



Downfield Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117255
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280025
Inspection dates 7 December 2005 to 8 December 2005
Reporting inspector Ms. Margaret Jones LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Downfield Road
School category	Community		EN8 8SS
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01992629598
Number on roll	245	Fax number	01992638614
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs.Wendy Thompson
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs. Liz Hurrion

Age group 3 to 11	Inspection dates 7 December 2005 - 8 December 2005	Inspection number 280025
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school in an urban area. It serves a changing and diverse community that includes many different cultures and faiths. A large proportion of pupils joins and leaves the school other than at the usual times. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and statements of educational need is well above average. The school has a Speech and Language Base for 10 pupils in East Hertfordshire. The school offers pre-school education for two to three year olds. The school has recently gained National Healthy School accreditation and is about to be assessed for the Investors in People Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. The headteacher provides effective leadership and clear vision to promote rising standards. Teaching is generally good. Pupils' level of enjoyment for learning is outstanding and as a result they make good progress. The quality of education in the foundation stage is good. Pupils with learning and communication difficulties achieve well because of the very effective support they receive. All pupils have good opportunities to participate in what the school provides. A lively, attractive and welcoming atmosphere is created for all visitors. National test results in English are not as high as in other subjects. Pupils do very well in science because the lessons are down to earth and practical. The pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy coming to school and grow in confidence as they progress through the school. The school cares about all its pupils and makes sure that everyone gets the individual support they need to make progress. The school provides many opportunities for the pupils to take on responsibilities and a rich range of activities in which they can all participate. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, enabling both staff and governors to identify what needs to be done to raise standards. Monitoring by the headteacher and subject leaders is robust, but the school development plan is not focused enough. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the school has the capacity to maintain this momentum. Standards have been maintained and all the key issues highlighted then have been addressed. Parents are mostly happy with the school. Their views are taken into account regularly and they are kept fully informed of developments. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English by providing more opportunities for pupils to develop and use their writing skills in different subjects and to think and talk about their ideas.
- Improve the quality of the school development plan by making it easier to measure when targets have been reached.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children enter the nursery and reception class very few have the skills and knowledge typical of three and four-year-olds, particularly in language and social skills. They make good progress because of the good teaching and the interesting things to do, but by the beginning of Year 1, most children have not quite reached the expected level for their age because they have a lot of ground to catch up. Standards have risen recently and last year, most children in Year 2 did as well as many of their age in reading, writing, mathematics and science. They achieve well. This is because the teaching is good and the school has introduced ways of raising standards; for example, by enlisting parents to hear their children read in school. The older pupils also make good progress. Last year, standards were broadly average in science, below average in mathematics and well below average in English. Pupils make good progress

in mathematics and science and satisfactory progress in English. There are several reasons why test results are low in English. The school's results include those from pupils from the Speech and Language Base. There is a lot of movement in and out of the school. Higher attaining pupils often leave and are replaced by pupils with significant learning difficulties. This depresses the results. Last year half the pupils in Year 6 had learning difficulties and a high proportion had statements of educational need. Pupils tend to do better in tests for mathematics and science because teachers are allowed to read them the questions. Last year the school did not reach the targets they were set because they were overambitious. Pupils with learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language get good support from teachers and teaching assistants and they achieve well. Pupils who are gifted and talented are given challenging work to help them to succeed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well. They are polite and treat each other and adults with respect. They often do not want to stop at the end of lessons because they are so engrossed in their work. They know they are treated fairly and that adults will listen if they have a problem. They say 'Everyone makes you feel at home here!' Older pupils take their 'buddying' responsibilities seriously. They fill in application forms for these roles and this, together with the emphasis on reading, writing, mathematics and computers, helps prepare them very well for the future. They contribute well to the school through the many opportunities to take responsibility; for example, by serving salad at lunchtime. They have helped the community through a wide range of fund raising activities. Pupils discuss their views and these are taken forward to the school council. They know their views are taken seriously because they asked for more to do at playtime and now the 'buddies' teach them new games each week. They understand about healthy eating and choose healthy meals. There are good opportunities for exercise and sport. Attendance is broadly average but the school works hard with parents to promote good attendance. Most pupils arrive punctually. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils respect others' beliefs and customs. Working together in pairs and small groups helps them to mix happily together.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The lessons that inspectors observed reflected the school's own analysis that the quality of teaching is good overall. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to good. In the best lessons, the teachers plan the work carefully to meet the needs of all the pupils. There are very good relationships and teachers manage the behaviour of pupils well. Pupils' response is keen and enthusiastic especially when practical work is involved, such as visiting Pizza Express to make their own pizza or doing experiments in science. In more mundane lessons, activities lack sparkle and teachers spend too

