

Downham Feoffees Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110799
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	378175
Inspection dates	12–13 January 2012
Lead inspector	Vivienne McTiffen

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alysoun Hodges
Headteacher	Sue Coppolaro
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Vivienne McTiffen

Additional inspector

Janet Watson

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 12 lessons or parts of lessons taught by seven teachers, and attended two assemblies. They sampled pupils' work and listened to pupils read. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers at the end of the school day. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at development plans, information about pupils' attainment and progress, monitoring systems and safeguarding documentation. They analysed responses to questionnaires from 83 parents and carers, 21 staff and 100 pupils.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is similar to that of most primary schools.

In 2011 the school's national test results for Year 6 pupils fell below the government floor standard. There have been several changes to the teaching staff since the last inspection. A new deputy headteacher took up post in September 2011.

An after-school club, managed by the governing body, runs daily during term time.

A privately-run pre-school shares the school's site and a privately-run breakfast club uses the school hall daily. These are subject to a separate inspection as they are not managed by the governing body.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	4
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	4

Key findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the quality of leadership and management.

- The school provides an acceptable standard of education for its pupils but leaders and managers have not made sufficiently rapid improvements since the previous inspection. Development planning has weaknesses. Pupils' progress remains satisfactory as it was at the time of the last inspection.
- Although test results declined last year, pupils over time have acquired an appropriate range of skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Some could do better because teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve are not always high enough and work is not always sufficiently challenging.
- Teaching is satisfactory. Staff use well-directed questions to promote learning. They ensure pupils share their ideas with each other and work with partners, developing communication and social skills effectively. Teachers' marking does not always give pupils enough help to improve.
- Efforts to raise the quality of teaching to good have not been effective enough. This is because the monitoring of teaching is too general and does not focus sharply on key areas for improvement in order to speed up pupils' progress and raise attainment.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Pupils are polite and feel safe at school. They get on well together and enjoy helping each other. They respond to teachers' directions and are attentive. Pupils say they are happy at school and their attendance is above average.
- Since the last inspection, improvements to outdoor areas have enhanced provision for Reception children and those in Year 1. These spaces are used

effectively to extend the curriculum for these age groups.

What does the school need to do to improve further

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress in English and mathematics by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - making sure that teachers use assessment information effectively so work is consistently well matched to ability, especially for more-able pupils
 - extending opportunities for pupils to use their writing and mathematics skills in other subjects
 - improving teachers' marking so it clearly indicates how pupils can do better
 - involving pupils more fully in target setting so they know what they are working towards.

- Improve the rigour and purpose of the monitoring of the quality of teaching by:
 - linking lesson observations, carried out by all leaders and managers, to those areas requiring improvement which have been identified by the school
 - acting upon the findings to create well-structured areas for development so that all staff are clear about how to improve.

- Establish more rigorous and urgent strategies to reach ambitious targets by:
 - developing a well-focused improvement plan with clear objectives, demanding timescales and precise criteria against which success can be measured
 - ensuring that all staff understand the school's aims and work together towards common goals and raised aspirations
 - involving all staff in the effective analysis of data and improve their understanding of how this relates to work in the classroom and pupils' learning
 - increasing governors' knowledge and expertise in systematically holding senior leaders and staff to account for the school's performance.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Most parents and carers who returned questionnaires feel the school helps their children to develop skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics and that pupils make good progress. Inspectors found that, from average starting points in the Reception class, pupils make satisfactory progress over time in all year groups across the school. Pupils' attainment in the current Year 6 class is higher than it was for the 2011 cohort. However, not enough pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This was reflected in last year's national test results, which showed

that pupils' attainment and progress fell below the government floor standards. Compelling evidence provided by the school, supported by inspection findings, shows that actions to remedy matters for the oldest pupils are proving to be successful.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Support for these pupils, in class and in small groups, often working with teaching assistants, allows them to make small steps in their learning and gives them confidence to try things for themselves. Those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the very few who speak English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress because the school tracks how well they are doing and uses additional support to aid their learning. Though lower attaining pupils make satisfactory progress, their progress is not good enough to narrow the gap with attainment levels nationally. Children in the Reception class make satisfactory progress and reach age appropriate outcomes by the time they enter Year 1.

Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is average throughout the school. Regular sessions for linking sounds to letters, especially for younger pupils, and guided reading groups throughout contribute to pupils' success in reading. As a result, attainment in reading by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is broadly in line with national expectations for pupils aged seven and eleven. Pupils read texts suited to their ability and use a variety of skills to help them read fluently. Talking about ideas helps pupils to develop their writing. For example, during the inspection, Year 5 pupils discussed the 'pros and cons' of school uniform. They shared ideas and opinions with partners before compiling and writing arguments for and against. They used communication, thinking and writing skills effectively and worked well together, showing well defined social skills. In mathematics, pupils are adept at calculating but opportunities for problem solving and investigational work are too variable between classes.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers feel their children are taught well. This is not consistent with inspection findings. Teaching is satisfactory, reflected in pupils' satisfactory achievement. While some lessons are good, there is not the level of consistency needed to speed up pupils' progress. In the best lessons, teachers use assessment information well to match work to ability, but this is not always the case so some pupils, especially the more-able, are not doing as well as they should. Although pupils say they learn a lot in lessons and teaching is good, some say the work is too easy and they would like more challenge.

