

Dorchester Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102982
Local Authority	Sutton
Inspection number	286539
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Jane Chesterfield

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 on roll	
School	422
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris John
Headteacher	Mrs Louise Austin
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2002
School address	Dorchester Road Worcester Park KT4 8PG
Telephone number	020 8330 1144
Fax number	020 8337 0473

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primaries and serves a residential community of mainly owner-occupied housing. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the number learning English as an additional language are in line with the average. The proportion with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is also below average. These pupils have mainly speech and language, specific learning or behavioural difficulties. The headteacher has been in post since September 2006, following a period when the school had problems recruiting and retaining a headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Dorchester Primary is a good school where pupils achieve well. As one parent commented, 'Dorchester is a caring school with a great community feel, where my children are very happy'. Parents are confident that the current headteacher is bringing stability to the school after a period of uncertainty, and that the school is improving as a result.

Pupils make good progress during their time at the school. From average starting points, they reach above average standards by the time they leave, particularly in mathematics where the school's drive for improvement has been very successful. The school has identified weaknesses in writing, where results dipped last year, and has now turned its attention to raising standards here, especially for more able pupils and for boys. The action the school is taking is already having an impact, and pupils' progress in writing is accelerating, particularly in Year 6.

Good teaching means that pupils learn well. One pupil said, 'The way the teachers teach you makes it really fun - you get to come up and do things on the interactive whiteboard.' Teachers work hard to interest and involve pupils in their lessons, and give them good feedback on how they are doing. Pupils who have additional needs are well supported in lessons, and pupils who are learning English as an additional language are also well guided so they can take part more easily. However, teachers do not always plan well enough to challenge the more able pupils, particularly in literacy, so they do not necessarily make the progress of which they are capable. In mathematics, they are well catered for and achieve very well.

Pupils like coming to school and enjoy all that it has to offer them. The curriculum focuses well on developing their skills, and boasts an excellent range of additional activities which pupils and parents alike appreciate. Good pastoral care means that pupils feel safe in school. Most behave well in lessons and around the site, and those who have difficulty behaving acceptably are well managed to minimise disruption to others. Pupils feel that bullying and other unpleasant behaviour are handled promptly and efficiently by staff. 'The teachers deal with it really nicely', one said.

The headteacher has brought dynamic and energetic leadership to the school, building team spirit and establishing consistency in policies and practice. The school has been well supported by the local authority in its efforts to raise standards in literacy and numeracy. Now that the groundwork has been done, the school has recognised that the next step is to involve subject co-ordinators more fully in monitoring, evaluating and leading improvement in their subjects. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, and the pace of its improvement to date shows that it has a good capacity to improve further. One parent commented, 'I'm proud to say my children are thriving.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children enter the nursery, most have the skills usually expected for their age although some children are weaker in their communication, language and literacy skills. Children settle well in the nursery because staff provide a good level of care and support. The curriculum is exciting and imaginative, providing the children with a wealth of opportunities that develop their personal skills and independence. As a result, children are very motivated. Building works currently limit the outdoor curriculum in Reception, but despite this, provision remains good.

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good, with a balance of activities led by adults and opportunities for children to make their own choices. However, there are not enough activities designed to promote an interest in writing, particularly for boys. Staff are committed to helping children achieve. This, along with the exciting play-based curriculum, means that children making good progress. By the time they leave Reception, many children reach levels that are in line with expectations, and some exceed those expectations. Staff now track children's progress carefully, and have improved the accuracy of their assessments.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in writing from the Foundation Stage to Year 6, particularly for boys and for more able pupils.
- Ensure that teachers provide the right level of challenge in lessons for the more able pupils.
- Develop the role of subject leaders further, so that they are fully involved in all aspects of monitoring and evaluating their areas.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter Year 1 with broadly average standards. They make satisfactory progress in their reading and writing in Years 1 and 2, reaching average standards, and good progress in their mathematics where their standards are above average. There is a similar picture in Years 3 to 6, where pupils reach above average standards in mathematics and science, making good progress, and average standards in English because of the weaknesses in writing.

