

Dovecotes Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104350
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	324028
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Helen Morrison

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	214
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	8
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Holmes
Headteacher	Gill Beddow
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ryefield Dovecotes Estate Pendeford Wolverhampton WV8 1TX
Telephone number	01902 558284
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Most of the pupils who attend Dovecotes Primary School live locally in an area where many families experience significant socio-economic disadvantage. An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. More pupils than average are from different minority ethnic backgrounds, though the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average.

The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises Nursery and Reception classes and there is an adjoining Children's Centre (The Dove Centre), managed by the school, which opened in May 2006. It provides full day care for children from the ages of 0 to 3, and a wide range of family support services and community facilities are part of its extended service. The school provides 'wrap around' care for pupils in the before- and after-school club. There are also adjoining Arts and Community Centres providing further family support.

The school has successfully achieved Healthy School status and the Sportsmark 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. The headteacher provides effective leadership, and gives very clear direction to the life and development of the school. There is good teamwork amongst leaders at all levels in the school, with a strong commitment to children, families and the local community. This is shown through the development of the Children's Centre and extended services, together with a clear focus on raising standards of attainment. The school has accurate and effective self-evaluation that links well to staff professional development and future action plans. Governors hold the school to account effectively and monitor the school well. The good impact of initiatives to raise pupils' attainment demonstrates that the school has good capacity to continue to improve.

Parents appreciate the daycare facilities and services available to them in the Children's Centre and say that staff throughout the school are welcoming, helpful and approachable. They are also very positive about the introduction of a structured programme for teaching letters and sounds; for example, one said, 'the scheme is a brilliant way of teaching the children to read and I am really pleased with the progress my daughter has made.'

Children achieve well across the school, though this is not yet consistent in all classes. They make a good start to learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and become increasingly independent as they choose activities that interest them. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are below average. Boys achieve less well than girls in writing but the more structured approach to teaching reading and writing is beginning to help them make faster progress. In Key Stage 2, standards have risen since the last inspection and are now average, as a result of good teaching and careful matching of pupils' work to their abilities. Regular monitoring of the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures they make good progress. However, pupils are not given individual targets in reading, writing and mathematics to help them to make faster progress. Pupils' work is marked regularly but the positive comments made do not always help pupils know what they need to do to improve.

The school has revised its curriculum planning to develop a more creative curriculum, with stronger cross-curricular links to make learning more meaningful, interesting and relevant to local circumstances. The curriculum provides a good range of experiences for pupils and they spoke excitedly about their residential visits. The comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education effectively promotes pupils' social and emotional development. Pupils are caring and considerate towards others and there is a strong sense of working together to help one another. They behave well in lessons and enjoy good relationships with their teachers.

The contribution the school makes to the school community and local community is good. Community cohesion is only satisfactory overall, however, because its impact on faith, ethnicity and culture are not yet fully developed. Pupils show considerable respect for one another and talk confidently about equal opportunities in school, although opportunities to learn about the multicultural nature of British society are limited. The school takes every opportunity to promote the importance of good attendance and as a result there are few pupils whose attendance is very poor. However, despite these robust actions, attendance remains below the national average.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the nursery with standards below age-related expectations but their achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. There are close links between the Children's Centre and the Early Years Foundation Stage so that children move confidently between them. They are eager to learn, behave well and their personal development is good. Children enjoy working and playing outdoors. The Early Years Foundation Stage and the Children's Centre are very well led. Children's progress is carefully assessed and the curriculum is planned so as to address any gaps in their learning. For example, regular focused sessions to help pupils learn their letters and sounds are beginning to improve their achievement in early reading and writing skills. However, although children learn to count well, their calculation skills are less well developed. Links with parents are good and there are detailed welcome packs for both the Children's Centre and the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff are available each day to talk to parents. Each child has a portfolio which shows their learning and these are appreciated by parents. Although welfare is of the highest priority and staff care for children's welfare well, risk assessments of particular areas of the outdoor environment are not always carried out sufficiently frequently.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set clear targets for individual pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics, and provide better guidance for them so that they understand what they need to do to improve.
- Provide targeted support to help pupils, particularly boys, make better progress in writing in Key Stage 1.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The majority of pupils start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge below typical expectations. From a very low starting point, pupils achieve well and they leave school having reached broadly average standards. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although the majority do not meet the goals expected by the time they start Year 1. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Key Stage 1, though they start Year 3 with standards below average, particularly in writing, where boys do less well than girls. The introduction of a structured programme for teaching letters and sounds has had a positive impact on pupils' reading and writing. As a result, standards are beginning to rise, although this improvement is at an early stage.

