

Topcliffe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121522
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	380260
Inspection dates	04–05 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Carmen Markham

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Molyneux
Headteacher	Wendy Shepherd
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited seven lessons and observed four teachers. They spoke to pupils about their work and looked at learning in lessons and in pupils' books. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, school policies, safeguarding documents and details of the progress made by pupils. The responses to 45 questionnaires from parents and carers, and those from pupils and staff were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The accuracy of the school's evaluation of the progress of all pupils in relation to their attainment on entry to the school.
- Whether teaching and the curriculum have improved sufficiently since the last inspection to secure good learning outcomes for all groups of pupils.
- The effectiveness of leadership and governance in distributing management responsibilities and holding class teachers to account for the performance of their pupils.
- The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage leaders in ensuring that the needs of all children are consistently met.
- The quality of the school's planning and delivery of national and global traditions, cultures and beliefs.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than the average size primary school. It serves a village and its surrounding rural area. It also serves several mobile families who regularly move into and out of the area. Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and no pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little below the national average. There is a playgroup on the school site that is run by a private provider and has not formed part of this inspection; it will receive a separate inspection. The school has been awarded Healthy School status and Financial Management Standards in Schools.

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 improved rapidly since its last inspection; consequently, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good. Its outstanding Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with an excellent start in school. This has improved progress and attainment in Key Stage 1. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have not had the benefit of this newly improved provision. By the end of Year 6, attainment is average in English and mathematics. However, significant improvement to teaching has ensured good progress for all groups of pupils, particularly the higher attainers. Pupils' outstanding behaviour and their high attendance have also accelerated their progress.

The rapid improvement made by the school reflects the commitment of the leadership team and the governing body to the successful sharing of their vision for continuing improvement, supported by team work and effective partnerships. Staff morale is high and the school's engagement with parents and carers is outstanding. The school's monitoring and evaluation of its performance and the progress of pupils is rigorous and accurate. Well-targeted development planning for improvement is effective. All staff are fully involved in and committed to this process.

A major strength of the school is the outstanding care, guidance and support that it provides for pupils. This ensures the early identification of needs and provision for additional, well-targeted support. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who move school frequently and higher attainers all meet their targets and make good progress. Good, and often outstanding, teaching provides all pupils with exciting learning opportunities to motivate and interest them. However, in a very small number of lessons teaching is satisfactory.

Pupils are developing good personal qualities. They make an outstanding contribution to their personal safety and that of others. They are well supported by a good curriculum. However, pupils do not have sufficient knowledge of world religions beyond Christianity and Judaism. Their experience and understanding of the variety of lifestyles and cultures in the United Kingdom and around the world are being addressed by the school but this has not been done systematically.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 by:
 - ensuring that the quality of all lessons is good or better
 - ensuring pupils have sufficient opportunities to be active learners in all lessons.

- Develop the pupils' knowledge and understanding of a variety of world religions and the diversity of life-styles and culture in the United Kingdom and around the world.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are rapidly developing the skills for effective learning. They are aware of the progress they are making and know how to improve their work. They understand their responsibility for their learning and most are confident independent learners. In lessons, pupils are well motivated and are usually fully engaged in learning as their work is relevant to their interests. They are very supportive of the learning of others. This is evidenced in the reading club started by older boys for any pupil in school. Pupils enjoy the pace and challenge provided by good teaching and achieve well. Their outstanding behaviour contributes well to their learning.

Most children start the Reception class with below age-related expectations, particularly in their personal development, literacy and numeracy. By the end of Year 6 their attainment is average overall. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics has risen and is also average. In Key Stage 1, pupils are benefitting from their excellent start in the Reception class. Their attainment is a little above average, with an increasing number attaining the higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics. Mathematics is the weakest of these three subjects but by Year 6 it is much stronger. Amongst the younger pupils, girls perform better than boys but this gap closes as pupils move through school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making increasingly rapid progress and beginning to exceed their personal targets.

Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to and knowledge of safety are outstanding. They make a good contribution to their school community and their views are sought and listened to by staff. The school council is very active in initiating improvements in school like the acquisition of additional play equipment. Enterprise activities are also led by the school council and contribute positively to the development of skills for their future economic well-being. Many of these activities are related to projects that support pupils' knowledge and understanding of different communities. Although their knowledge of global diversity is variable, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are very reflective, can make reasoned judgements and respect the needs and interests of others.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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 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?

Teachers are effective as they work in strong partnerships with teaching assistants. They use their knowledge of pupils' progress to plan lessons that will meet individual needs. Therefore, tasks, activities and questions develop learning effectively. Resources are very well planned to ensure that learning outcomes are met. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well by teachers and pupils to enhance learning. In most lessons pupils are fully engaged in their lessons. The pace of these lessons is good and there is a high level of challenge. In the very small number of less effective lessons, where teachers talk for too long, pupils are more passive and not fully involved in learning. In all the outstanding lessons observed teachers very skilfully taught pupils to become responsible and independent learners who are critical of their own work. Marking is usually both encouraging and constructive.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and key skills are developed well in all lessons. For example, the skill of writing a diary is developed through pupils writing a diary as a Victorian. Pupils are fully engaged with school as they have a choice of topics to study. All topics include visits to broaden pupils' experience and interest. Evidence from displays and pupils' books demonstrates the success of topic work. It is of a very high standard and research and reporting skills are developing well. Good partnerships with other organisations provide many extra-curricular experiences, such as sport, music, local studies and enterprise. Through the curriculum, pupils are well informed about healthy and safe lifestyles. The proportion of pupils who attend after-school clubs is high at 67%. Religious education has a high priority in school but pupils do not have sufficient knowledge of a variety of world religions. Good curriculum planning and the generous use of teaching assistants ensure that all pupils have good access to their curriculum.

