

Little Digmaor Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119297
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	326995
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Nigel Cromeey-Hawke

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)	107
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Spurr
Headteacher	Miss Jenny Haunch
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Abbeystead Skelmersdale Lancashire WN8 9NF
Telephone number	01695 724539
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school in an area of high social and economic disadvantage. The number on roll has decreased since the last inspection, mainly due to a fall in the local birth rate. The proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals and of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well above average. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage but there is an increasing number coming into the school whose first language is not English. The school provides for Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) learners and extended services to pupils, parents and the community, often through the on-site Friends of Little Digmaor (FOLD) Centre. The school has Healthy Schools and Activemark awards and was the regional winner of the National Teaching Awards under the Sustainable Schools category in 2007.

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 that has improved significantly over recent years. Parents are overwhelmingly of the view that their children enjoy their learning, behaviour is good and that they are making good progress. One typically commented that, 'I cannot praise the school enough.' Achievement is good because of the positive attitudes of pupils to their learning, the good curriculum and teaching complemented by good levels of pastoral care.

Children make a good start to their learning in EYFS because the teaching and the curriculum are good, they are helped to learn and develop effectively and are looked after well. Resources and activities for outdoor learning are underdeveloped.

Children start school with understanding and skills that are well below those typical of their age but make good progress and achieve well in their time in the school. When pupils leave school in Year 6, their standards are broadly average. Standards have risen steadily over the last three years as a result of improvements in teaching and learning. Pupils now make good progress towards challenging targets, although progress in English is not as rapid as other subjects. The increasing number of later entrants to the school who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or whose first language is not English, also make good progress.

Teaching is good. The many teaching assistants have received training in language work and support learners well. Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have been improved since the last inspection and both teachers and pupils make good use of computers, laptops and interactive whiteboards to support learning. Pupils find this interesting and it prepares them well for the future.

The good curriculum has a focus upon healthy living and the broadening of pupils' experiences through a wide range of visits and extra activities. This stimulates their interests and contributes successfully to their good personal development and to their positive attitudes to school. Pupils clearly enjoy their learning, say they feel safe and their behaviour is good. Pupils are keen to become involved in the life of the school, for example as playground buddies or members of the 'Eco Team' and the school council has been active in helping to promote fitness and healthy eating. The levels of care provided by the school are good, helped by the school's extended services for parents and community support through the FOLD Centre. Guidance to pupils on how to improve their work is generally good but marking varies across subjects. Target setting is generally good but at times some pupils are not clear about what they have to do to improve.

Leadership and management across the school are good, including in the EYFS. The headteacher provides strong leadership and has a staff who are highly committed and work well together to ensure that the school provides a stimulating and supportive learning environment. The school's self-evaluation is good and staff know what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. Community cohesion is a strength of the school, with good strategies to extend pupils' understanding of the lives of people different to themselves. The effective leadership by the headteacher and senior staff, coupled with good governance, gives the school a good capacity to improve in future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with knowledge, understanding and skills that are well below those typical of their age, especially in communication, language and literacy. Many additional children

join during the Reception year. They often have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and, increasingly, with first languages other than English. Children make good progress in EYFS but nonetheless start Year 1 with skills and understanding below that expected for their age, especially in English. The learning environment is warm, friendly and fun and, as a result, children enjoy coming to school and they develop good attitudes to learning. The care and attention to their welfare is good. Children experience a wide range of activities across all areas of learning. There is a good balance between activities the children choose for themselves and those led by the teachers or the numerous assistants who support the classes well. Opportunities for outdoor learning are underdeveloped due to a lack of suitable resources and equipment. Children are encouraged to take responsibility, organise themselves and others and learn new skills. They demonstrate good levels of confidence and behaviour, following clear guidelines and routines they have worked out with the help of their teachers. Teaching is good and ensures that the well planned curriculum is made interesting and relevant to them. ICT is used well by even the youngest to support their learning, especially with language work. This especially helps those who are learning English. The leadership of EYFS is good and frequent assessment and recording of children's progress enables staff to plan for the individual needs of children. The transition from EYFS to Year 1 is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further improve standards in English, especially the areas of speaking and listening and reading.
- Improve provision for outdoor learning in the EYFS.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From below average starting points at the beginning of Key Stage 1 pupils make good progress and reach broadly average standards by the time they leave the school. This represents good achievement, especially for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who often form high proportions of each year group. Standards have risen steadily from levels in the past that were below and, at times, well below national averages. This is reflected in the improving picture of results in national tests and assessments. An effective focus upon writing, especially with boys, has contributed to this rise but overall progress in English has been slower than other subjects. Standards in speaking and listening and in reading remain relative weaknesses. The rigorous assessment and tracking systems introduced two years ago indicate that current pupils are making good progress and are on track to reach the challenging targets the school has set itself.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their good attitudes to learning, good behaviour and in the effective progress they make in their learning. Attendance matches national averages. Pupils are helpful and caring towards each other and say that they feel safe and valued in school. Bullying and racist incidents are rare and well dealt with. Pupils feel that they are listened to and are confident that any problems they might have will be dealt with quickly and fairly by staff. The school council has been very active and influenced the school's provision on a number of issues, such as the purchase of playground equipment and a school allotment. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop a good understanding

