

Mexborough Doncaster Road Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106682
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	287586
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Linda Murphy

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr K Barron
Headteacher	Mr P Davis
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2002
School address	Doncaster Road Mexborough South Yorkshire S64 0LU
Telephone number	01709 583295
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school which serves an area of social disadvantage as seen in the high proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Since the last inspection, the number on roll has declined following a lower birth rate in the area, improvements have been made to the accommodation, and a new deputy headteacher appointed. Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage. Very few pupils are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the average nationally. The school has attained the Healthy Schools 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. It meets its aim to provide a firm foundation for the pupils' academic and personal development. The great majority of parents think highly of the school and like the 'friendly and welcoming atmosphere' and 'recommend the school to others'. This small school is seen by many as an extended family that really helps pupils to become happy, mature individuals who enjoy learning and look forward to the future.

The warm relationships and good care given provide a cornerstone to treating all pupils fairly. The pupils are proud of their school and enjoy all that they do. They have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy and make the most of the many opportunities for sport.

All groups of pupils achieve well. From average starting points on entry to Year 3 pupils attain standards that are above average by Year 6. Pupils are well prepared for their next school because they acquire a good level of basic skills. Reading is the weakest subject and changes in the teaching of reading have yet to pay extra dividends. Pupils write for a good variety of reasons and their writing is interesting and pertinent. It is let down by their handwriting which is often not well formed and leads to untidy presentation that sometimes goes unchecked. Even so, since the last inspection standards have risen overall. This is because of the good teaching. Assessment is well linked to teaching and learning and, as a result, pupils are set work at the right level. Pupils learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties benefit from extra help and do well. They are readily accepted into school life.

The curriculum is of good quality and at its very best is personalised to pupils' needs and backgrounds. Strengths are in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and the wide variety of enrichments. A relative weakness is that subjects are not well enough linked to enable pupils' learning to accelerate even more.

Good partnerships with the community, including other schools, promotes pupils' personal development and their day-to-day learning well. For example, a joint breakfast club with the nearby infant school gives many children a good start to the school day.

The quality of leadership and management at all levels is good. There are clear lines of delegated responsibility and staff fulfil their roles well. The school knows its strengths and areas to develop because of very effective monitoring and evaluation. Leaders embrace carefully chosen initiatives and use these well to raise standards. For example, through its successful work to gain a healthy school status it nurtures pupils' social and emotional development well. Good progress since the last inspection is evident in the improvements in standards, pupils' achievement, the rate of attendance and the quality of teaching. The school is well placed to improve further and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading to at least match the higher standards in other subjects.
- Ensure that handwriting and presentation are of good quality.
- Strengthen links between subjects so that pupils' learning becomes more integrated.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are improving faster than they are nationally. Pupils attain standards that are above average by the end of Year 6 in writing, mathematics and science. A good proportion of pupils attain highly in English, mathematics and science. Pupils learning English as an additional language receive extra help which accelerates their use of English. Pupils with learning difficulties do well because of the individual guidance they are given – another improvement since the last inspection. A recent focus on English has helped pupils improve the content of their writing, although their handwriting is untidy and adversely affects presentation in other subjects. Boys do not do as well as girls in reading and standards are lower than in writing for most pupils. The school has begun to increase the choice of books that are available and the opportunities for reading, although the impact of these actions has yet to be fully seen. In mathematics pupils get on well with learning about numbers and are increasing their abilities to apply their learning to solving problems.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. As a result, pupils enjoy school and attendance is above average. The pupils behave well and this supports their rapid learning. They say that if they have any problems there are always plenty of adults to turn to in school and that the very few incidences of alleged bullying are dealt with promptly by staff. Pupils are friendly, courteous and care well for each other which adds much to the school community. By Year 6 pupils' increasingly mature attitudes helps them to take much responsibility, for example as school counsellors or monitors. They perform their duties well. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy. They really enjoy the plentiful opportunities for sports and keeping fit and appreciate well the importance of a healthy diet. They are proud of their healthy tuck shop which provides fresh fruit at break times. Pupils contribute much to the wider community through involvement in local events and fund-raising.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Relationships are very good between teachers and pupils and this promotes a good atmosphere for learning across the school. Pupils' behaviour is managed very well; expectations are high and pupils come to class ready to learn. Questioning is demanding of the pupils. It provides a good influence for the pupils in their discussion and helps them to make rapid gains. It helps those pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language very well by introducing new vocabulary and developing their confidence in speaking. Teaching assistants are deployed well and add a great deal to pupils' individual learning, in particular when working alongside teachers to help pupils who experience difficulties with learning. Marking is diagnostic and pupils say how much it helps them improve their work. Well chosen resources aid pupils' learning and make it fun. For example, a teacher followed the pupils' written instructions to make a cup of tea. This gave great delight to the pupils, but also reinforced the importance of clearly set out directions. On occasion when teaching is satisfactory rather than good it is because the pace is slow and results in less learning than usual.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is practical, gives pleasure to the pupils and meets the needs of all groups. Pupils benefit from studying philosophy which aids their approach to working out problems and informs discussion very well. Pupils particularly enjoy work when subjects are linked because they say it makes learning more interesting and 'gives us more to think about'. The links are most refined in ICT and work particularly well. Those in other subjects are not as well integrated. Plentiful visits enrich the curriculum and add excitement and appeal, such as when pupils make visits to watch dance, listen to music or explore the local castle. Physical education including sports is a strong element that helps pupils keep fit and lays the foundation for later interests and good health.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils' pastoral care is carefully planned. Outside agencies are used well and coupled with the school's arrangements impact positively on pupils' self-esteem and emotional well-being. Arrangements to assess pupils' progress are very effective and this is a good improvement since the last inspection. It helps teachers match tasks to pupils' needs so that all pupils work at a challenging level. The outcomes of assessment are shared with pupils and encouragement is given for pupils to check at the end of lessons how well they have done. This helps them understand what they need to do next to improve. Pupils' progress is tracked by senior staff through an easy to use management system. Procedures for health and safety are satisfactory in the main. Arrangements for child protection and for safely recruiting new staff meet requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development. This is because monitoring is well considered and evaluation of the school's work is very effective in identifying the next step. It results in a clear focus to raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress; it enables pupils to meet challenging targets. Staff have many subject responsibilities in this small school. A very effective management structure is in place and the role of subject leaders has developed significantly since the last inspection. Teachers are involved in checking the quality of teaching and learning and their skills are drawn upon well to ensure standards improve. The development plan highlights key priorities but lacks clearly allocated responsibilities and quantifiable success criteria for governors to check progress against initiatives even more thoroughly. Governors are supportive of the school and provide timely challenge. Together with the headteacher, they have improved the accommodation to make it more conducive to learning and have also ensured good provision in ICT; consequently standards have risen.

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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 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	2
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your help when I visited your school to find out how well you are doing. You will be pleased to know that Mexborough Doncaster Road is a good school.

The staff take good care of you and this helps you to become confident and mature. As a result you behave very well and take on responsibilities around school. You have a good understanding of how important it is to keep fit and healthy. The good teaching and enjoyable work makes learning fun. This is why you make good progress and attain higher standards than in most schools. Your attendance is also better than in a lot of schools.

The school is well led and managed and your headteacher and other staff know what to do to make things even better for you. They agree with me that the next step is to improve your reading so that it is as good as in other subjects and to ensure that your handwriting and presentation are of good quality. You and your parents can help in this. The school is also going to make some changes to the curriculum so that you have even more interesting opportunities to learn.