

Sowerby Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121341
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	358993
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Robert Jones

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Polly Crook
Headteacher	Mrs Jean Yendall
Date of previous school inspection	06 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons, observed nine teachers and held meetings with a governor, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including policies, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress and child protection records. The inspection team received and analysed 47 questionnaires from parents and carers, as well as a number of questionnaires completed by pupils and staff.

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

- The progress pupils make in English during Key Stage 2.
- How care, guidance and support systems provide support for pupils' learning and well-being.
- The quality of teaching and the curriculum in helping pupils acquire good writing skills.
- The effectiveness of self-evaluation systems in improving the standard of teaching and sustaining improvement in the school.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. Average numbers of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school holds various awards, including the Healthy School award, Investors in People and the Activemark.

There is a private nursery and a before/after-school club on the site which are not managed by the governing body. These are inspected separately and receive separate reports which are available on the Ofsted website.

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 2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement 2

Main findings

This is a good school. It has undergone rapid improvement since the previous inspection and there are now some aspects of the school's work that are outstanding. Parents agree, making comments such as, 'This is a lovely, happy, caring school which has improved greatly.'

Pupils make good progress from their starting points which are generally below average particularly in reading and writing. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is average, but is improving due to a concerted effort to drive up the quality of teaching and learning and to provide pupils with an interesting, rich curriculum. Pupils love coming to school, commenting, 'Teachers really make it fun', and this is reflected in their high rates of attendance. Teaching and learning are good overall, but there are pockets of inconsistency which are preventing the overall quality of teaching and learning from rising to outstanding. The Early Years Foundation Stage runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, but systems to assess and track pupils' progress and some aspects of indoor provision are still developing.

Pupils have a good understanding of safety and how to lead fit, healthy lifestyles. The contributions they make to the school and wider community are outstanding, which ensures that pupils leave the school as mature, responsible young people. They have a sound idea of the diverse cultures, languages and religions through the work they do in class. However their first-hand experience of other cultures and religions within and beyond the United Kingdom is limited.

The school has successfully driven up rates of pupils' progress and standards are rising. This has been achieved through incisive self-evaluation which is undertaken by all school leaders. Declining standards in writing were tackled successfully by putting literacy at the heart of the curriculum. Similarly, the quality of teaching and assessment has improved considerably and is now good as a result of high-quality monitoring and evaluation undertaken by school leaders. This demonstrates the school's good capacity to sustain its improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop provision, and leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring effective systems are in place to assess pupils' progress accurately and regularly
 - enhancing the indoor areas so they give pupils the best possible opportunities to develop skills across all areas of learning.

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning from good to outstanding by:
 - sharing the good practice that currently exists in the school
 - providing increased challenge for high-ability pupils
 - summarising learning at the end of lessons so pupils are well aware of what they have learned and how they have learned it.

- Enhance community cohesion by:
 - giving pupils opportunities to learn at first hand about cultures, religions and communities other than their own.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In lessons, behaviour is often exemplary due to the swift pace and the high expectations of teachers. There are abundant opportunities for pupils to work individually and to solve problems in groups. This quickly develops their self-confidence as well as their speaking and listening skills. Pupils enjoy school a great deal and achieve well. 'Every day is fun', as they say. This was very apparent in one lesson where pupils buzzed with excitement as they prepared group presentations on an aspect of the Second World War. Pupil tracking and their work in lessons show that all groups of pupils are making good progress and are all on track to meet or exceed their challenging targets. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable also make good progress.

Pupils are very proud of their school and show great commitment to it. They are very keen to take part constructively in school life beyond day-to-day lessons and activities. Playground helpers with their distinctive yellow caps ensure there is always somebody to play with and pupils say they feel very safe. Many grasp the plentiful opportunities to make positive contributions to the school and the local community, for example by holding cream tea afternoons and roast beef lunches for the local community. Although their understanding of other cultures is limited, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. This is due to the very mature attitudes of pupils, their overall good behaviour and their very highly- developed sense of right and wrong.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
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	1
The extent to which pupils develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and it is clear that this has borne fruit. Lessons are well planned and teachers have a good understanding of the benefits of fully including pupils in the assessment process. Books are carefully marked, often leaving pupils in no doubt what they need to do to improve. In the best lessons, teaching has pace and purpose. Pupils are given interesting tasks that enthuse and motivate them. They thrive in this environment, developing in self-confidence and independence. There are, however, isolated examples of satisfactory teaching that remain. In these lessons, higher-ability pupils are occasionally not challenged as well as they might be and at the end of lessons, learning is sometimes not summarised effectively enough. This means that while pupils are making good progress overall, their rate of progress varies between the year groups.

