

Denver Voluntary Controlled Primary School

19 Ryston Road, Denver, Downham Market, PE38 0DP

Inspection dates 27–28 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' progress is consistently at least good.
- Reading skills are particularly strong and pupils have excellent knowledge of letters and sounds.
- Teaching is usually good, and in Years 5 and 6 it is outstanding so pupils make very rapid progress and leave the school with standards in English and mathematics well above the national average.
- Homework reinforces and extends work done in lessons.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good; attendance is above average.
- Leaders meticulously analyse every part of the school's performance so the right changes are made, and precise support given to continually improve teaching and learning to ensure pupils achieve well.
- Each pupil's progress is tracked very closely. If any individual starts to fall behind, extra help is given.
- Pupils who need extra help thrive and do as well as others due to the quality of the support they receive.
- Staff are a very effective, well-trained team.
- Governors offer very strong support to every part of school life.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching from when pupils join the school until the end of Year 4 is generally good, but not outstanding.
- Children in the youngest class have too few opportunities to choose what learning they will do for themselves.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in all classes. Accompanied by the headteacher, he visited 12 lessons.
- Pupils, teachers, the headteacher, a representative of the governing body, parents and a local authority officer had discussions with the inspector.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation. He also examined work in pupils' books.
- The views of 31 parents were analysed through the Parent View survey. Other parents' views were sought during the inspection.

Inspection team

Robert Greatrex, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-size primary school. Because of its size, pupils learn in four classes with two age groups in each.
- All of the pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is low.
- There are fewer pupils from ethnic minority groups than in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus is low, while the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is high.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013, ensure that more teaching from Reception to Year 4 is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers encourage pupils to be more active participants when the whole class is led directly by the teacher
 - creating a climate for learning where pupils are encouraged to discuss their mistakes more fully and the misconceptions that led to them are resolved
 - ensuring that all teachers understand the value and importance of following up pupils' answers when appropriate with supplementary questions to clarify or extend pupils' thinking.
- Improve the Early Years Foundation Stage provision by:
 - arranging the indoor and outdoor provision so these children can more independently access a wider range of resources
 - creating more opportunities for children to learn on their own or in a small, self-chosen group, so that they begin to develop self-confidence and self-awareness as learners
 - checking that children more frequently initiate their own play activities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good.

- Standards on entry to the school have dipped recently and are below those usually seen nationally. Children in the Reception Year make good progress. Progress is best in adult-led activities because these are well planned and children are attentive. They already understand what is expected of them, want to please and, consequently, try hard. They enter Year 1 with average standards in most areas of learning.
- In Reception, there are too few opportunities for the children to 'have a go', build on what they know and choose what they do and how they do it. While meaning to be helpful, teachers and teaching assistants sometimes take over and direct activities. As a result, children's personal, social and emotional development lags behind other skills.
- Good progress continues in Key Stages 1 and 2 largely unhampered by classes of mixed ages. Consequently, by the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average. Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are high because pupils make accelerated progress during their last two years in school. Their excellent basic skills prepare them very well for the next stage in their education.
- Elsewhere in the school, progress is generally good as learning is better matched to pupils' levels than at the last inspection. Higher attainers make the progress they should, though a small minority still say they find the work too easy or too repetitive.
- Acquisition of reading skills is particularly strong because expertise among teachers is very high and the school makes sure that all pupils read at the right level of difficulty. A mantra of the school is, 'We don't listen to children read – we teach them to read.'
- Pupils learn and regularly practise important skills necessary for their future lives, both in their next school and beyond. For example, they work as teams, learning to listen, share ideas, take turns and come to a consensus.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those for whom the pupil premium provides support, thrive. All receive very helpful, well-directed, individual support and instruction. Consequently, they make good progress from their various starting points.

The quality of teaching is good.

- Teaching ensures that pupils' learning and progress are at least good. It is best for the oldest pupils for whom instruction is broken into smaller 'chunks', often interspersed with activity, so pupils are always interested and alert. Elsewhere in the school, instruction is often in longer, teacher-led sessions and pupils are, consequently, more passive and, occasionally they lose concentration.
- The oldest pupils make excellent gains in learning because explanations are very clear and easily understood. Pupils say, 'Our teacher puts things in a way that you can understand.' 'She relates things that are new to things we already know, which makes it easier.'
- Pupils say they learn well because lessons are 'fun and interesting'. They gave an example of an imaginative task where one partner was blindfolded and the other gave instructions to get

through a course. This taught them the importance of giving clear instructions in the right order.

