

# Yew Tree Community School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133712
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oldham
<b>Inspection number</b>	316208
<b>Inspection date</b>	20 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jim Kidd

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	452
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr William Gow
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Martine Buckley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 May 2004
<b>School address</b>	Alcester Street Chadderton Oldham Lancashire OL9 8LD
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 2845464
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 2845465

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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: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, the quality of leadership and management at all levels and improvements made since the previous inspection. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form, nationally published assessment data, the school's own assessment records, relevant policies, observations of the school at work including visits to lessons and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Discussions were also held with staff, the chair of governors, pupils and a local authority adviser. 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 the report.

## Description of the school

This larger than average school serves a mixed area in which there are pockets of significant social and economic disadvantage. Most pupils are White British but there are increasing numbers from minority ethnic heritages, of whom almost two thirds speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above that usually found. Yew Tree is an eco school and also runs both before and after school clubs. The school has opened a Nursery since the previous school inspection.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of what this outstanding school does for their sons and daughters. As they say, 'Yew Tree does an excellent job in teaching and caring for our offspring. Teachers help and reassure them and even advise us on how we can help them to learn at home!'

Indeed, the school is a focal point of the area and its warm relations with parents and local institutions do much to foster community cohesion both inside and outside its walls. The school is calm, well ordered, and racial harmony abounds. Leadership at all levels is outstanding. Under the auspices of an inspirational headteacher, a very well informed governing body and an utterly committed senior team, all adults share the same, clear educational philosophy: they want the very best for each individual pupil and in all areas of school life. Staff foster high levels of teamwork among their pupils, do all they can to raise their self-esteem and encourage them to celebrate not only their own successes but also the personal and academic progress of their peers.

Children enter the recently established Nursery with skills which are well below those typically expected for their age. By the end of Year 2 pupils reach broadly average standards and by the time they leave for secondary school their attainment in English, mathematics and science is above average. Their progress is outstanding. Increasing numbers of Year 6 pupils are reaching the higher National Curriculum Level 5, and the school has an enviable record in reaching or surpassing its challenging academic targets year on year. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology are similarly impressive; they use computers with a confidence that belies their years.

An issue at the time of the previous inspection, the quality of pupils' writing, has improved markedly over the past three years. This is a result of teachers taking every opportunity to research the most effective ways of ensuring that their pupils gain in confidence using the written word. Classrooms are adorned with displays of high quality writing and with examples of how to approach the production of work in different genres. Pupils also support each other with their writing and make perceptive comments about whether their classmates have met the success criteria for each piece of work.

Pupils' personal development is excellent. They behave well, have a keen social conscience and older pupils in particular willingly take on responsibilities to help their younger counterparts. The school council represents the views of its constituents with pride; its suggestions as to how to make the school even better have led to more playground equipment and a tyre park, for example. The vast majority of pupils love their school and teachers and support staff do everything in their power to encourage regular attendance. Pupils have an excellent understanding of cultures different from their own and celebrate a range of religious festivals. They support local, national and global charities and, through eco school activities, are fully aware of the need to protect the environment. They know what makes a healthy diet and they keep fit by taking part in a wide variety of games and sports both during and after school. They also take the lead in several local events. For example, the choir performs regularly at a home for elderly residents.

The quality of teaching is outstanding and has pupils' learning at its very heart. Teachers plan comprehensively for the achievement of all abilities and they place considerable emphasis on making sure that their pupils know exactly what they need to do to reach their targets. Success

criteria are strong features of all lessons and pupils are able to gauge their own progress with the utmost accuracy. Pupils are encouraged to act as resources for each other and the use of 'learning partners' gives them an opportunity to test out their opinions before being required to share them with the whole class. In an excellent Year 1 literacy lesson, for example, pupils challenged each other to high levels of attainment and demonstrated that, at such an early age, they had a keen understanding of the importance of a synopsis in writing a story. This lesson showed that pupils are more than willing to take responsibility for their own learning.

Pupils understand the links between subjects across the curriculum and they are increasingly using the skills gained in one area to aim for success in others. They speak positively of the impressive variety of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. They add that assemblies are often the high point of the week because they learn so much in them and also gain rewards such as being named Pupil of the Week.

The care for pupils is of the highest order. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are identified as vulnerable receive the utmost support from the talented team of teaching assistants and learning mentors. Pupils are grateful for the help they get and say that there is always an adult (or sometimes an older pupil) to turn to if they are worried or experiencing difficulties. Academic guidance is of a similar high standard. The school quite rightly prides itself on the quality and detail of the advice it gives to pupils of all levels of ability on how they can improve their work. Marking is excellent and it is the policy of the school that it is completed in conjunction with pupils so that immediate discussions can take place on successes and areas for improvement. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place and meet national guidelines.

First-class leadership, exceptional teaching and high levels of achievement among pupils, in both personal and academic terms, demonstrate that the school provides outstanding value for money. Yew Tree is without doubt a 'thinking school' in which self-evaluation is accurate, the well-being of its pupils is paramount and where complacency is not tolerated. It has, therefore, an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The addition of a Nursery on site has a positive impact on the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage as a whole. The area is led and managed well. Children enter the Nursery with well below the expected skill levels, and these are declining even further over time. Their personal and social skills are particularly weak. Good teaching, strong support from teaching assistants and a curriculum which provides an ideal balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities lead to good achievement in children's all-round performance. Increasing numbers are reaching or surpassing the expected goals by the end of their Reception year. They make good progress in both Nursery and Reception, especially in their emotional development. Teachers give children increasing autonomy and encourage them to make decisions about what they wish to do. As a result, children behave sensibly, get on well with others and become more independent. Teachers recognise the need for them to assess children's progress accurately more consistently in order to plan effectively for their next stages in learning. The strength of the outdoor provision is exemplified by the fact that teachers from other schools visit both Nursery and Reception to learn from Yew Tree's impressive practice.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that assessment practice in the Foundation Stage is consistently accurate in order that teachers are able to plan more effectively for children's next stages in learning.

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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?	1
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	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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?	1
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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 Yew Tree Community School, Oldham, OL9 8LD

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited Yew Tree recently. It was a pleasure to visit your lessons, watch you learn and talk to you. I am particularly grateful to those of you who came to chat with me in the deputy headteacher's office. I enjoyed the Key Stage 2 assembly and thought your singing was marvellous! I would now like to tell you just how good your school is.

Yew Tree is an outstanding school and you are right to be very proud of it. The teaching you receive is excellent and you make first-rate progress in your work. You always reach your targets and more and more of you are reaching higher National Curriculum levels. You produce some very good writing and I was fascinated by your accounts of 'The Piano'. You behave well, get on with each other and have really good relationships with the adults who work with you. The school council has many suggestions to improve school life and older pupils do a lot to help younger ones, particularly when they are playing games in the playground. You know why it is important to eat healthily and you also take part in a variety of sports and games to keep yourself fit.

You really enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular trips and visits you make. You are also delighted that your teachers, teaching assistants and learning mentors take such wonderful care of you. They give you a lot of advice on how you can improve your work and how to stay happy in school.

Your headteacher and all the other staff work very hard to make sure that you continue to enjoy Yew Tree. I have asked them to take a closer look at how children's progress is assessed in Nursery and Reception, so that teachers know exactly how well the 'little ones' are doing, and can plan the activities based on this.

Thanks once again for being so polite and friendly and for helping me with the inspection. Please keep working hard, doing your best in class and looking after each other.