

Ackworth Mill Dam Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130966
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	341074
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Joan McKenna

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 of pupils on the school roll	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Susan Nunns
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Mann
Date of previous school inspection	15 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons taught by seven staff and observed other shorter sessions in classrooms as well as some sessions where pupils were withdrawn for support. They held meetings with a governor, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including data about pupils' progress, records of monitoring, policies, action plans and the 49 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

- the extent to which more-able pupils are challenged
- whether teaching in Key Stage 1 has improved since the last inspection
- whether the new curriculum arrangements are making a difference to pupils' learning
- the impact of changes made to the organisation of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

All pupils at this smaller than average primary school are White British. The proportions of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are broadly average and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. A new headteacher took up post in September 2009.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Ackworth Mill Dam School provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Pastoral care is good, as is pupils' personal development, and these strengths have been maintained since the previous inspection. Academic provision and the achievement of pupils are satisfactory, as they were when last inspected. Through monitoring, the headteacher has accurately identified the school's effectiveness and what needs to be improved. Steps to bring this about have begun. There are some early signs of positive impact. Action is being taken to develop the roles of other leaders including their skills, understanding and effectiveness. In view of this picture, and some progress in tackling key issues from the last inspection, the school is demonstrating satisfactory capacity to improve further.

The small size of the school is capitalised upon in the extent to which all pupils are well known by staff, and a good level of care is provided for them. Pupils feel safe and secure within a friendly and happy atmosphere. Most pupils behave well and have positive relationships with each other. They make a good contribution to their community and have a clear understanding of how to keep healthy. Strong efforts are made to support those pupils who have additional, sometimes quite severe, needs and this helps them to cope with school life and benefit from it.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory across the school and standards are usually broadly average when they leave Year 6. Standards are higher in reading than in writing and mathematics. The number of pupils in each year group is small and that largely accounts for any variation in standards, although more-able pupils do not always attain higher levels in their work. Teaching is satisfactory, including at Key Stage 1 where there were weaknesses at the previous inspection. However, across the school work is not always well-matched to the full range of needs and occasionally tasks are not clearly explained. New arrangements have been adopted to make the satisfactory curriculum more creative, interesting and flexible in order to meet pupils' needs better. Although recent, the changes are popular with pupils. Improvements have been made to the organisation of the Early Years Foundation Stage in response to the previous inspection and provision there is satisfactory.

The school's engagement with parents and carers is satisfactory. The large majority are supportive of the school, but a small minority express considerable concern about some aspects. In view of this, the school has yet to further strengthen its relationships with parents and carers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Improve the rate of progress pupils make across the school and raise the standards they attain by:
 - - improving their acquisition of basic skills, especially in writing and mathematics, and their capacity to apply them in other subjects
 - - ensuring that work is well matched to the full range of pupils' needs and provides the right level of challenge for all, including more-able pupils
 - - ensuring that tasks are clearly explained, are interesting and actively involve pupils.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - - ensuring that all leaders have the knowledge and understanding of how to judge the quality of practice by its impact on pupils' outcomes
 - - establishing a comprehensive programme of monitoring and evaluation that involves all leaders
 - - ensuring that the information gained from monitoring is used to escalate the rate of improvement.
- Strengthen relationships with parents and carers by:
 - - ensuring more regular, formal communications with parents and carers
 - - establishing more ways to ascertain parents' and carers' views of, and involvement in, the school
 - - providing parents and carers with clear and regular information about their children's progress and how they can support them at home.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils are keen to learn. Most willingly do as they are asked by teachers and try hard with their work. When given the opportunity to be actively involved in tasks, such as working with others on investigations, they apply themselves well. The new curricular arrangements provide more opportunities for this. Pupils enjoy work that is made interesting for them and is well explained. Most pupils persevere even when they find work too easy, too hard or not engaging, despite their learning being less effective. Some lose concentration on these occasions, which further limits their learning. Pupils make satisfactory progress, overall, with some escalation for older pupils. The small numbers cause some variability but, overall, there is little difference in rates of achievement across different groups. Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their classmates because of the extra support they receive. On occasions, more-able pupils' progress is held back because they are not given sufficient challenge.

