



# Northfield Primary School with Autism Resource

Inspection Report

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Better  
education  
and care

**Unique Reference Number** 130859  
**Local Authority** Wakefield  
**Inspection number** 298875  
**Inspection dates** 2–3 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Sarah Drake

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Northfield Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		South Kirkby, Pontefract
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11		West Yorkshire WF9 3LY
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01977 723820
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	186	<b>Fax number</b>	01977 723821
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Barbara Mawtus
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Liz Bradley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 May 1998		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Northfield is a small school, the great majority of whose pupils are of White British origin. Average numbers of pupils are eligible for a free school meal but an unusually high proportion arrives or leaves partway through their education. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Six pupils currently attend the ten-place resource for those who have autism. Since the last inspection, when the school was judged to have serious weaknesses, it has been through an exceptionally difficult time with a very high turnover of teaching staff. The permanent headteacher only took up her post in September 2005 along with the assistant headteacher, who has since been promoted to deputy headteacher because of the leadership responsibilities that she has taken on.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

When you walk through the doors of Northfield Primary you know that this is a school where something special is happening. Although the impact of this has yet to be translated into the standards that pupils achieve, the school is now providing a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. The school's previous designation as having serious weaknesses no longer applies.

Due to the exceptional leadership of the headteacher, Northfield has made rapid progress over the past year so that parents now hold it in high regard and pupils understand that learning can be fun. All this has been achieved against a background of high levels of staff absence, a serious deterioration in pupils' behaviour after the last inspection and other unforeseen circumstances, including a lightning strike that disabled all the recently acquired computers.

Leadership weaknesses in the past and staffing instability since the last inspection, including the lack of a permanent headteacher for over a year, led to pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2, not achieving as well as they should. This has been reversed by the current leadership team which is why leadership and management are judged to be good, rather than satisfactory as in the school's self-evaluation. Although standards overall are below average, pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress. The youngest children make a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage but, because of the level of their attainment when they start school, they enter Year 1 with overall skills that are below expectations for their age.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, form good relationships and the great majority behave well. They want to contribute to the community and are beginning to believe that they are capable of doing so. Teachers make clear to pupils what they are expected to learn and they are skilled at helping them to remember how to behave well and concentrate. However, sometimes pupils have to listen for too long and lose concentration. Teachers' marking does not always give sufficient guidance for improvement. Excellent provision in the autism resource and good support from teaching assistants helps those pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress. Pupils with autism are very successfully integrated into mainstream education on a regular basis.

The curriculum is enriched by a great many extra activities that excite pupils' interest and not only make them want to learn but also to share their new found knowledge with others. This is why inspectors grade it more highly than the school does. Each pupil's well-being is at the heart of the school's work and everything speaks of the good quality care that it provides. Now that parents are welcome in school and helped to support their children's education, they too are making a strong contribution to raising expectations.

Managing the good progress made in recent months has placed very heavy demands on the school's leadership. It has also been financially costly but, nevertheless, the school provides satisfactory value for money because it uses its resources well to raise levels of achievement. There is good capacity to improve but currently the responsibilities for taking action related to strategic planning and ensuring the

consistent implementation of the newly developed systems are not shared widely enough.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- Improve the consistency of teaching quality so that pupils throughout the school can make the progress of which they are capable.
- Distribute more widely the responsibility for moving the school forward.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Most children entering the Nursery have particular weaknesses in their personal development and ability to communicate. In the bright, supportive Foundation Stage environment they make good progress and they enter Year 1 as willing learners. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 have been below average for the past five years and results in 2006 dropped further. Over half the Year 6 pupils who took the tests had learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including an unusually high proportion with autism. This, combined with high levels of pupil mobility and unsettled staffing throughout their years in Key Stage 2, had an adverse impact on the overall standards. All the pupils made very good progress during Year 6. Due to past weaknesses in teaching, current pupils have gaps to fill in their knowledge, skills and understanding but teachers' rising expectations and pupils' growing self-esteem mean that, throughout the school, they are now making at least satisfactory progress. Due to the good support provided for those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly those in the autism resource, these pupils make good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The huge efforts made by staff over the past year to help raise pupils' self-esteem have had a big impact so that their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is now good. Pupils recognise their important role as members of the community. They carry out responsibilities eagerly and competently. They care for others' well-being and treat with great respect, in one pupil's words, 'the really good displays that make school bright and happy'. Relationships with adults are good which means that the great majority of pupils respond positively to reminders about the right way to do things. Behaviour is good and pupils comment that bullying is a thing of the past, although the challenging attitudes of some older boys in particular hint at the problems that until recently beset the school. This is now a harmonious community in which good quality learning can take place. Pupils' enjoyment is reflected in the rising attendance levels that are now in line with the national average.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Pockets of good and outstanding practice in the Foundation Stage, autism resource and some Key Stage 2 classes, point to the rapid progress that pupils can make when their attention is fully engaged. Lessons have a uniform structure, are usually tightly planned and most teachers incorporate a variety of ideas to keep pupils interested. They provide good opportunities for pupils to share ideas with their neighbour, helping to develop their thinking, speaking and listening skills. The best lessons move at a good pace with activities that are highly enjoyable and well matched to the needs of each pupil. Other lessons do not have the same level of excitement or drive and teachers occasionally talk too much, missing opportunities to let the pupils learn for themselves. Teaching assistants provide good quality support both in lessons and for small groups.