The care, guidance and support are a priority for the school. These are well organised and all staff are involved in the process of identification of need and

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

support for pupils. This ensures good continuity as children move through school. The school sees itself as a family, reflected in the mixed-age allocation of lunch tables, where older pupils help and encourage younger pupils. Staff mentors and pupil play leaders work with less confident pupils during break and lunch-times. The robust tracking system enables pupils who need additional support to be identified rapidly, assessed and appropriate action provided. Good use is made of specialist outside agencies and staff are well trained by the local speech and language unit. Exemplary case studies demonstrate the strong impact of the provision on potentially vulnerable pupils. Transition arrangement into and out of school are excellent and well supported by other providers. The management of attendance is exceptionally successful.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has been successful in inspiring school leaders and all staff to share her ambitions for the school. This has been achieved through strong team work involving all the staff in this small school. Leadership and management have been successful in ensuring that monitoring is systematically planned and all priorities are addressed robustly. Assessment and the regular tracking and review of pupils' progress, linked to good performance management, have ensured that class teachers are held to account for the performance of their class. The significant improvement in teaching and outcomes for pupils is testament to the good quality management of teaching and learning in school.

The governing body has similarly been inspired to improve its work in school and to undertake regular systematic monitoring. Members of the governing body are increasingly influential in determining the strategic direction of the school and rigorous in the discharging of their statutory responsibilities, including safeguarding. The school adopts recommended good practice across all areas of its work and all staff have received the required training. The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination is good. The gaps between different groups of pupils have been closing. Volunteers from minority groups in the community work with pupils on their topics; this provides excellent opportunities for pupils to meet and value people of diverse cultures and those with disabilities. This has also contributed well to community cohesion. Community cohesion has been evaluated and an action plan is in place. Links with local schools with a more diverse population and with a community in India are developing well.

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	1
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle very quickly to their new routines and make outstanding progress so by the end of reception they are above age-related expectations in all areas. They are extremely well cared for in a stimulating and welcoming environment. The staff are exceptionally skilled in their ability to develop the children’s independent learning. Activities are further developed by excellent questioning and the provision of carefully prepared resources. This represents exemplary planning and excellent team work by staff. Relationships are superb and expectations are high. Pupils quickly learn to concentrate on a given activity and work both collaboratively and independently. The indoor and outdoor environments are both used imaginatively by pupils and are outstanding in the quality and range of opportunities offered. A good emphasis on speaking skills and work on sounds and letters supports reading. There is a similar emphasis on number recognition.

Pupils are kept very safe and all requirements are fully met. Observations are used to identify children’s progress and to inform planning. Observations also form part of the rigorous assessment procedures, which ensure that the needs of all children are consistently met. Staff work extremely closely with parents and carers and keep them well informed about their children’s progress. Workshops are provided for parents and carers to help them to support their children’s learning. Transfer arrangements into Year 1 are exemplary.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	1
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The percentage of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire was above average. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and recognise the improvements the school has made since the previous inspection. They identify many strengths, including the good progress made by pupils, good teaching, the good care provided for potentially vulnerable pupils, the high quality provision in the Reception class and the exceptional learning environment. Parents and carers feel welcome in school and believe that the 'Link Book,' pupils' diaries keep them well informed about their children's life in school. These positive views of parents and carers are reflected in the report's findings.

There were only three slightly negative comments. These were not identified by other parents and carers. They relate to challenge for able pupils, communication and pupils' progress. There was no evidence of these concerns in school during the inspection. The team found that able pupils are currently challenged by teaching and the curriculum and that they are achieving well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Topcliffe Church of England Voluntary Controlled 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 inspector received 45 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 93 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	62	16	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	84	7	16	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	62	17	38	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	44	24	53	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	56	20	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	58	19	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	53	20	44	1	2	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)	23	51	20	44	0	0	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	53	19	42	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	69	13	29	0	0	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	58	17	38	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	73	10	22	2	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	71	13	29	0	0	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



6 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Topcliffe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Thirsk, YO7 3RG

I would like to thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we came to inspect your school. A special 'thank you' goes to the pupils who gave up some of their time to talk to us about their activities. We were very impressed that so many of you took part in the cross country run during the inspection.

You attend a good school. Children in the Reception class make an excellent start to their education. By the end of Year 6 your attainment in English and mathematics are average and you are all making good progress. Most of you know what your targets are and how to improve your work. Your behaviour is exemplary and your attendance at school is high. You all feel very safe in school and you understand how to keep yourself and others safe. It was good to see how you take care of each other. Teaching and the curriculum are good while the care, guidance and support you receive are outstanding. Your school is a happy place where you want to learn and we agree with you when you all said in your inspection questionnaire that, 'the headteacher and senior staff in your school do a good job'.

We have asked your headteacher and staff to do two things to improve your school further:

- improve your attainment in English and mathematics by making sure that the teaching in all lessons is at least good
- help you to learn more about different world religions and to find out about the different life-styles and cultures in the United Kingdom and around the world.

You can help to improve your school by checking your own work in English and mathematics and making sure that it is as good as you can make it.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Carmen Markham

Lead inspector

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