

Little Digmoor Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119297
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	395748
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2012
Lead inspector	Diane Auton

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	97
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joanne Hill
Headteacher	Jenny Haunch
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Diane Auton

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited five teachers in their classrooms and observed nine lessons or part-lessons. The inspector listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of letters and sounds in Key Stages 1 and 2. She held meetings with a member of the governing body, staff, a group of pupils and a group of parents and carers. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, safeguarding and equality policies and minutes of governing body meetings. The inspector reviewed information provided by parents and carers in 27 completed questionnaires. She also took into account the views of pupils in Key Stage 2 and those that staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned.

Information about the school

The school is considerably smaller in size than most primary schools and the number of pupils on roll has fallen since the time of the previous inspection. The size of year groups varies between four and twenty pupils and the school is arranged in four mixed-age classes, including an Early Years Foundation Stage unit. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is also well above average. Most pupils are White British, with a small proportion from other ethnic backgrounds. In 2011 the school did not meet the government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

In the period since its previous inspection the school has experienced turbulence in staffing and leadership, including changes of personnel and some long-term health-related absences. Some vacancies are currently being filled by temporary staff.

The school has achieved Healthy School Beacon Status.

Pre-school child care and before- and after-school care are provided on site by an independent company. This provision is subject to separate inspection by Ofsted and reports 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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because the quality of teaching is uneven and, in a minority of year groups, pupils' progress is not rapid enough. Governors do not yet have a clear enough picture of achievement across the school. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory overall. It has improved as a result of actions taken in the current year. Attainment is now in line with national expectations in Years 5 and 6 and is rising steadily in most of the other year groups in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Behaviour and attitudes to learning are satisfactory. Pupils usually behave well, feel safe and show consideration for others. Pupils in some classes are starting to develop responsibility for their own learning and increasing their ability to work independently. This is not yet a consistent picture across the school, however, and where pupils are less confident learners their learning and progress are slower.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall. Improvements to teaching are increasing the rate of most pupils' progress. However, shortcomings remain and, where teaching is less effective, the pace of learning and progress is not fast enough and pupils are not made fully aware of what they need to do to improve.
- Leaders have identified the school's main weaknesses correctly and have begun to address them successfully. The leadership of teaching and management of performance are satisfactory. Progress is measured and tracked each term and this is starting to have a positive impact on improving pupils' achievement. The absence of a detailed account of children's skills levels in all of the areas of learning when they start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage reduces the effectiveness of assessment for this age group.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better, so that pupils build continuously on their skills, year on year, as they move up through the school, by:
 - providing a brisk pace of learning in all lessons
 - further developing the use of individual learning targets to give all pupils a clearer understanding of what they need to do to raise the standard of their work to the next level.

- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management and the drive to raise achievement by:
 - rigorously monitoring the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and progress
 - providing governors with termly, succinct information on pupils' progress to assist them in monitoring how well the school is doing.

- Provide a clear account of children's attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage in each of the areas of learning, in order to establish an accurate baseline from which to track and measure their progress during the Nursery and Reception years.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. This is an improving picture and several parents and carers commented favourably on the good progress they feel that their children have made this year. Learning in lessons is satisfactory because pupils usually apply themselves well to their work. They are learning to collaborate, with a partner or in a group. Sharing ideas in this way is helping them to gain confidence and develop their thinking skills. They make an effort to comply with the school's expectations for good behaviour in lessons. When teaching does not fully capture pupils' enthusiasm the pace of learning slows but most are increasing their ability to concentrate and stay on task.

Attainment has risen in the current year, particularly in those classes where teaching is most effective. Progress is satisfactory overall, but the picture is variable across the school because the quality of teaching varies and pupils do not always build continuously on their skills as they move up from class to class. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have benefited from small-group teaching and have made good progress this year; they are now working at the levels of attainment that are expected for their ages in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress has begun to accelerate in Key Stage 1; pupils' attainment is rising, although it still remains below average overall, especially in writing. Achievement is better in reading, and regular teaching of letters and the sounds they make is having a positive impact on improving pupils' reading skills. Pupils from Key Stage 1 read to the inspector, showing interest and enjoyment and

demonstrating a growing confidence in using their skills to sound out and understand new words. Reading attainment is now average by the time pupils leave in Year 6 and, although rising, remains still slightly below average in Year 2. Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school's data suggest that their skills are below those expected for the age group when they start school. They do not provide sufficient detail for all of the learning areas, however, so the baseline from which to measure children's progress is not as clear as it should be. Children leave the Reception class with skills that are slightly below expectations for their age.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall, in line with that of their peers, because of the targeted support provided for them.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers strongly agree that their children are taught well. Some good and outstanding teaching was seen, but the inspector found that teaching is predominantly satisfactory rather than good.

Lessons are generally planned appropriately to meet the range of pupils' learning needs. Teachers' subject knowledge is appropriate. Positive relationships between adults and pupils support learning and progress and ensure that pupils are usually ready to learn. In the more effective lessons seen, structured planning and good support strategies help pupils to approach independent learning tasks with confidence. In a lesson in the Key Stage 1 class, for example, pupils were engaged by their topic about butterflies and how they grow and change. A well-structured and enjoyable introduction meant that they understood what would need to go into the sentences they would be expected to write on their own. Effective input from the class teacher and her team of assistants helped them to extend their thinking and organise their thoughts, so that they were able to complete their independent work successfully. By the end of the lesson they had added to their knowledge and understanding of the topic and had also achieved their learning objective in literacy. In lessons like this, teaching contributes well to pupils' achievement and to their enjoyment of learning.