Pupils like school. They appreciate and respond positively to the opportunities the school provides for them. They take a pride in their own achievements and celebrate the achievements of others. They have some awareness of a range of religions and cultures. The large majority of pupils readily abide by school rules and try hard to meet the

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school's expectations of them. However, a small minority of pupils, mainly boys, experience difficulty doing so and at times conduct themselves inappropriately. Other pupils say that they would sometimes like adults to take their concerns about this more seriously. Overall, however, pupils feel that they have a voice in school and that their views are listened to. They make helpful contribution to school life through, for example, carrying out jobs in classrooms, acting as playground buddies, selling fruit in the tuck shop and acting as house councillors. They have a well-developed sense of how to keep healthy through good diet and exercise, with pupils of all ages participating enthusiastically in the daily 'wake up and shake up' exercise.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers create a supportive environment for learning in lessons, underpinned by positive attitudes. They identify what they want pupils to learn in their plans and structure lessons accordingly, usually adopting a range of strategies. Teaching is most effective when work is practical, interesting, well explained and pitched to meet the range of pupils' needs. However, these features are not always present in all lessons.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Underlying concepts are not always clearly explained or illustrated practically so that pupils do not fully understand the ideas being taught. Work is sometimes too easy for more-able pupils or too difficult for others because it is not adapted appropriately for all. Pupils' progress is assessed regularly. Steps are being taken to check the accuracy of judgements and the information is beginning to be used more to help improve progress. It is not yet analysed and used fully by teachers to promote good progress. Some marking of work provides helpful feedback to pupils on how well they are doing and how to improve their work, but this is inconsistent across subjects or classes.

The promotion of basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. It has recently been reorganised and strengthened. Information and communication technology is not used extensively by pupils. The organisation of the curriculum in the afternoons has recently been radically altered, with much greater flexibility in the grouping of pupils and the deployment of staff. The aim is to match the curriculum more closely to the full range of pupils' needs, abilities and interests, to provide wider opportunities for them to develop and apply basic skills and to allow for more personalised learning and support for individuals and groups. It is certainly capturing pupils' imagination, for example through the use of film to stimulate practical learning and involvement. The school has yet to monitor fully the impact of the new arrangements to check they are meeting the desired aims, although very early indications are positive.

Pupils are well known to adults. Relationships are positive and contribute to the good level of pastoral care for all. Pupils play a part in caring for others, formally and informally. There are a minority of pupils who have significant additional needs. Concerted efforts are made to help meet their needs, with close liaison with external agencies where necessary, and these result in them making similar progress to other pupils overall. Attention is also paid to minimising the impact on other pupils, where this is an issue. The provision of teaching assistants is not extensive, but they are appropriately deployed. The school takes clear steps to promote attendance, although the rate has been adversely affected by a variety of factors beyond the school's control during the year. Transition arrangements at all stages provides a very positive experience for pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Although the school is satisfactory the headteacher has set aspirations for it to be more

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effective and is working to bring about a greater awareness of this among others. Greater use of data about pupils' progress is helping to develop understanding and sharpen accountability. Monitoring and evaluation activities take place, including some monitoring of teaching, but there is not a well-established programme of checking all aspects of the school's work and not all leaders are fully involved. Governors are supportive of the school. They have taken some appropriate actions, including where difficult decisions have been necessary, such as reducing staffing to maintain a balanced budget. However, they do not yet use all of the information available to them, for example about pupils' progress, to ensure that they have a full picture of the school's effectiveness. The safeguarding of pupils is taken seriously. Arrangements for checking the suitability of adults working with children meet current requirements, additional steps to keep pupils safe have been taken and where any issues are identified they are acted upon. The school is inclusive, values all pupils equally and does not tolerate harassment in any form. The progress of different groups is checked and action is taken to reduce any gaps, such as that being adopted to promote the progress of more-able pupils. The school promotes community cohesion well, especially within its local context where it works with external agencies to extend provision for pupils and support for families. The school seeks parents' and carers' views and is aware a small number have concerns, but has yet to take action to tackle this successfully.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's transition into the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective. They are warmly