Teachers mark work regularly but do not always offer sufficient advice to pupils on the next steps to take, or follow through the advice to the next piece of work. However, some pupils are beginning to build up a dialogue with teachers, showing that they have understood the guidance given. Teachers are making increasing use of the information provided by the recently introduced system for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress but this is not yet consistent practice, in part due to the high turnover of staff.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum, with its strong emphasis on promoting pupils' acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills, is increasingly also focused on developing their creativity to bring excitement to all lessons. Sporting and non sporting activities, opportunities to participate in educational and residential visits, and the many visitors to school broaden pupils' horizons and add to their enjoyment. The developing links being made between subjects, particularly history and literacy, bring lessons to life for pupils. The emphasis placed on extending pupils' thinking and speaking skills also has a positive impact on their self-confidence and overall achievement. The precise, realistic targets included in the individual education plans of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities mean that work is matched well to their needs. Pupils in the Foundation Stage enjoy practical and imaginative activities that promote learning through play and give them a positive start to their school life.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

'Over the past year my children have become much happier going to school and much happier coming home at the end of the day.' This parent's words exemplify the good quality care and guidance that has underpinned the school's great improvement over

recent months. Pupils are now confident that they are listened to and help is available in time of need. Pupil buddies, the behaviour support coordinator and all staff create a supportive community in which pupils can succeed. Child protection and health and safety arrangements are monitored regularly and applied rigorously. Procedures to help children settle into the Nursery, move into Year 1 and then on to high school are well thought out and implemented according to individual circumstances. Pupils in the autism resource are sensitively helped to increase their time in classes away from the unit. Practices such as 'thinking Thursday' when at lunchtime, rather than chatter, pupils reflect on their attitudes and what they have learnt, ensure they are increasingly taking responsibility for their own progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Everyone connected with the school, from pupils to governors to midday assistants to parents, comments on the remarkable transformation that has taken place since September 2005 so that it now operates as an exciting, orderly learning community. This change has been brought about by the inspiration and dogged determination of the headteacher. She has been ably supported throughout by the deputy headteacher who has taken on leadership responsibilities including the role of special needs coordinator. Starting from a crystal clear understanding of the quality of education to which the children are entitled, the leadership team has raised staff morale and provided excellent role models for how to effect improvement. Self-evaluation is based on evidence derived from accurate, systematic assessment of pupils' standards and achievement. All staff are involved in developing action plans and policies and subject leaders are beginning to understand their role in raising standards. The school has developed an extensive network of partners whose skills are used well to improve provision. Resources are used well and the school runs smoothly. Governors are becoming far more aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and are very supportive of its work. However, instability in staffing, including at senior manager level, means that far too much responsibility falls on the headteacher's shoulders. This is why the capacity to improve is judged to be good rather than outstanding as judged by the school. Quick thinking and highly effective short-term solutions have held the school together and brought rapid improvement in the face of many setbacks but at the cost of strategic development and the implementation of systems to bring about consistency of provision.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making Mrs Hepworth and myself so welcome when we visited your school recently and for being so eager to tell us how much it has improved over the last year. It was lovely to hear you talk with such appreciation of the hard work all staff have put in to making you feel so much more positive about yourselves and about learning. These are the real strengths of your school:

- your headteacher is determined to provide you with the best possible education and is very good at motivating other adults to help her make this happen
- you understand that learning can be fun and that, if you put in enough effort, you can make good progress
- working together, you have made the school into an exciting, happy learning community of which pupils in the autism resource are full members
- your teachers organise interesting things for you to do and explain them clearly so that you know what is expected
- staff look after you very well so that you feel valued in school.

This is what we have asked your school to do next to make it improve even more:

- help you to achieve higher standards, particularly in literacy and numeracy
- make sure that all pupils receive consistently good quality teaching so that you can make good progress
- share the responsibility for helping the school improve among more people.

Your job will be to attend regularly and to keep up your enthusiasm for learning.