

Dobcroft Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107048
Local Authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	287692
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Judy Jones

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	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ruth Bourne
Headteacher	Mrs Cathy Rowland
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2002
School address	Pingle Road Millhouses Sheffield South Yorkshire S7 2LN
Telephone number	0114 2368099
Fax number	0114 2368014

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large infant school serving a socially advantaged area to the south of Sheffield. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, as is the proportion of children from minority ethnic families. A below average number of children speak a language other than English at home. Children's knowledge and skills when they enter the Foundation Stage are broadly average. The school is a leading school for the local authority and holds Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Dobcroft Infant School gives its children an outstanding education. Masterful leadership and management and the strong clarity of purpose enable children to make outstanding progress in the Foundation Stage and through Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2 standards are exceptionally high. While all groups achieve outstandingly well and there is no significant difference in the progress of any particular groups, boys' writing still lags behind that of girls.

High standards and outstanding achievement are due to consistently high quality teaching within a broad, lively and exciting curriculum and to children's outstanding personal development and well-being. In lessons teachers have high expectations and never miss an opportunity to extend children's knowledge and skills. Children enjoy learning and are proud of their successes. Even the youngest are exceptionally self-reliant and can work independently. They know how to eat well and stay safe. Practical activities within the curriculum prepare them well for the future. They learn to support each other and they become responsible and independent from the earliest age because the ethos of caring, nurturing and striving for excellence underpins all that the school does. All adults treat children and each other with respect and children respond by being kind and thoughtful with each other. There is excellent support for individuals with different needs, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children are assessed frequently and accurately and encouraged to meet challenging targets.

The school has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development and improvement since the previous inspection is very good. In this it is very well supported by the governing body which is well informed and conscientious in its duties.

The school is well resourced, in part thanks to its very active parents' association, and makes very good use of its funding. It gives outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve boys' writing to raise it to the standard of the girls'.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress in the Foundation Stage, which continues through Years 1 and 2, so that when they are ready to transfer to the junior school at the end of Year 2, standards are exceptionally high. Since the previous inspection, national assessment results have improved faster than the national picture, with the exception of reading, where the trend in results has remained level. Although the achievement from their starting points of both girls and boys is outstanding, girls reach higher standards than boys in writing, who start school with less developed skills in this area. The school met its challenging targets in 2006 and is on track to do the same in 2007. A high proportion of children reaches a standard of work above that expected for their age by Year 2. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language and children from various ethnic family backgrounds all make excellent progress during their time in school. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved since the previous inspection, when children did not have enough opportunities to use their ICT skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children delight in school because learning is fun. Their attitudes to learning and their behaviour are exemplary. Above average attendance levels reflect children's and parents' commitment to the school. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. High quality provision ensures they have a widespread understanding of social and moral issues. They understand right and wrong and show they understand what it means to live healthy and safe lives. They know that a healthy lifestyle is based on emotional as well as physical well-being. This is valuable knowledge for their future success. They have a growing understanding of what it means to be a responsible citizen. When asked what it meant to be an Eco-school, children replied: 'Well, we're a green school and we're trying to save the world!' Above all, children enjoy their education. They have plenty of opportunity to learn about the world of work through inventive role-play within a creative curriculum. A significant improvement since the previous inspection is the way children know and can talk about the diversity of our world: this is reflected in the stimulating displays and the work they produce under the guidance of visiting experts.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Children enjoy their lessons and are keen to work hard and do their best because teaching is consistently good with some outstanding features, particularly in areas of personal and social education. Lessons are planned and prepared with care and children's work is assessed thoroughly. Children build skills and knowledge successfully because they are taught to assess the quality of their own learning and they do this honestly and seriously. Teachers know their subjects well and use this good knowledge to make lessons interesting. Lessons in which the whole class is taught together are very well managed and teachers lose no opportunity to reinforce learning, or to ask questions that make children think hard and extend their understanding. Teachers use a wide and complex vocabulary, while explaining the meanings of words. Consequently, children respond well orally. When children work in groups teachers try hard to make sure all are busy and doing work that is appropriate, although sometimes the more able find the work easy if they are not being guided by the class teacher or teaching assistant. Teachers work closely with teaching assistants who make a valuable contribution to the quality of children's learning. Work is marked conscientiously and encouragingly, giving children sufficient guidance about how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because it enables all children to achieve exceptionally high academic standards, as well as to excel in their personal development. They thoroughly enjoy their education and thrive on the opportunities they have to learn from a very wide range of activities, including extra-curricular activities. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is exemplary and this is a major factor in children's outstanding academic achievement. The school gives high priority to this aspect of the curriculum and many parents comment on how much this has improved their children's education in recent years. Similarly, an emphasis on first hand and practical experiences makes learning more interesting and meaningful for the children, so that they want to try their best. This is seen, for example, in the lively and

imaginative art and design, created as a result of working with visiting artists and craftspeople. Since the previous inspection provision for children to learn about cultural diversity has improved. Work about life in India and Tanzania, for example, broadens their horizons and prepares them well for their future lives. As part of efforts to raise standards in writing, the school aims to extend opportunities for children to write across other subjects. Similarly, teachers are increasing opportunities for boys to enjoy reading books, so that they catch up with girls in writing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support for children are exceptional and unwavering, with high emphasis on children's emotional health and well-being. All adults, including lunchtime personnel, receive training to support children's needs very well. The school embraces innovative approaches to extending its support for children as, for example, it improves their nurturing skills through a very well planned programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education. There is excellent provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they make very good progress as a result. Adults ensure children become increasingly aware and tolerant of those who are different from themselves. There are appropriate procedures to safeguard children and to ensure their health, safety and general well-being. The nurturing characteristics embedded in the school's core ensure all children discover the emotional support they need in order to become more effective learners and, even more crucially, better citizens.

Systems to track children's progress are secure and children know how well they are doing. First class links with other schools and organisations ensure that induction into school and transition to the junior school are very well managed. As a result, children transfer to the next stage in their education with little anxiety.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Despite considerable changes and absences of leaders and managers, the school has continued to improve on its previously good track record. This is because of the inspirational leadership and high expectations of the headteacher, insightful governance and a committed team of teachers and support staff. Everyone pulls together to meet the needs of the children and to strive for an even better quality of education. Consequently, parents have great confidence in the school, standards are improving and children get off to a very good start. The school has a largely accurate picture of its strengths and areas for improvement. Subject leaders take their responsibilities very seriously and newer ones are keen to develop their skills further. The school keeps a careful eye on its progress through thorough systematic monitoring of teaching, analysis of data and careful management of finances. Improvement since the previous inspection is excellent and the school has outstanding capacity to improve in the future.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Inspection of Dobcroft Infant School, Sheffield, S7 2GN

On behalf of the inspectors I would like to thank you for making us so welcome during the inspection and for letting us share your lessons, lunchtime and playtimes. Thank you for letting us look at your work and for telling us so much about your school.

You will be pleased to know that we decided that you go to an outstandingly good school. You learn very well and many of you read, write and use number better than most children your age by the time you go on to junior school.

You are good at thinking about others and looking after other children who need help. You are also very good at thinking for yourselves and working independently. This is because your teachers and other helpers give you excellent ways to learn to care for others and be good citizens. You care a lot about looking after our world and several of you explained the ways in which your school is an Eco-school.

Your teachers are very good at asking interesting questions that make you think hard and learn more. They are very good at introducing you to new and unusual words and you are good at using them.

We are asking your headteacher to help you even more by finding ways for boys to improve their writing. We are sure the boys will try very hard to write better still.