of right from wrong. They understand much about their own immediate culture and are developing a good understanding of other cultures. Pupils are aware of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle, supported by the good lifeskills programme provided within the FOLD Centre. There are strong community links and pupils are actively involved with local churches and businesses. Pupils have good ICT skills that will help them when they enter the world of work, although basic English skills are less well developed. Pupils are adequately prepared for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good so pupils learn well. In the best lessons teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan a range of activities that interest and engage pupils well. Planning is good and takes into account the often complex needs of the pupils. Good pace and challenge ensures that pupils make good progress and they clearly enjoy their learning. In one such lesson, pupils were encouraged to demonstrate their understanding by using the interactive whiteboard to explain their answers. This boosted their confidence and celebrated their achievements. The many teaching assistants are well briefed and have received special training to help them deliver the wide range of small group activities that successfully support the class teachers' work. This especially benefits those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are in the early stages of learning English. Occasionally, there is room in mixed-age classes for additional challenge for the older pupils to promote greater progress. Teachers' guidance in lessons through marking is usually helpful but sometimes varies in its quality and impact on pupils' learning across subjects in the same class.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum is well organised and generally well matched to pupils' abilities in the mixed-age classes. Pupils learn through a wide range of activities including modern foreign languages in conjunction with the local secondary school. Pupils also benefit from role play in the well equipped 'museum' classroom that is helping them develop their language skills and confidence. The provision for learners with difficulties and/or disabilities is good and the more able are identified for appropriate extension work. The school responds well to local needs and has put in place a range of visits and visitors to the school that enriches pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world. Good links with Africa, involving helping the rebuilding of a school through fundraising activities, has had a marked impact on the pupils' awareness of the lives of others in contrasting communities. The curriculum has a clear focus upon healthy living. Many pupils take the opportunity of becoming involved in the many sporting and fitness opportunities provided during and after school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good quality pastoral care is at the heart of the school and is part of its extended services. Good procedures are in place to ensure that all pupils are kept safe and current requirements for child protection, safeguarding and risk assessments are in place. Learners' needs are identified early and interventions put in place to support them. These contribute to the good progress

made by pupils and to their personal development. A learning mentor provides effective counselling to pupils and parents. Good assessment procedures track pupils' progress well. Good systems exist for setting targets for pupils' academic performance. This usually has a positive impact on pupils' progress. At times, however, targets are too broad to be helpful and occasionally they are not expressed in language that makes sense to pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management, including governance, are good. Since taking up post the headteacher has led the school through a period of significant improvement. She has a clear vision for the future of the school and has built a staff around her who work enthusiastically to achieve it. Good self-evaluation means that the school knows its strengths and also what is needed to improve it further. Staffing changes have been made in support of this and the EYFS area remodelled. Subject leaders are taking increasing responsibility for their areas of learning and are assessing and tracking pupils' progress effectively. The school has a strong vision for developing pupils' understanding of the wider world by setting out to successfully establish strong links with parents and local services and also communities further afield including Africa. Staff analyse the value of such links with care so that the benefit for pupils is evaluated. These actions ensure that the school's promotion of community cohesion is good and pupils gain a good understanding of their place in their local community and wider society. Behaviour has been improved and considerable support brought in to raise the quality of teaching and learning. The school is a warm, welcoming and stimulating learning environment that is praised by both parents and pupils alike. Standards have risen steadily as a result. Governors know the school well and carry out their challenge and support functions well.

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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	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

18 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Little Digmoor Primary School, Lancashire, WN8 9NF

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. You were very friendly, polite and enthusiastic about what you do. You told me a lot of interesting things about your school and you are clearly very proud of it. Little Digmoor Primary is a good school. These are the main things I found.

- You make a good start to your education because of the good teaching, facilities and organisation within the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Your school cares for you and looks after you well, providing many extra services to help you and your families lead fuller and healthier lives.
- Standards in your work have improved and you make good progress, especially those of you who find learning difficult. Well done!
- Your behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Well done.
- The teaching and curriculum are good and the school is well led and managed.

These are the things that I have suggested to your school to make it an even better place to learn.

- Further improve standards in English, especially in the areas of speaking and listening and reading. This will help your learning across all subjects.
- Improve the planned activities for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage area and the equipment provided there.

You can help by telling your teachers how you learn best and if you have any difficulties. You can also help by continuing to attend school, behaving well and working hard, as you do at the moment.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Cromey-Hawke

Lead inspector