Pupils make the best progress when lessons are interesting and engaging. For example, in a literacy lesson, the teacher skilfully used a range of resources to help pupils develop note-taking skills. Through role play, pupils asked each other questions about holidays, destinations and travellers' needs. This lesson had high expectations of what pupils would know by the end. It made a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development, helping them to understand differences between nationalities and to develop confidence in speaking in front of others. Teachers link subjects together in topics so pupils make sense of their learning. In one lesson for example, pupils used thinking and reading skills to carry out simple archaeology and identify objects. In another lesson, art was used to develop pupils'

understanding of Bangladeshi culture and lifestyle. These links across the curriculum are developing well but there are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to develop their writing or mathematical skills in other subjects. In the Reception class, staff effectively promote children's early reading and writing skills and ensure access to all areas of learning through a wide range of tasks, both indoors and out.

Teachers monitor pupils' work during lessons and pick up misconceptions. They praise effort and provide positive feedback. Marking in books usually tells pupils how well they have done but does not always indicate how to improve. Pupils do not have full involvement in setting personalised targets in literacy and mathematics to match their learning needs, and this limits their understanding of what they are working towards.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school's systems for promoting good behaviour are generally understood by pupils, although there are some inconsistencies in teachers' management of behaviour between classes. This leads some pupils to comment that behaviour they consider to be 'silly' can interrupt their work. Inspectors found this to be the case when visiting lessons. In some, behaviour was satisfactory, and in some it was good. The best behaviour occurs in classes where pupils are fully involved and motivated. This is where the best learning takes place and the best progress is made. In discussion with pupils, most said behaviour is usually good. They have a clear understanding of the differences between right and wrong. Although parents and carers expressed some concern over disruptive behaviour in lessons, inspectors found that, in most cases, those pupils with identified behavioural difficulties respond well to the school's systems and make improvement over time. Incidents of bullying of any type are rare. The school takes any incidents seriously and helps pupils to develop positive attitudes to each other.

Pupils feel safe and have confidence in the school's level of care and support. They value friendships and are happy at school, as shown by their above average attendance. Very few are persistently absent. Playground buddies help younger pupils with any problems they may have. Pupils value the headteacher's 'Worry box' which they use if they have a concern. They have a realistic understanding of unsafe situations and know how to ensure their own and others' safety, for example, when involving tools, computers and electricity. Most of those parents who returned questionnaires agree their children feel safe at school.

Leadership and management

A recent staffing re-organisation and new appointments to the school have been designed to maximise the use of teachers' expertise and provide role models of good practice. Inspection evidence confirms that this is beginning to show results. For example, the headteacher has made headway in involving teachers in analysing progress data. This means the performance of all pupils is checked and underperformance recognised. The newly-formed leadership team are raising aspirations and creating a common sense of purpose to move the school forward. While the impact of this work remains to be seen there is a clear and renewed focus on raising achievement, especially in literacy, through more precise target setting.

Current development planning lacks sufficient detail to highlight the most important areas for improvement and how these link to pupils' learning and teachers' performance. Strategies to reach ambitious targets are not rigorous or urgent enough. Criteria for success and timescales are insufficiently demanding or precise enough to lead to rapid development. Because of this, efforts to raise achievement since the last inspection have been ineffective and improvement has been too slow. The school has not demonstrated that it has adequate capacity to improve.

Efforts to improve teaching have met with limited success. Lesson observations carried out by leaders and managers do not focus enough on identified areas for improvement or lead to well-structured guidelines either for staff or to inform whole school development. As a result, staff do not have enough guidance on how to improve their performance. The governing body is aware of the school's weaknesses but lacks a concerted approach to school improvement. Governors are keen to hone their skills, but do not systematically monitor the school's performance or rigorously hold it to account.

The curriculum is satisfactory because it prepares pupils suitably for the next stage of learning. Pupils' say they enjoy the range of clubs and visits which are popular and these enhance provision. The after-school care, managed by the governing body, provides valuable facilities for pupils and parents and carers. It is well run and pays due attention to children's welfare. The curriculum makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, which is satisfactory. Leaders and managers ensure pupils' good social development through giving them roles of responsibility and encouraging them to work productively together. Cultural development is less well promoted. Although pupils experience educational visits and benefit from the experiences which visitors bring to the school, leaders and managers have not established regular opportunities for pupils to engage with those from other faiths and backgrounds.

The school works well with parents and carers and there are clear and effective channels of communication. There are regular opportunities for parents and carers to engage in reading activities with their children at home and in school although this is more apparent for younger pupils. Those spoken to feel generally well informed about their children's progress and feel suitably supported by the school. This is consistent with inspection findings. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination satisfactorily.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory

		school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Downham Feoffees Primary School, Little Downham, CB6 2ST

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed listening to your views about the school and seeing you at work in lessons. Thank you for completing the questionnaires and talking to us. Your answers to our questions have helped us greatly.

You are making satisfactory progress but the school could help you to do even better. We have asked the school to make sure teachers give you work that is just right, not too hard and not too easy. We have asked them to help you to understand what you are working towards, how to improve your work and to give you more opportunities to use writing and mathematics in other subjects. We have also asked the headteacher and senior leaders to develop plans that will lead to rapid improvement and be more thorough in the way they check how well the school is doing so that everybody works together with the same aim.

You told the inspectors you are happy to come to school and you feel safe. You told us that sometimes behaviour is not as good as it could be and inspectors found that it varies from class to class. Because of this, we judged behaviour at your school to be satisfactory, although most of you are polite and attentive in lessons. You say you enjoy your roles of responsibility and you work well with the younger children. You all get on well together and enjoy the clubs and visits which the school offers.

We have given the school a 'notice to improve' which means inspectors will visit the school again to see how well it is doing. We hope the things we have asked the school to do will help you to make the best possible progress. All of you can help by behaving the best you can and by working hard in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Vivienne McTiffen
Lead inspector

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