Progress in writing is, however, improving rapidly as the school is tackling the weaknesses with the same thoroughness and determination it has used successfully to improve mathematics. Here, the school has raised standards and achievement by systematically identifying problem areas, such as calculation, and by developing the confidence of staff as teachers and pupils as learners. Teachers have benefited from training sessions and from local authority support in class. This same approach is now bringing about similar improvement in writing. Much thought has gone into making writing more appealing to boys through the choice of subject matter and tasks, and this is paying dividends in increasing their interest and confidence to try their best.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development is evident in their outgoing, friendly behaviour and in their positive relationships. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They respect the views of others and are ready to listen to one another, for example in school council meetings. Pupils understand the school's code of behaviour, and know right from wrong. Though a small minority of parents have concerns about the behaviour of a few pupils, most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Those who do not are well managed by staff.

Pupils understand the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. They make a good contribution to the community. The school prepares them well for the future by focusing closely on important skills and by providing many opportunities for them to take responsibility. Most pupils attend regularly, but a number are taken out of school by their families for holidays during term time, and this disrupts their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, and the school has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses to be found in lessons. All teachers have good relationships with their classes and manage behaviour competently, setting firm boundaries for pupils. Classroom assistants are consistently well deployed. Teachers use resources well to interest and motivate pupils, and boys in particular appreciate the opportunities to use modern technology such as the interactive whiteboards. Lesson objectives and success criteria are made clear to pupils, so they know what is expected of them and when they have achieved it. Tasks are usually well matched to the needs of less able and average pupils, but there is sometimes insufficient challenge for the more able pupils. Teachers mark pupils' work well and help them to correct their errors. Sometimes when the work is good, though, there is no indication of what pupils can do to make it even better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum. National requirements are met, and since the previous inspection there have been improvements in its quality and range. There is a good emphasis on numeracy and literacy, and the school has plans to develop more links between subjects to increase pupils' enjoyment. Pupils develop good information and communication technology skills, though they do not always have the chance to use these in every subject.

The curriculum is enhanced by an outstanding range of very popular clubs and activities. One pupil said enthusiastically, 'I love gardening club, we're planting seeds tonight'. Educational visits support pupils' enjoyment of topics and provide interesting starting points for this work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of all its pupils. Safeguarding procedures are securely in place, and every effort is made to ensure that pupils are happy and secure. The school takes satisfactory steps to deal with attendance and recognises the need to improve the attendance of a minority of pupils. Pupils with speech and language or specific learning difficulties make good progress because of careful and caring support from teaching assistants. Provision for pupils who are learning English as an additional language is thoughtfully planned, and consequently these pupils make very good progress. Pupils are given good guidance on how to make progress. They all have targets to work towards, and most pupils understand them and use them well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher gives strong and purposeful direction to the school and is ably supported by the deputy. School self-evaluation is good, and the school has a clear programme for monitoring the quality of its work. Subject leaders are well involved in monitoring planning and pupils' work, and in leading professional development in

their subjects. The school has made good use of local authority expertise to support and monitor teaching. The impact of subject leaders now needs to be further extended by enabling them to take on this role more fully in the future. The governors fulfil their duties well. They have a good grasp of the school's strengths and the areas it needs to develop, and a clear understanding of the role of the governing body. They provide the school with a good and improving balance of support and challenge.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

01 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dorchester Primary School, Worcester Park, KT4 8PG

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. We think that Dorchester Primary is a good school, and we could tell that you like going there. You are doing well in your lessons, because your teachers know you well and know how to make your work interesting so that you learn new things.

We were impressed with your good behaviour in the school and the playground, and we thought that you all get on very well together. The staff take good care of you, and those of you who need extra help are well supported.

Your headteacher and her staff run the school well, and know how to make it even better in future. We have agreed that they are going to do more to make sure that all of you achieve as well as you can in your writing. They are also going to make sure that you are all given work which is right for you in lessons, and some teachers are going to have more responsibility for different subjects. You can help by telling your teachers if you find your work too easy or too hard.

Well done to you all, and best wishes for the future.

Jane Chesterfield

Lead Inspector