

Yewtree Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135222
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	341629
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Rob Crompton

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	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Damian Deen
Headteacher	Zoe Mathie
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twenty-two lessons were observed taken by 10 teachers. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at curriculum plans, assessment records, minutes of meetings and 24 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement of pupils at both key stages to determine whether teaching is effective in accelerating their progress and raising standards
- following a period with a number of pupil exclusions and low attendance, pupils' behaviour, attitudes and attendance levels to gauge the impact of these factors on their learning and progress
- the school's capacity for sustained improvement without extensive support from the local authority.

Information about the school

The school opened in September 2008 to replace two primary schools. It is about average in size. Most pupils are of White British heritage with about 20% from minority ethnic groups. A few of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Around a third of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is above average. Most of these pupils find learning difficult because of behavioural and emotional problems. Others have speech, language and communication difficulties. There is a 'nurture class' attended by some of the younger pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises one Nursery class and two Reception classes that work in an integrated unit.

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

2

Main findings

When the school first opened, staff faced a number of challenges. Many parents were opposed to the reorganisation; almost all staff had been newly appointed and several pupils had negative attitudes. An inspection by the local authority in January 2009 found many weaknesses. The school has made very good headway since then and has a good capacity to sustain this improvement. It now provides a satisfactory and improving quality of education in a warm, purposeful and supportive environment.

Pupils behave well and enjoy school. Views taken from a wide sample of parents reveal that the very large majority are happy with their children's overall experience. One parent commented, 'This school is progressing in the right direction and has made up a lot of ground since it opened; in fact a huge improvement', reflecting the views of the inspection team.

Pupils' learning has improved following the introduction of new teaching strategies. With clear guidance from staff, pupils frequently review their own work and are increasingly aware of what they need to do to improve. They make good progress in most lessons. However, their overall achievement is average, as progress has been slower than expected over the last two years and pupils have some catching up to do. Levels of attainment are below average, but there are signs of improvement. Pupils are developing better skills and more confidence in mathematics and English, although their general level of handwriting and presentation is weak. A strong focus on helping pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities means they are making good progress towards their individual targets. More able pupils also receive targeted support, but too much time spent on the introductions to some lessons leaves insufficient time for independent work, and this constrains their progress.

A strength of the school is the extent to which leaders, teachers and support staff work together to ensure outstanding care for all pupils. Over half of the pupils are identified by the school as being potentially vulnerable in some way, and staff work in close liaison with outside agencies to support them.

The leadership team rigorously monitors pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning. This contributes to the effective self-evaluation procedures that provide a secure basis for development planning. Building a cohesive school community has been, rightly, the main focus over the first two years of the school's life. The impact of this is evident in the good relationships across the school, participation in local events and the school's work with families facing particular difficulties. Pupils gain a reasonable awareness and understanding of different cultures in lessons but have a limited awareness of Britain as a diverse society. They do not have enough opportunities to

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engage with communities beyond the school in any direct or structured way.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' achievement by:
 - sustaining the good quality of learning evident in most lessons
 - ensuring a more effective balance between teacher's input and the time for pupils to work independently
 - providing work which challenges the more able pupils earlier in lessons
 - being more insistent that pupils present their work neatly, using appropriate punctuation.
- Extend opportunities for pupils to gain an understanding of cultural diversity by:
 - ensuring that this is given a stronger emphasis in the school's promotion of community cohesion
 - providing first hand experiences for pupils to engage with children from different communities and diverse backgrounds within the United Kingdom and beyond.
- 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**

Standards in Years 5 and 6 are below those expected due to a legacy of under-achievement, but pupils are working hard to catch up. Results of the Year 6 national tests in 2009 were well below average. Although similar results are expected in the current cohort, these pupils started from a much lower point indicating a much better rate of progress. Pupils in Year 2 are making good progress in sequencing stories, but their weak handwriting skills and uncertain punctuation detracts from the overall quality of their written work. They are developing confidence in using their number skills, for example, to measure accurately using millilitres and millimetres, but again, rather haphazard setting out leads to some inaccuracy. Practical work continues in Years 3 and 4, although a lack of challenge for the more able pupils sometimes restricts their progress in mathematics. In the older classes, pupils' skills in English and mathematics are increasing. They are keen to improve and enjoy reading and honing their written work. In Year 5, for example, pupils were eager to offer ideas for persuasive writing, such as the use of superlatives and rhetorical questions. Most rise to the challenge of using words effectively to create a mood. One boy, writing as a shark, wrote, 'Slowly, I swam through the deep blue ocean. But this wasn't any ocean, it was the most terrifying in the world'.

