



Donisthorpe Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119944
Local Authority Leicestershire
Inspection number 291578
Inspection dates 15–16 January 2007
Reporting inspector Mike Capper

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Ashby Road
School category	Community		Donisthorpe
Age range of pupils	4–11		Swadlincote DE12 7QF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01530 270371
Number on roll (school)	233	Fax number	01530 272074
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Michael Meadows
		Headteacher	Mary El Menyiy
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 15–16 January 2007	Inspection number 291578
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school takes pupils from the local village, which is a former mining community, as well as from the surrounding areas. About half of the pupils in the juniors join the school in Year 3 from a nearby infant school. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Children's attainment when they start school in the Reception class is broadly average in most years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that supports pupils' personal development well. Members of staff take good care of pupils. Pupils are friendly and polite and they behave well in lessons. They develop good social skills and happily take responsibility through the well organised school council and by being 'house' or 'sports' captains. There are effective systems for ensuring that pupils who transfer to the school in Year 3 are able to settle quickly. There is a satisfactory curriculum that is enriched by a good number of out-of-school activities and visits. Pupils especially enjoy the sporting and music activities that the school provides for them.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and by the end of the Reception Year, standards are broadly similar to those found nationally. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and make good use of resources such as the interactive whiteboards to teach new skills. Teaching assistants ensure that less able pupils can take a full part in lessons, but teaching, although satisfactory overall, does not consistently stretch more able pupils. Consequently, although standards are broadly average overall by the end of Year 6, not all more able pupils make fast enough progress. In English, test results are slightly lower in writing than in reading. Pupils do not get enough opportunities to write at length and this slows the pace at which skills improve, especially for boys.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The welcoming atmosphere in school reflects the calm and caring leadership of the headteacher. Senior managers have a clear understanding of what is going well and what needs improving. They have an accurate picture of overall school effectiveness and have demonstrated, in the way that they tackled weaknesses from the last inspection, that there is a satisfactory capacity to improve. The school development plan identifies the right priorities but does not contain enough detail or sharp enough targets. This makes it difficult for senior managers, subject leaders or governors to monitor rigorously progress towards meeting targets. There are good links with parents and most are very happy with the school. One parent summed up their views: 'My children enjoy going to school. They are full of enthusiasm and we have never had a day when they haven't wanted to come.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching by ensuring that there is always enough challenge for more able pupils.
- Give pupils more opportunities to write purposefully so that writing skills improve more quickly.
- Improve the quality of the written development plan by including more information about what is to be achieved and how success is to be measured.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children make satisfactory progress from their different starting points in the Reception Year and, by the end of the year, most are working at the levels expected for their age. Children make good progress in personal, social and emotional development and quickly develop confidence and self-esteem. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6. Standards are generally broadly average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. In 2006, a more capable group of Year 2 pupils successfully reached above average standards. By the end of Year 6, most pupils are working at the expected levels for their age although some more able pupils do not always achieve as well as they could, because their work is not always sufficiently challenging. In English, pupils do better at reading than writing. Pupils read frequently at school, but they do not always get enough opportunities to practise and improve their writing skills, and this slows progress, especially for boys.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils support each other well and behave sensibly in lessons. Even in the Reception class, they are sociable and inquisitive. Pupils talk very positively about most aspects of school life. They especially like doing practical work in subjects such as art, science and design and technology, although older pupils, particularly some boys, are less keen on the written work they are given in English. Rates of attendance are satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils feel valued and they happily take on responsibility. They know that their views are taken into account through the effective school council. Pupils are developing a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. The school has an award for its sporting provision and pupils are keen to take exercise. Pupils explain why they need to eat fruit. As one said, 'Five-a-day keeps you well.' The 'Little Rotters' Club' helps pupils to look after the environment by recycling waste. Pupils make a sound contribution to the community by taking part in local events. For example, the choir recently sang in Leicester Cathedral.