At Key Stage 2, standards are broadly average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2 and achieve well with particularly good progress in Year 6 due to consistently good teaching. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Girls make less progress in Key Stage 2 than boys and a range of initiatives is being used to raise girls' aspirations, which is beginning to have a positive impact. Targets are not set for individual pupils, however, so they do not always know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and want to do well. Social and moral skills are promoted well and pupils have a good awareness of right and wrong. A particular strength of the school is

the confidence with which pupils explore feelings and relationships in their nurturing programme and through exploration of the social and emotional aspects of learning. Pupils are polite and their behaviour is good. Their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory, although their knowledge of life in a multicultural environment is limited. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of living healthily. They say they feel safe in school and that any bullying is dealt with promptly and effectively. Older pupils have a good understanding of internet safety. There is an active school council which is helping to develop the school, for example through reviewing extra-curricular activities, and pupils act as peer mentors and 'zoneparc' leaders in the playground. Pupils also make a good contribution to the wider community through collections for local and national charities and links to a local home for the elderly. Pupils' interest in learning, their increasing awareness of the world of work as a result of visits from local professionals, and their developing skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology result in their being satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers work hard to make lessons interesting, challenging and fun. As a result, pupils have positive attitudes to learning and generally make good progress, although this is not always consistent across the school. Opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas with a partner are used well throughout the school and role-play encourages pupils to extend their thinking; for example, in one lesson, pupils considered Pandora's response to Zeus after opening the box he had given her. Teaching assistants play an important role in lessons, supporting pupils of all abilities, for example when working with targeted groups to improve reading and writing. There is a wide range of interesting resources and interactive whiteboards are often used to motivate and interest pupils. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own learning using a 'traffic light' system. Teachers generally make helpful comments when marking pupils' work, but marking does not always tell pupils what they need to do to improve, and comments are not linked to targets for learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has rightly emphasised the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics, and recent improvements are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievements. The introduction of a structured programme for teaching letters and sounds, for example, has begun to raise pupils' attainment in reading and writing, and the setting arrangements for English and mathematics in Key Stage 2 ensure pupils are given work that challenges them so that they make good progress. However, some of the 'creative curriculum' topics are disjointed and the outcomes have yet to be monitored to ensure that pupils' skills are developing fast enough, especially for the more able. There are also too few opportunities to use problem-solving skills and to learn about different cultures in Britain and internationally. Pupils' personal development is promoted well through the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme. There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities and visits, particularly residential visits, which enable pupils to learn new skills in an exciting and challenging way. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit from a good curriculum, linking all areas of learning. This results in good progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good care and support for all pupils, including the most vulnerable, helps pupils to feel safe and happy at school. They know that they will always get the help they need because adults listen to them. Staff develop good links with parents and encourage them to help their children's learning at home. Together with the Children's Centre, the school offers a good range of support services for children and their families and these are highly valued. The family support worker organises activities that engage an increasing number of parents and carers as partners in children's learning and this has contributed to improving attendance. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding are robust and meet requirements, and security is good throughout the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified promptly and good provision is made so that they make good progress. However, higher attaining pupils are less well provided for. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate how well they are doing but, while marking is supportive, it does not inform pupils about the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is an effective leader who knows the key strengths and areas for development of the school well. Her vision for the school has led to strong team work amongst all staff who share her commitment to the school. There is a clear focus on raising standards and increasing pupils' progress based on effective school self-evaluation, which is now accurate, and this is beginning to raise pupils' attainment. Whole-school targets, based on the analysis of attainment data, are both realistic and challenging. The school is committed to equality of opportunity and identifies quickly the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Actions have been taken to raise the attainment of girls in Key Stage 2 and to improve boys' writing, and these are beginning to have an impact.

The school successfully manages its growing provision for children and families through the Children's Centre and extended services. The Children's Centre is well led and provision is rigorously evaluated to ensure it meets community needs. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, with children's progress monitored effectively so that they make good progress. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily and has a good understanding of the impact of socio-economic issues in the local community.

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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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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**

12 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dovecotes Primary School, Wolverhampton WV8 1TX

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and showing us what you are learning. We hope that Years 1 and 2 enjoyed their visit to Kingswood. Because you were so friendly, polite and helpful, we found out quite a lot about your school.

- It gives you a good education so you achieve well.
- Your headteacher leads your school well.
- Your teachers care for you and look after you and so you feel safe.
- You clearly enjoy being at school and finding out new things.
- The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get a good start to their school life.
- Those of you who find work difficult are given lots of support so you make good progress.

In order that your school gets even better we have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to do the following:

- help you reach even higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by setting you targets that you can check with your teachers, and make sure marking helps you to know how well you are doing and what you need to do to get better
- help you all, but especially the boys, to write well by showing you what you need to do to make better progress. You can help your teachers do this by making sure you come to school regularly and by always doing your very best.

I wish you lots of success in the future.

With best wishes

Helen Morrison

Lead inspector