In the less effective lessons pupils are unclear how to improve and the pace of learning is too slow, with the teacher's input with the whole class taking too long so that the momentum of learning is reduced and progress slows. Teaching assistants are well trained and are usually deployed to where they are most needed. This contributes to the teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs as they benefit from support in and out of class.

Teaching is satisfactory in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff give due attention to children's care and welfare and they settle happily. Assessment as children progress through the year guides planning but the lack of clear levels of attainment on entry clouds the overall progress children make. Improvements to the outdoor learning environment have taken place since the school's previous inspection and staff now provide an improved range of opportunities for learning out of doors.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents' and carers' responses to the questionnaire survey showed that they believe their children are safe in school and that behaviour is good. Inspection evidence supports their views about safety, but the inspector found that behaviour is satisfactory rather than good. Pupils usually behave well in lessons and around the school. Their attitudes to learning are satisfactory overall. Where teaching is most effective pupils are starting to be enthusiastic learners and have begun to take more responsibility for their own learning. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 know and understand their individual learning targets and this is helping them to see the 'big picture' for their learning, so that they are aware of and can talk about what the next steps need to be. This practice is variable and, in some classes, pupils are less positive towards their learning because they do not know how well they are doing and how to improve.

Pupils say that school is a happy and friendly place; they feel safe and well cared for and are confident that help is always on hand if they have a problem. They explain their understanding of different types of bullying and say that any falling out which may occur is dealt with effectively by staff if they are not able to deal with it themselves. They enjoy accepting responsibilities and contribute to decision making through the school council.

The school provides sensitive support for pupils and families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Individual parents and carers spoke of how highly they value the support they are given and of the difference this has made in children's and families' lives. Nurture group support and input from the school's learning mentor help to break down barriers to learning and progress that some pupils sometimes encounter. This provision has also contributed to improved attendance, which was below average and is now average.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have identified the school's main weaknesses and they have set to work to tackle them, with support from the local authority. Regular management of performance and monitoring has ensured that teaching is now at least satisfactory across the school, although weaknesses remain. Nevertheless, it has resulted in a programme of ongoing professional development which has helped to underpin some of the improvements achieved this year. These include the development and effective use of systems for tracking, measuring and reviewing pupils' progress. Termly assessment meetings are now used to keep a close check on pupils' progress so that teachers and managers can spot promptly when pupils are not doing as well as they should. As yet this information is not fully evaluated and shared with members of the governing body to enable them to have an informed picture of progress in the school. Leaders understand that monitoring needs to be more rigorous and must ensure that teaching is consistently good or better if pupils are to build continuously on their learning and skills as they move up through the school. Assessment systems in the Early Years Foundation Stage are not as effective as elsewhere in the school because the baseline is not defined clearly. Regardless of this, however, the school is clear about the way ahead and actions are starting to resolve identified weaknesses. The staff team works together well and

shares the leaders' vision for taking the school forward. Overall, the school's capacity for continued improvement is satisfactory.

The governing body ensures that safeguarding is given appropriate priority and the school complies with statutory requirements for safeguarding. Equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily. The school's ethos is inclusive, discrimination is not tolerated and gaps in performance are reducing as teaching improves.

The school's curriculum is satisfactory. It is appropriately broad and balanced and pupils say that they enjoy their lessons, 'especially topic work'. Teachers plan links between subjects and this is helping to improve pupils' basic skills, for example by providing regular opportunities for pupils to write outside of literacy lessons. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities for pupils to learn skills in sports and the arts and to learn a modern foreign language. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted satisfactorily. A range of topics and themed events in the curriculum and the school's link with a partner school in Uganda all contribute to extending cultural awareness. There are many opportunities in lessons, assemblies and circle time for pupils to reflect on and discuss important issues.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



18 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Little Digmoor Primary School, Skelmersdale, WN8 9NF

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. It was a great pleasure to meet you all and I enjoyed my conversations with you. I found that Little Digmoor is a satisfactory school. It is also a happy school and I was pleased to hear from you about how much you enjoy coming to school. You told me how friendly everyone is and I soon saw that for myself. I think you are polite young people. Your attendance has improved considerably this year – well done, keep up the good work and see if you can make it even better! The adults in school look after you well. They are working hard to make sure that teaching continues to improve and, because of this, your learning and progress are starting to speed up.

The school's leaders agree with me that further improvements are needed, so that you can all achieve as well as possible. These are some of the things I have asked them to do next, because I think they will help your school to carry on improving.

- Make sure that teaching is always good or better.
- Make sure that pupils in every class know and understand their learning targets and what they need to do to move their work up to the next level.
- Improve the ways they share information about your learning and progress with the governors, so that they can easily see, every term, how well you are all doing.
- Improve the ways they measure what children know, what they can do and what they understand when they start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

You can help with the school's improvement by continuing to be happy, hard-working learners and by making sure your attendance is good. Thank you again for an enjoyable visit and best wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Diane Auton
Lead inspector

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