- Teachers and teaching assistants use open-ended questions effectively to enable them to check how well pupils understand and think through their work. However, some do not respond to their pupils' answers and miss the opportunity to extend their thinking.
- Planning of learning is thorough and each lesson has a clear purpose. In mixed-age classes, both age groups are catered for well. In older classes, this is then broken down and matched closely to pupils' various ability levels so that they are all learning at a good rate. In younger classes, this good practice is less secure.
- Because pupils' progress is tracked so accurately, staff quickly recognise when pupils are falling behind. Disabled pupils, and those with special educational needs, benefit particularly. Effective support and interventions are put in place, enabling the vast majority of pupils to catch up. Teaching assistants are well trained and very helpful to the pupils. Pupil premium funds are carefully targeted to specific improvements so these pupils do well and catch up steadily.
- Pupils say the targets they are given in English and mathematics are very helpful because they understand clearly what they have already achieved and what they need to think about next in order to improve.
- Marking is used effectively, particularly for the oldest pupils. Work is marked in pupil-friendly language, clearly stating whether the lesson objective has been achieved or more needs to be done. If the latter, there is a clear statement of what needs to be done.
- Self-assessment is used throughout the school, but with mixed effectiveness. In some classes and groups, pupils are encouraged to see mistakes as learning opportunities and teachers' further questioning helps them to gain better understanding. On other occasions, the adult's tone of voice discourages anything but the right answer, and misunderstandings are not always fully pursued.
- Homework is effective. The amount of homework is similar to that provided in most schools. A variety of tasks support learning in school, for example by giving extra practice of something already learned or research to prepare for future work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good.

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. The vast majority of pupils listen attentively to both teachers and teaching assistants, so that no time is wasted in lessons. When engaged, nearly all focus on learning and persevere, even with challenging tasks.
- Pupils are confident that staff will look after them and keep them safe. 'It is a really happy school where everyone is cheerful,' typifies their views. The school gives pupils a clear understanding of how to look after themselves, including when using the internet.
- The youngest children respond positively to adults and contribute well in whole-group instruction. They try hard to please in these situations. They cope very well when working in larger spaces such as the hall.
- A clear recognition that many others are less fortunate than themselves leads pupils to raise

generous sums for several charities, largely to benefit children, both nationally and internationally. Pupils' social and moral understanding is much enhanced from such responsible action.

- Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to give their views about their school, for example through the school council. They think carefully about how they will spend the money they raise by selling their unwanted toys, after deducting half for charity.
- Attendance is above average. When it dipped, school leaders and governors moved quickly and decisively to put this right. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and look forward to their lessons and time with friends.

The leadership and management are good.

- A real sense of togetherness is created because the school's vision is shared by all staff and governors. All have the opportunity to contribute and all consequently share a strong commitment to meeting their agreed expectations, especially for teaching and learning.
- School leaders fully understand the importance of high-quality teaching and learning to progress and achievement. The headteacher is very analytical and so has a very clear and accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development of each member of staff so she is able to assist them in enhancing their skills.
- Staff development is very closely matched to each individual's needs so that all have high morale and a real sense that they are improving. Each individual is fully involved in shaping their training. Each has a programme strongly focused on enabling them to teach better and so teachers' practice improves.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and administrative staff all receive effective performance management. Consequently, all understand their individual role in the school and their pathway to further improvement.
- The local authority recognises that the school is effective and provides support at the school's request. For example, additional training and advice has been given in both mathematics and what the school offers the youngest pupils. Staff found this very useful.
- Curriculum tasks are interesting so that pupils have clear understanding and memorise important details. For example, they can describe their experiment to check what plants need to grow, and how they made sure the tests were fair.
- After-school activities and special events extend and enrich pupils' learning. Pupils' recollections show the depth of enjoyment and learning. Pen pals give pupils some sense of the wider world.
- Pupils and staff undertake many worthwhile activities with local schools. Staff train together and form beneficial support groups. Pupils enjoy opportunities to be part of a larger group, or to work with, or compete against, their peers.
- The school works closely with all parents, and recognises the importance of a trusting relationship. Regular surveys are used to check parents' views. The school is pro-active in the advice and information it gives; for example, a clear and transparent policy describes how

pupils' next classes are chosen.

- Safeguarding is excellent. Pupils' safety and wellbeing are held as paramount. All necessary checks are in place. Staff are thorough and meticulous, for example in teaching pupils how to stay safe when using the internet.
- Professional standards are adhered to fully. In all relationships, staff consistently model the same very high standards of courtesy and respect that they expect from their pupils. A strong bond exists between all staff which helps them form a highly effective team.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - has a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and what must be done to take the school forward
 - is very carefully managed so that a skills audit has enabled the school to make very effective and efficient use of governors' expertise and experience
 - very carefully and prudently manages the school's finances to ensure priorities are fully funded while ensuring the long-term stability of the school. Pupil premium funding is used well for specific projects to meet these pupils' needs, and is monitored very carefully.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	121069
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	403453

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	112
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicola Marston
Headteacher	Linda Allison
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2008
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Email address	office@denver.norfolk.sch.uk

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