

Westhoughton Parochial CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105237
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	331048
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Roger Gill

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	200
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Bernadette Reynolds
Headteacher	Mr Gareth Robertshaw
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Fairways Westhoughton Bolton Lancashire BL5 3NZ

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2009
Inspection number	331048

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

When Westhoughton Parochial C of E Primary School was inspected in June 2007 it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Subsequently, Additional Inspectors visited the school on four occasions to monitor its progress.

Description of the school

This school is slightly smaller than average. It serves a socially mixed population in a small town to the west of Bolton. Smaller proportions of pupils than usual are eligible to receive free school meals, have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or belong to minority ethnic groups. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school's provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage comprises one Reception class. The school has gone through some major changes since it was last inspected. An interim executive headteacher was appointed in January 2008 until a permanent appointment was made. Slightly over half of the staff is new to the school including the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

This is a good school that has eradicated the considerable weaknesses it possessed in 2007. Standards have risen and pupils' progress has forged ahead because teaching provides pupils with tasks that are expertly matched to their needs. Beyond the academic, pupils' personal development has blossomed owing to the good care, guidance and support they receive. This was remarked on by parishioners at a Fairtrade coffee morning hosted by Year 5 pupils. 'Children show an amazing confidence: they really act as if they belong to something,' was a typical view expressed over coffee. It is similar to the written comments from parents that are posted around the school, linked to exciting displays of the pupils doing Indian dancing, for example. This comprehensive revival of the school has been achieved in a relatively short time owing to effective leadership, which has taken swift action in eliminating inadequate teaching entirely.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have acted with skill and determination in tackling the areas for improvement identified by the last inspection. They have built on the good start made by the interim executive headteacher and the excellent support provided by the local authority. The school possesses a very clear direction for school development; a system of assessment that is extremely useful in identifying standards reached, progress made and areas for further development in learning; and plans for teaching that dovetail neatly with what pupils need to learn next. As a result, current standards in Year 6 are above the expected levels nationally, which represents good achievement. This is majorly different from the average results in 2006 that signified inadequate progress, which is why the school now provides good value for money.

Standards have risen at a fast pace since 2006, except in writing, which has in some cases lagged behind reading and mathematics. Progress in reading is wholly good now, and excellent in Year 2, Year 4 and Year 6, whereas by comparison it is good, and sometimes satisfactory, in writing. There are signs of quicker advances of late in writing, owing to the implementation of some new teaching methods, but these are not yet having a uniformly good effect across the school. Nevertheless, progress in writing, or any other area of learning, is never less than satisfactory.

Pupils are fully aware about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, they feel safe in school and enjoy learning because the good curriculum has become a source of fascination for them. For example, pupils in Year 3 have expanded their educational and personal horizons by completing a topic on the Tudors in a novel way. They have, with the aid of computer technology, been able to study alongside pupils in another school in Bolton who are from a minority ethnic heritage. Provision for community cohesion is good because on top of the very lively ethos in the school, pupils are able to learn about their local community and global issues in ways that have a positive impact on their development. Thus the school's good provision for equality and diversity is reflected not only in its dedication in creating good academic progress for all groups of pupils but also in developing a positive awareness about ethnic, faith and social issues.

Governors and middle leaders have developed their ability to review the school's progress and set the challenging agenda for change. This, coupled with the drive generated by the senior leadership, has made sure that self-evaluation is thorough, results and teaching are evaluated rigorously, and pupils' progress is good. In a relatively short time, good leadership and management have turned the school's inadequate capacity to improve into a good one.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Most children enter the school with skills and knowledge typical of those expected for their age, although recognition of letters and sounds, and the early skills of writing and calculation are often below that level. Nevertheless, standards by the end of Reception are now higher than expected nationally owing to the recent improvements in provision that have taken place. This quicker pace of learning is only now beginning to have an impact on standards through the school.