much time explaining to pupils what they want them to do. As a result pupils become restless and lose concentration because they spend too long sitting still and listening. In these lessons the more able pupils mark time. Teachers use good assessment procedures to check on pupils' learning in each subject and to guide their teaching. They mark pupils' work well, showing clear points for improvement. In mathematics and English lessons, teachers use individual targets successfully to help pupils improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Careful planning ensures the needs of all pupils are met. Nursery and Reception children enjoy taking part in a wide range of stimulating activities that support well the development of their literacy and social skills, and give free rein to their creativity. There is an appropriately sharp focus for pupils aged 5 to 11 on promoting basic skills, with a particular emphasis on literacy. However, pupils are not always given sufficient opportunity to develop and use their writing skills in different subjects. Teachers particularly encourage the pupils' creative skills and this is reflected in the good quality of the artwork on display throughout the school. Detailed individual education plans and effective support ensure that pupils with learning difficulties participate fully in the school's activities. Pupils in the Speech and Language Base have a curriculum that is effectively balanced between withdrawal sessions in the morning for literacy and numeracy, and afternoon activities in their normal classes. There is a strong emphasis through the personal, social and health education programme on working together, developing an awareness of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe. Children speak enthusiastically about their work, especially their residential trips and the visits they make to museums and other local attractions, and the wide number of clubs that they attend at lunchtimes and after school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a very caring school where the pupils' welfare, health and safety are the shared concern of governors and staff. The pupils know who to turn to if they have problems, and agree that their comments will be treated seriously and that action will be taken if necessary. Child protection procedures are well established and are understood by staff. Staff know the pupils' circumstances well and carefully monitor their personal and academic development. This enables support and guidance to be carefully focused to meet their identified needs. Pupils throughout the school know their individual English and mathematics targets, and respond well to the challenge of achieving them. Intervention takes place when a pupil is falling behind. The school benefits from its excellent links with external health and social service agencies. There is good liaison with the local secondary school which helps the pupils move smoothly to their new school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads the school with energy and dedication. She knows the school's strengths and weaknesses and is honest and open about what needs to be done to improve further. The school has a caring and supportive ethos in which pupils feel safe, and can concentrate on their learning. The headteacher does not have a deputy at the moment but is well supported by four senior members of staff. Staff are very well trained and keep up to date with the latest developments. There is a very good team spirit among the staff and governors, who are well motivated and want to do their best by the school and all its pupils. The evaluation of teaching carried out by the headteacher and subject co-ordinators is accurate. The senior teachers and the governors have correctly identified what needs to improve and have a good capacity to bring this about. They know that pupils could do better in their English. The views of all members of the school community are welcomed, although a few parents think that more could be done to take their views into account. The well trained and carefully deployed teaching assistants help the pupils to succeed with their work. The school improvement plan is detailed and thorough and the school has the capability to put these plans into action. However, the plan lacks specific success criteria and this means senior staff and governors cannot easily measure how well they are meeting their targets. The school provides well-organised and well-maintained accommodation. Staff and children take pride in, and care for, their school. The attractive school grounds provide a secure and stimulating environment for children who participate in a range of fun outdoor activities.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We enjoyed our visit to your school. We learned a great deal about your school by talking to you and your teachers and watching you learn. We thought you would like to know what we liked about your school and how we thought it could get even better. What we liked about your school - You made us all feel very welcome in your school and greeted us with a friendly smile. - You all looked very smart in your school uniform. - You really enjoy your work and join in your lessons well. - You do some very good work in science. - You all behave very well around the school. You play nicely with your friends and the grown ups at lunchtime and speak very politely to your teachers and visitors. - You do a lot of jobs around the school and through the school council you have made some good changes like the Buddies system. - Your teachers and teaching assistants work very hard to make sure that you all get the right sort of help you need to help you learn. - Your head teacher runs the school well. - Your parents and carers are right in thinking that you go to a good school. What we have asked your school to do now to make it even better - To improve the way the school plans to get better. - To encourage you all to try harder with your English work especially your writing. We wish you all the best in your future learning.