Pupils take part in elections for the school council and they learn to manage small budgets by running stalls at the summer fair. Activities such as these, as well as their generally secure basic skills, prepare pupils satisfactorily for the next stage of their education and eventually for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are good features to teaching across the school. In the Reception Year, adults provide calm and sensitive support to all children, helping them to settle quickly. Throughout the school, relationships are good and adults work together very effectively to manage pupils' behaviour, even when it is potentially challenging. Consequently, pupils are happy at school and are able to concentrate on their own learning without distractions. There is a good pace to learning at the start of lessons, with teachers using questioning well to help pupils understand what to do. Throughout the school, skilled teaching assistants have a good effect on learning, especially when working with small groups of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities outside the classroom. At these times, these pupils make good progress.

The school has rightly identified that some aspects of teaching need further improvement. Although pupils' learning is regularly assessed, this information is not always used well enough to ensure that work builds on what they already know. In particular, there is not always enough level of challenge for more able pupils, thus slowing their progress. There is good quality marking in English and mathematics in some classes, but this is not yet consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There is a satisfactory curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage. The strong focus on children's personal and social skills is effective in helping them to learn new routines and make friends quickly. Adults plan interesting work but there are not enough opportunities for children to choose for themselves what they are going to do, restricting children's independence. In Years 1 to 6, the curriculum helps pupils to build steadily on what they have already learnt, though planning does not always take enough account of the needs of more able pupils. There are too few opportunities for pupils to write, both in English and in other subjects.

Throughout the school, a good number of visits and visitors extend pupils' experience of the wider world and introduce new artistic or sporting skills. Pupils explain clearly how recent visits to the Black Country Museum and a Roman fort brought topics to life. Pupils value the after-school clubs provided by adults. These are well attended and enhance both social and academic development. Pupils particularly enjoy music and they sing enthusiastically and tunefully.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school successfully cares for pupils and supports their personal development well. All members of staff place great value upon each individual and regard their welfare

as a top priority. Consequently, pupils are happy and feel safe and secure. They say that any worries are dealt with quickly. The school works well with parents and outside agencies to safeguard children.

Academic support is merely satisfactory because information about how well pupils are doing is not always used rigorously enough to plan work. Recent improvements include the setting of targets to help pupils understand how they can improve. Older pupils say that they find this helpful. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified early and provided with appropriate support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Senior managers are hardworking and enthusiastic and they are moving the school in the right direction. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together well and have established a strong caring ethos that is reflected in the school's commitment to providing a secure and happy haven for all pupils whatever their background or need. There are satisfactory systems for evaluating how well the school is doing. As a result, senior managers and subject leaders understand what needs to be improved although this is not reflected well enough in development planning. This identifies the correct issues but lacks detail and does not always set clearly measurable targets for raising attainment. The school has accumulated a great deal of information about pupils' progress. Senior managers are beginning to use this to check whether all groups of pupils are making enough progress, although this still needs to be done with greater rigour to ensure that any dips in achievement are tackled quickly. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive and have successfully managed significant improvements to accommodation which have resulted in improved provision, especially for younger children. Governors play an active part in holding the school to account although they are insufficiently involved in development planning.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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 behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

Leadership and management

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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work. You were very polite and friendly. At the moment, your school is providing a satisfactory education. This means that we found some good things in the school but also some things that need improving.

Some of the things we found out about your school:

- You make steady progress so that by the time you leave the school in Year 6, you are reaching the same standards as children in most other schools.
- You behave well and are keen to take responsibility.
- Teachers do a satisfactory job, get on well with you and make good use of resources to involve you in your work.
- There are lots of interesting things to do outside lessons.
- All adults in school are very kind and caring and they look after you well.
- Your headteacher and governors know what needs to be done next to make the school even better.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Make sure that teachers always give you work that is hard enough for you.
- Help you to improve your writing by giving you more chances to write in literacy lessons and other subjects.
- Make sure that the school's written plans for improvement are clear and give enough information so that progress can be checked.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn and we wish you all well for the future. We hope you continue to help your teachers by working hard and trying your best.