The school provides a limited range of extra-curricular opportunities, although the ones that are offered are popular.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Learning mentors provide an extra layer of care and support for the pupils' learning and emotional needs. They are respected and valued by pupils and staff because of their contribution to helping pupils with their problems, attendance and confidence building. Pupils are well supervised at lunchtime and pupils have the chance to take part in many organised activities such as playground games and football. Challenging targets are set, although they are

insufficiently understood and acted upon by pupils. Clear classroom displays help pupils know their targets but they are too far removed from pupils' day to day work in their books. Inconsistencies in the quality of marking and guidance pupils receive on their work mean some remain unsure of how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

As a result of the headteacher's good leadership, the deputy headteachers have taken on more responsibility. This has increased their effectiveness in improving the school. Consequently, standards are rising and achievement improving because of a strong drive from the senior leadership team which has instituted effective systems to track the pupils' progress. Effective self-evaluation of how well the school is doing means the school understands itself well and, consequently, actions taken to improve the school are well placed. There are good links with outside helpers, particularly through the 'Intensifying Support Programme' and with neighbouring schools. Improvements in behaviour and in the pupils' care are offset by some pupils' low attendance and poor punctuality. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection and satisfactory value for money.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	2
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

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you very much for the way you welcomed us to your school. You were very polite and keen for us to talk to you.

We think that your school is satisfactory and that it is getting better. Your headteacher is determined to make the school improve even more and school staff are helping her to do that.

You are a big part of this and we are convinced that you will be very much involved in improving the school.

You reach standards that are broadly average but do much better in science. You enjoy your lessons, especially when you are involved in doing practical activities. The children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress because they are well looked after and excited by their learning.

We judge that your school needs to see how the teaching and learning you have enjoyed could be developed. Some of you said to us that you would 'like to do more interesting work' and we agree with you.

We think that you all need to know how you are doing in your work and exactly how to improve it. You could help by asking your teacher how you could make your work better and working hard to achieve higher standards of work.

Some of you come to school late or have too much time off school. It is very important to attend school and you could make a difference by making sure that you come to school regularly.

Thank you again for your help and I wish you all the very best for your future.