Currently, much learning is devoted to exploring a fictitious Dinosaur Island on which a character called Katie has become shipwrecked. Children are fully absorbed in, for example, writing lists of things to pack in their rucksacks, sifting sand in the class museum to find bones and fossils and searching for Katie by using binoculars in the lookout post. Teaching is skilful at promoting the fantasy, extending children's thinking through apt questions and providing opportunities for freely chosen play. Personal development is good because adults work well to create a purposeful environment. Children collaborate with each other well, listen to ideas, work in teams and share resources. Outdoor learning is always available and children love the way in which they can continue with their adventures in the cabin or behind the camouflage netting. However, space is tight and children can unintentionally disturb each other by simply moving around too quickly. Bikes and scooters can be used but only on a timetabled basis in the general playground. Consequently, there is a limit to the way in which skills and knowledge can be developed through outside play. Nevertheless, the Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed in a way that recognises what is successful and what needs to be improved. Children make good progress because they are looked after well, teaching is effective and links with parents and carers are productive.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing to match those in reading and mathematics.
- Extend opportunities for outside play in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in Year 6 are above average, they have improved because the rate of pupils' progress has speeded up. Since 2007, progress has quickened but advances were uneven to begin with. The rate of improvement, for example, was faster in mathematics or reading depending on the quality of teaching in different parts of the school. Now, progress throughout the school is generally good across the board. Achievement improved as inadequate teaching was eliminated. There are still some patches of satisfactory progress in writing but these are matched by first-rate progress in reading whereby pupils have caught up in one term quicker than might have been expected in one year. The school has made sure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress well. They are identified accurately and given suitable work, which is supervised by well-qualified teaching assistants. Moreover, the school keeps a very watchful eye on different groups of pupils, such as those from minority ethnic backgrounds, intervening where necessary, and this ensures that their achievement is good too.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children enjoy school, behave well and participate eagerly. Older pupils say things such as, 'I like to be busy and take care of people,' which sums up the school's general air of energy and commitment. The pupil voice committee sets a good example through its work in organising events such as those for Red Nose day. Pupils learn about global issues, assume responsibilities such as acting as buddies, and study other faiths and cultures. In this way, pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Levels of attendance are above average, which demonstrates pupils' desire to learn. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the way that their creativity, health and fitness are promoted. Many attend the good range of clubs available, for example those for choir, art, sport and reading. Personal development is good, but not yet outstanding because although pupils are beginning to gain a global perspective, it is too soon to see the full benefit of this kind of development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Learning is good because teachers are successful at deciding the right activities, communicating the purpose of the lessons well and creating enthusiasm among pupils. Furthermore, precise assessments provide a very clear idea about pupils' next steps in learning. There is some outstanding teaching. For example, in Year 4 pupils asked probing questions of an Indian visitor because they were so enthralled with the topic and the way they had been prepared for it. In Years 5 and 6, writing tasks were pursued superbly because pupils were so committed to reaching their targets. However, the new programme to develop writing is not yet evenly applied to good effect throughout the school. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have regular opportunities to undertake educational play activities in the shared area outside their classrooms. These have improved their learning no end. For example, pupils in Year 2 designed and made puppets in class more effectively because they had tried out some ideas beforehand in the shared area.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved pupils' academic learning well and is a positive force for their personal development. Apt tasks for different groups of pupils are planned well. Until recently, the higher attainers were sometimes under-challenged but now they relish the additional opportunities they are given. A hallmark of the recent improvements to the curriculum is the way in which skills in literacy and numeracy are developed and practised through other subjects. The vast majority of activities are practical and full of problems to solve. Very occasionally, learning is planned through worksheets that make too few demands. Many pupils get involved in a wide range of extra-curricular activities in a way that boosts their confidence and stimulates valuable skills. Moreover, study visits, such as to Tudor houses, add a valuable dimension to the curriculum. Physical education is a good feature of the provision, as is information and communication technology. The way in which pupils are able to participate in running the school equips them well for later life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are given good quality care and support, which has a beneficial effect on their personal development. It is a united team of staff being led in a spirited way by knowledgeable and skilled leaders that creates a strong atmosphere of support. Pupils' needs are considered in detail. Their academic progress is tackled with precision in ways that inform lesson planning well. Throughout the school, pupils receive good guidance about what to do next. The need to strengthen, in some cases, the way in which pupils assess their own work, particularly in writing, does not diminish the positive nature of academic guidance. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils including risk assessments are in place and meet current government requirements. Parents are involved closely in their children's learning. They appreciate particularly the opportunities to observe their children's learning and to write comments about what they see. Additional help is exploited well for any pupil with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good because the drive to raise standards has been effective despite different leaders being involved. The governors and other external partners have acted well together to provide continuity. Current senior leadership has accelerated the school's progress even faster. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher can articulate the educational direction clearly and possess excellent skills, as teachers, to influence at a practical level. Despite leadership being relatively new, the degree of rigour that lies behind the evaluation of teaching, for example, has totally eradicated inadequate teaching. Moreover, the school's other substantial difficulties have been tackled as thoroughly. The school make good provision for community cohesion, pupils have good opportunities to learn about their local community and global issues in ways that have a positive impact on their own development. Subject leadership is developing well but the school will not have its full complement of middle leaders until September. This does not preclude leadership and management from being good but the extra load carried by senior leaders limits the school's drive to become outstanding.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our two days with you all. You go to a good school, which has improved enormously since it was last inspected in 2007. Many of you told us how much it has got better in that time. Your school has made such a lot of improvements that it no longer needs special measures. Standards are now above average. You are achieving well owing to good teaching, an interesting curriculum and the caring way in which you are supported.

What has struck me the most, over the five terms that I have been visiting the school, is the increase in your confidence. Currently, it is plain to see when you think of your fantastic singing in assembly, involvement in events such as the community coffee morning and the way you throw yourselves wholeheartedly into activities such as Indian dancing. Bollywood certainly did come to Bolton judging by the look on your faces in the photographs. No wonder you find learning at school enjoyable and rewarding.

You enjoy the lessons that place higher demands on you, events such as the Multicultural Super Learning Week and challenges such as fundraising to pay £1000 for the coach to take pupils from Years 5 and 6 to their residential trip this year. Your pupil voice committee certainly contributes to the success of the school. I was most impressed to learn that the school involves you in the process of appointing new staff and that you write to parents telling them who has been appointed.

I know everyone wants to do even better and I have asked the school to do these two things to help bring this about.

- Raise standards in writing so they are as high as in reading and mathematics.
- Children in Reception now have a well equipped outside space in which to learn, but it is too small for all that they need to do. I have asked the school to find a way to extend their learning in this respect.

You can all help by trying even harder with your writing.