The good curriculum has been highly effective in helping pupils make links between subjects. During the inspection, pupils were studying the Second World War as a topic. This led to writing on the life of evacuees, scientific discussions on how gas mask filtering systems work and collaborative work to find out why the Luftwaffe targeted certain British cities. Many trips and visitors supplement the topics studied in class. A range of well-attended sports and music activities, including the popular ukulele club, enrich the curriculum. The school is aware that pupils' understanding of diverse cultures and religions is underdeveloped.

The pastoral support afforded to those who need the most care is good, which ensures that those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress overall and as a result of the close attention to their needs given by teachers and dedicated teaching assistants. Transition to secondary school is

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

managed well, although it is at present less successful between the many feeder nurseries and Reception due to recent turbulence of staffing in the Reception classes.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and her senior staff have communicated ambition and driven improvements well. A well-coordinated system of monitoring teaching is driving up the quality of teaching and learning. However, there are at present few opportunities for teachers to share the good and outstanding practice that currently exists in the school. The overhaul of the curriculum has been successful in injecting a sense of fun and high-quality learning.

Safeguarding arrangements adopt recommended good practice, fully meet requirements and are particularly effective with regard to computer-related safety. Policies relating to child protection are comprehensive and regularly reviewed by the governing body. Equal opportunities are promoted well, with the school's tracking system monitoring carefully the achievement of different groups of pupils. As a result, boys achieve as well as girls and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive prompt attention to their needs.

Local community cohesion is particularly strong. During the inspection, members of the community and inspectors delighted in sampling cheesecakes made by pupils that afternoon. However, there is still work to be done in helping pupils understand diverse faiths and cultures, which means that community cohesion is satisfactory overall. The governing body offers good challenge and support. They are a frequent presence in the school, being not only aware of the substantial improvements already made, but of what the school needs to do to sustain them.

These are the grades for the 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	2
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	2
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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are generally in line with those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress across most areas of learning during their time in Reception. Children generally make slower progress in communication, language and literacy. The school has introduced schemes to develop speaking and listening, although it is too soon to measure their impact. The well-equipped outdoor area is effective in giving children a free choice of activities. Children are well behaved and show particularly good social skills in playing and learning collaboratively. For example, one group of children enjoyed learning about the seasons in the garden area, with minimal adult supervision. Indoor learning is less effective because resources provided in the two rooms do not give the best opportunities for children to choose activities and develop their skills across all areas of learning. The Reception classes run smoothly on a day-to-day basis and welfare of children is afforded the highest priority. An experienced Reception leader recently left the school which means staff are developing their leadership and management skills. Assessment systems are not fully effective in tracking progress across areas of learning, and the use of 'learning journeys' to engage parents more effectively is relatively new and it is too soon to measure its effectiveness.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school's work. Many of their comments focus on the friendly and welcoming nature of the school and how well the school involves them as partners in their children's education. A minority of parents raised concerns about pupils' progress in mathematics, their progress during Key Stage 1, and the investment into securing good quality teaching. Inspectors found that pupils made overall good progress in mathematics from their starting points. They found that while past data does indeed show that pupils made slower progress in reading and writing throughout the school, the school's renewed curriculum and improved quality of teaching have resulted in pupils now making good progress in all subjects.

The inspection findings endorse the very positive responses from parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sowerby Community 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 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 231 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	74	12	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	70	14	30	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	49	22	47	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	53	16	34	4	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	55	18	38	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	55	19	40	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	62	17	36	0	0	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)	24	51	19	40	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	51	20	43	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	49	20	43	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	45	21	45	3	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	60	15	32	2	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	64	15	32	1	2	0	0

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 all 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring term 2009/10 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.



29 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sowerby Community Primary School, Thirsk, YO7 1RX

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school. We very much enjoyed talking to you all and hearing about all the interesting things you do.

You go to a good school, but some things about it are outstanding. I was very impressed by the way you work together in teams and I particularly liked the cheesecakes you made. Many of you take on responsibilities such as being playground helpers and these are helping you to become mature, responsible young people. You told us about all the things you do in class and how the recent work you have done on the Second World War has made learning so interesting for you. Overall, you make good progress during your time in school. The school takes good care of you, particularly those of you who need the most support.

Of course, these things do not happen by accident. Behind the scenes, your headteacher, governors and staff have worked very hard to improve teaching and to make learning 'real' for you all. They are always looking for ways to improve the school even further, and to help them, I have asked them to do the following:

- make sure children in the Reception class make good progress indoors as well as outdoors, and that their progress is checked regularly
- improve teaching and learning by using the endings of lessons to make sure you have understood, by helping those of you who are more able to make even more progress and for teachers to share good tips for teaching with each other
- give you more opportunities to learn about other cultures and religions.

With very best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Robert Jones
Lead inspector

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