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welcomed into school at the start of sessions and parents and carers appreciate the opportunity to stay with their children for a while. Children are well cared for. Most settle quickly, play happily and are confident approaching and talking with staff. Attainment on entry to and exit from the Early Years Foundation Stage varies considerably from year to year, in part because of the small numbers and differing profiles of the groups involved. The group that left last year did not attain the levels expected for that age group overall, but it contained a higher than usual proportion of children with additional needs. Overall, children make broadly satisfactory progress in their learning. The curriculum addresses all areas of learning and provides an adequate range of activities for children, more so indoors than outside. They receive helpful support and take part in productive discussion when with adults, both when playing independently and when being taught in focused sessions. However, as in the main school, group tasks are not always pitched appropriately, sometimes being too formal and at too high a level for all to understand. Child friendly language is not always used. Activities that children choose independently, although enjoyed, are not always organised in a way that fully promotes children's skills and thinking. There are times of the day when the organisation results in too leisurely a pace to learning. Since the previous inspection when the Early Years Foundation Stage was split between two sites, it has been reorganised on to one site within the main school building. This has helped to address the issue of limited resources as they are now concentrated in one setting. It also means that the youngest children in the school are more integrated with older ones, and they participate effectively in whole-school activities, such as some assemblies. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but some aspects lack rigour, such as in rectifying the weaknesses outlined above.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Just over a third of parents and carers returned the questionnaire giving their views of the school. Of these, the large majority were positive about it. In particular, they said that their children enjoy school, are kept safe and that healthy lifestyles are promoted. Inspectors agree with these aspects. However, a small minority of parents and carers expressed some concerns, especially in relation to the progress their children are making and how parents and carers are helped to support their children at home. Of the written comments accompanying questionnaires, some were positive but more were negative,

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often strongly worded, expressing concerns about the above issues as well as communication with them and aspects of leadership and management. Inspectors judge that these aspects are satisfactory overall, but also that they could be stronger.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ackworth Mill Dam Junior and Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 49 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 134 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	35	33	60	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	45	26	47	1	2	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	20	32	58	6	11	3	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	31	22	40	9	16	3	5
The teaching is good at this school	18	33	31	56	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	24	21	38	13	24	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	29	31	56	3	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	13	24	20	36	6	11	2	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	27	26	47	5	9	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	13	33	60	6	11	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	16	30	55	3	5	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	14	25	25	45	4	7	5	9
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	29	31	56	3	5	3	5

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



01 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ackworth Mill Dam Junior and Infant School, Pontefract, WF7 7PH

Thank you for being so friendly when my colleague and I visited your school. I am writing to tell you about our judgements. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. Staff know you and care for all of you well. Pupils who are 'buddies' also help look after you. You enjoy school. Most of you behave well and play nicely with each other. You have a good understanding about staying safe and healthy. Teachers plan work to help you learn and gain new knowledge and skills. You work hard and you particularly like it when you can work in groups with other children. The afternoons have been reorganised to help make work more interesting and to help you learn better. This has happened very recently, but you told me you are enjoying the changes. Overall, the teaching and curriculum are helping you make satisfactory progress in your learning.

Part of the job of inspectors is to help schools improve and your school has been asked to do several things to help make it better for you:

- to help you reach higher standards and make more progress, especially in writing and mathematics
- for teachers to make sure that they explain things well, and to give you interesting tasks you can be actively involved in and which are at the right level for all of you
- for the school's leaders to check how all the work the school does is helping you learn and take action to improve further
- to make sure your parents and carers know how you are getting on and about what is happening in school and to invite them to become more involved.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard and behaving well. I send you very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ms Joan McKenna

Lead Inspector

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