Those pupils whose progress is potentially constrained, because they find it difficult to behave appropriately or form positive relationships, also benefit from skilled

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encouragement. This enables them, for the most part, to keep focussed in lessons and make good progress. Pupils at an early stage of learning English and those with speech language and communication difficulties also progress well. All pupils leave the school with the basic skills they need, satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils enjoy school life and say they feel safe, secure and free from harassment. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and take part eagerly in a wide range of sporting activities. Pupils' good levels of social and moral development are evident in their good behaviour around the school, their contribution to the school community and keen support of charities. Year 5 and 6 pupils expressed strong moral convictions during a visit from a 'Show Racism the Red Card' team. However, their general awareness of the similarities and differences of different communities and cultures is rather limited.

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	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	3
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	3

How effective is the provision?

An improvement in pupils' behaviour has had a significant impact on their learning and

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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progress. This means lessons can move at a brisk pace, without unnecessary interruptions. Staff take every opportunity to raise pupils' self-esteem, to see the purpose of learning and the benefits of doing their best. The warm relationships that adults develop with pupils enable many children, who generally lack the confidence or social maturity, to participate as fully as possible in school life. This is particularly evident in the nurture group, where staff often spend their own breaks observing and supporting pupils during playtime and sitting alongside them at lunch.

Across the school, pupils' increasing confidence in reviewing their own work against specific criteria is making a strong contribution to the quality of their learning. In addition to providing clear feedback during lessons and through their marking, teachers successfully engage pupils in reviewing their own and one another's work. One Year 5 pupil wrote about a classmate's work, 'He used fabulous wow words such as rebounded and hideous but he could have improved punctuation'. At the beginning of lessons, teachers try to ensure all pupils know exactly what to do and how to tackle new work. In their enthusiasm to do so, however, they often spend too long introducing things, limiting the time pupils have for working independently. Using a wide range of assessment information, teachers set tasks according to pupils' different abilities but the higher attaining pupils often spend time covering old ground before tackling more challenging work.

Pupils participate keenly in after school clubs including sports, theatre arts and cookery. Their interest is captured by special events such as a problem solving week, one world week and jobs week. These and other initiatives have led to increased levels of attendance. Subjects are linked, which helps pupils to make connections in their learning. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise, consolidate and extend their literacy, numeracy and computer skills across the curriculum, something the school has identified as a priority for development.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have embedded ambition successfully. They make good use of the information they gain from tracking pupils' progress and evaluating teaching to identify weaknesses and set clear improvement goals. These strategies are beginning to drive up standards, but it is too soon to see an impact on overall achievement through the school. The local authority is supporting the school in analysing the progress of different

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groups, and by providing advice for the leadership team and training for staff. A close partnership with a neighbouring school is proving mutually beneficial. These partnerships have clearly helped the school move forward. Notwithstanding such help, the leadership team has made a considerable impact on the school's effectiveness, indicating a good capacity for sustained improvement without extensive outside support. The governing body works in tandem with senior staff, providing support and encouragement, at the same time asking searching questions. They ensure policies are implemented for the safeguarding of pupils. Only half of the places on the governing body have been filled, however, which somewhat constrains their activities and effectiveness. The school's commitment to equal opportunities and addressing any discrimination is evident in the way that any discrepancy in the achievement of different groups is quickly identified and addressed. Community cohesion operates well at the school and parish level, but progress is slow in exploring and promoting understanding of diversity within the wider society.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

As they enter the Nursery, children's social and language development is well below that typical of the age group. They respond well to the well-organised and vibrant learning environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage unit, making good progress in all areas of learning. Children benefit from well-planned adult-led sessions, complemented by time for them to explore their own interests. Following a session focussed on letters and sounds, for example, one child working in the writing area wrote 'ar' and proceeded to

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add the initial consonant to make 'car', 'mar' and 'bar'. Early counting skills are promoted imaginatively. A group working with a teaching assistant delighted in spreading icing sugar on biscuits, adding ten chocolate drops and then biting off sections and counting how many they had left.

