



Little Digmaor Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119297
LEA Lancashire
Inspection number 280519
Inspection dates 4 May 2006 to 5 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Penny Parrish

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Abbeystead |
| School category | Community | | Skelmersdale |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 | | Lancashire WN8 9NF |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01695 724539 |
| Number on roll | 130 | Fax number | 01695 724539 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr William Trickett |
| Date of previous inspection | 1 January 2000 | Headteacher | Mrs Jenny Haunch |

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|-----------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Little Digmoor is a smaller than average primary school in an area of high social and economic disadvantage. The number on roll has decreased since the last inspection, mainly due to a fall in the local birth rate. The proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals and of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well above average. The great majority of the pupils are of white British heritage. A small number have a minority ethnic heritage, and a few are in the early stages of learning English. After a period of uncertainty about the future of the school, a new headteacher was appointed in September 2005. The school moved into one building in October 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Little Digmoor Primary School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils.

A downward spiral in national test results has been turned around with good help from the local authority. Satisfactory progress and achievement are evident overall, but there is a history of inconsistent provision for different year groups that is taking time to resolve. Standards are broadly average by the time pupils leave the school. However, learning in English, from the Foundation Stage onwards, is not rapid enough and standards are too low. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but adequate systems for planning and assessing pupils' work are not consistently applied by all teachers. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and they make adequate progress. Throughout the school, personal development is satisfactory, but pupils' attendance rate is too low, despite recent improvements. The satisfactory curriculum is enhanced through a good range of extra-curricular activities. Leadership and management are satisfactory, ensuring an adequate view of its own progress. Improvements since the last inspection were slow to begin but recent well thought-out changes have led to satisfactory improvement overall. Recent effective changes in leadership and management systems and in teaching arrangements in some year groups show that the school has a good capacity to improve further. A very high surplus accumulated in the budget reserves until a year ago has now been rightly allocated to improving standards. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English throughout the school.
- Ensure that teachers use assessment information more consistently to plan lessons that promote good achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory overall and standards are broadly average. There has been considerable improvement over the past two years after a period of decline. The school has an accurate view of its work, and staff are aware that further improvements are necessary to help all pupils to achieve their best.

Children start school with low levels of knowledge and skills compared to most three year olds. Achievement for the children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, although their mathematical development is good. Standards are below those expected nationally by the time children enter Year 1. By the end of Year 2 standards are below average in reading and writing but close to average in mathematics. This represents satisfactory progress. Higher attaining pupils are doing better because of greater challenge in lessons.

The standards reached by Year 6 are broadly average in mathematics and science but considerably below average in English. In all three subjects, few pupils reach a higher

than expected level. Throughout the school, standards in language and literacy are not high enough. However, recent improvements in teaching and assessment systems are leading to higher standards.

The attainment of boys is improving due to a more stimulating curriculum and because realistic targets are set for learning. Pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily, and those with a statement of their special educational need achieve well due to regular, extra support in class. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The majority of pupils have satisfactory personal and social skills which are improving through recent initiatives, like the focus on working with 'response partners' to promote discussion and learning. The school judges personal development to be good but this is the case only for some groups, such as those closely involved with the school council, the 'buddy' system or links with the local community. Pupils clearly enjoy school. Their attitudes to learning are satisfactory overall, and sometimes good when motivated by the use of interactive whiteboards, for example. Behaviour is satisfactory and good when pupils' attention is captured well. The school is working successfully to improve low attendance levels. Close liaison with parents through the efforts of the learning mentor, the offer of a free breakfast club to those in most need, and awards for good attendance have led to steady improvements.

School assemblies, discussions in class and recent improvements in pupils' awareness of other cultures ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Sound encouragement for pupils to adopt a healthy diet and good opportunities for exercise help them achieve a healthy lifestyle. Pupils say they feel safe in school and at play, and recent initiatives to raise awareness of all forms of bullying have ensured that they know how to deal with any problems that arise. Links with parents and the community have improved considerably in recent months. There is satisfactory provision for the pupils' future economic well-being which should improve as standards, attitudes and attendance rise.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. Sometimes teaching is good but it is not yet consistently effective enough across the school to ensure good achievement overall.