Children's welfare and safety is given the highest priority. They enjoy playing and learning in the secure, spacious and well equipped indoor and outdoor areas. Two children were engaged in imaginative role play in the 'princess' castle', as four used the interactive whiteboard independently to follow the story of the three little pigs. Outside, a full-size rowing boat, equipped with books and cushions attracted children to browse through books. The sturdy climbing equipment provides a good level of challenge, with children eager to demonstrate their skills.

Under the effective leadership of the deputy headteacher, staff take every opportunity to engage children in conversations and move their learning on. Using notes from observations, photographs, and information from parents and carers, staff keep informative assessment records. However, they do not analyse these records sufficiently to gain a more precise overview of children's progress from the start of Nursery to the end of Reception.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Given the small number of parental questionnaires returned, the inspection team also looked at two previous surveys sent out by the school, which asked similar questions and drew a far greater response. They also held informal discussions with parents as they dropped off their children. From this larger sample, it is evident that the very large majority of parents and carers are very positive about the school. Within these positive views, a few raised individual concerns about the management of behaviour, their children's progress and how the school is led. The inspection team found that the behaviour of individual children with social and emotional problems is managed extremely well so that it rarely leads to the disruption of lessons. The school has succeeded in improving overall behaviour to the extent that it is now good. Although some pupils have fallen behind in their learning, the vast majority are making good progress and parents very rarely raise concerns with staff. Written reports on pupils' progress are very comprehensive. The establishment of a new school has involved decisions which have been unpopular with some parents; for example, dissuading

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parents to keep their children off school for trivial reasons. The inspection found that improvements to the effectiveness of the school owe much to the dedicated and successful leadership of the senior leadership team.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Yewtree Primary 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 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 229 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	9	38	12	50	2	8	1	4
The school keeps my child safe	12	50	9	38	2	8	1	4
The school informs me about my child's progress	10	42	12	50	0	0	1	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	29	10	42	6	25	1	4
The teaching is good at this school	11	46	11	46	2	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	42	12	50	1	4	1	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	38	11	46	1	4	1	4
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)	9	38	9	38	4	17	1	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	8	33	10	42	5	21	1	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	33	8	33	4	17	4	17
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	38	9	38	4	17	2	8
The school is led and managed effectively	8	33	7	29	3	13	4	17
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	46	8	33	2	8	2	8

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 pupils' 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.



27 May 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Yewtree Primary School, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 5QR

You may remember that a team of inspectors visited recently to see how you are getting on. Thank you for making us so welcome. It was good to talk to the school council and to chat with some of you at break and over lunch. We saw how much you enjoy lessons and all the extra activities. You are now learning well not only because of the good teaching but also because you are trying hard to improve. The school has lots of good features but, because there is still some catching up to do to ensure you all achieve as well as you can, we have judged the school as satisfactory overall.

These are the things that we found were particularly good.

All the adults have your best interests at heart and take good care of you.

You behave well and understand how important is to stay safe and healthy.

You know your targets and this is helping you to make good progress.

Your headteacher, staff and governors are always looking for ways to make the school better.

We have suggested these things which the school needs to do now:

- for teachers to allow more time for you to tackle work on your own, by spending less time introducing lessons
- give some of you more difficult tasks so that you continue to make good progress rather than just practise what you can do already
- help you to write more neatly, using the correct punctuation and to set things out well
- extend your understanding of the similarities and differences between different communities by finding out first hand about life elsewhere in Britain and making links abroad.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard. Before you start a piece of work, set yourself the target of making it as neat as you possibly can.

Thank you again for your help and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Rob Crompton

Lead inspector

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