In the Foundation Stage, the teaching team works together well but not all activities enable children to make good progress. Sometimes groups are larger than they need to be. Throughout the school, the quality of planning for teaching and learning is satisfactory. Although staff understand the programme of work for the term, weekly

planning is sometimes too brief to be useful. The school has identified the need to challenge pupils of differing needs more successfully. There is evidence that improved arrangements, such as smaller teaching groups, changes to the curriculum, and greater attention to learning targets are leading to better achievement by boys and the more able pupils. However, assessment information is not used consistently by all teachers to match teaching plans to pupils' individual needs. In some lessons, teachers assess accurately what pupils have learnt and give good feedback at the end of the lesson. This helps pupils to learn effectively because they know what they have to do to improve next time. The marking of pupils' work is satisfactory, but does not always help pupils to understand fully their successes and areas for development. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities learn satisfactorily and sometimes well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory, with all required subjects and areas of learning taught in all age groups. This differs from the school's judgement of good, which the inspection found applies more specifically to the wide range of additional activities made available, mostly after school. Teachers' termly plans generally ensure that pupils cover what they need to know and help them to develop important skills, including healthy lifestyles and personal safety. Although the curriculum is good for some subjects, such as mathematics and science, for others, such as music, the full programme of work has only recently been established. The school has worked hard to provide a wide range of extra activities, which include sports, in which pupils achieve particularly well, as well as musical tuition, fencing, occasional French classes and theatre visits. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is broadly satisfactory, but creative and physical development are limited by the very restricted space available indoors. Suitable use is made of the outdoor facilities but there is too little space to use play vehicles and other apparatus freely.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are satisfactory and not good as the school believes. Pupils are well cared for and protected from harm. Relationships are good and effective guidance is provided to promote thoughtful behaviour. Those with specific behaviour difficulties have effective targets and imaginative reward systems to help them to improve. Guidance and support for learning are satisfactory for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Recent initiatives in setting specific targets for different groups of pupils and whole classes are important strands in the school's programme for improvement. However, these are not yet fully supported by effective links between assessment, teaching plans and the marking of pupils' work. Consequently, pupils are not attaining as well as they might, especially in English.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and this matches the school's judgement. The recently appointed headteacher is having a good impact, especially in identifying strengths and areas for development as a basis for the school's development plan. Pupils' achievements are being tracked increasingly well and standards are improving. Performance management for staff has been reinstated and there is greater consistency in the provision for pupils across the school. Subject leaders are taking full responsibility for their subjects and are making a satisfactory contribution to improvements in standards. Satisfactory self-evaluation systems are established and becoming increasingly effective. The governing body has played a marginal role in the school's affairs until recently. They are gradually becoming more closely involved although they are not yet fully involved in reviews of the school's effectiveness. The views of pupils and parents are taken into account regularly.

Improvements in standards and other issues identified by the last inspection have been slow but are satisfactory overall. The school now has a good capacity for further improvement. The school had an exceptionally large budget underspend up to last year. The financial reserves are now being sensibly managed through the school development plan and appropriately allocated to improve provision and pupils' achievement. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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? | 3 | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 3 | NA |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage | 3 | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 | 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? | 3 | NA |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 | NA |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | NA |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 | NA |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 | NA |
| The attendance of learners | 4 | NA |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 3 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 3 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 3 | NA |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 | NA |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 | NA |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 | NA |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 | NA |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 | 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? | 3 | NA |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 | 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 | 3 | NA |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 | NA |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 | 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

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Little Digmaor Primary School

Abbeystead

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WN8 9NF

5 May 2006

Dear children

Thank you for being so friendly when I visited your school. You made me feel very welcome and pleased to be with you. I could tell that you enjoy coming to school. I found out that most things in your school are satisfactory and improving, and that you are getting better at your work. Children on the different committees in your school are working hard to improve things for you. I was impressed that the whole class in Year 4 is on the committee to make your school an Eco-school.

There are some improvements that need to be made in order to help you do even better in your work. Firstly, your work in English needs to be a lot better. Secondly, your teachers need to use what they know about the standard of your work to make sure you are learning at the right level and know what you have to do to improve. Lastly, the accommodation for Nursery and Reception children needs to be improved.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Penny Parrish

Lead inspector