

# Dagnall School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110218
<b>Local Authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	356702
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	23
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Victoria Lee
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jennie Marriner-Kyle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 June 2008
<b>School address</b>	Main Road South Berkhamsted HP4 1QX
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector who observed three teachers delivering seven lessons. The inspector held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher, parents and carers, and groups of pupils. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including assessment and attainment information, lesson plans, safeguarding arrangements, school development planning, the governing body minutes and pupils' work. Eighteen questionnaires from parents and carers were analysed as well as seven from staff.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which the school is raising standards in writing, especially for the most-able pupils.
- How successfully children in the Early Years Foundation Stage attain basic skills of reading and writing.
- How well information from assessment is used to plan the next steps of learning.
- How well the leadership and governing body are influencing the school's direction through spending wisely.

## Information about the school

Almost all the pupils at this very small school are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very low. Pupils are taught in two classes by three part-time teachers. The Reception class is taught separately from Years 1 and 2 who are taught in the same class. The school has achieved National Healthy Schools status, Activemark, Quality Mark from Basic Skills, Investors in Parents Award and Safer Routes to School Gold Award. The school's premises are used for a parent and toddler group that meets on a weekly basis that is not managed by the governing body.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?****2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

## Main findings

This is a good school. It has several outstanding features, particularly the pastoral care, guidance and support it offers its pupils and the excellent links it has with the community. Pupils take part in a wide range of village activities, such as participating in flower festivals and caring for the elderly. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start and make excellent progress in their personal, social and emotional development, which continues throughout the school, resulting in excellent behaviour. The school meets its aims of offering a secure and caring environment where each pupil is seen as an individual. As a result, pupils are confident, very happy at school and curious to learn. Consistently good teaching and a well-planned curriculum, enriched with a wide range of extra-curricular activities, contribute to pupils' good achievement. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the clubs and say that 'This is the best school in the world because we have so many exciting things to do.' Themed weeks such as learning about space contribute to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have good knowledge of healthy eating, they grow their own vegetables and are developing good gardening skills. Very rigorous safeguarding procedures ensure their excellent knowledge of keeping safe both physically and emotionally.

Pupils have good attitudes to learning and say that learning is fun. Parents and carers echo their children's love of the school. 'We are delighted with the headteacher, governing body and staff, they really care about our children. The school is the heart of our community.'

Children's attainment on entry to the school is very varied due to the very small cohorts; overall, it is what is expected of children nationally. The attainment on entry of the present Year 2 pupils was below that expected of children of a similar age in all areas of learning. Both in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, pupils make consistently good progress and this year, by the end of Year 2, pupils are on track to attain average levels in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Children in this year's Reception class are likely to exceed the levels expected in all areas of learning, apart from writing, where more-able children are not forming their letters correctly and they are not writing enough.

Achievement throughout the school is good and pupils learn at a fast rate. There are some occasions when more-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged, as teachers do not use information from assessment to plan the next steps in learning, particularly in writing and mental mathematics. There are still some pupils who struggle with recalling number bonds. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and boys make good progress in lessons because of well-targeted support from the teaching assistants. All groups of pupils achieve equally well because subjects are linked in innovative ways and strategies to

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provide additional support for pupils requiring specific help are helping pupils overcome their difficulties.

The headteacher, with close support from the well-informed governing body, has developed a school that is up to speed with all local and national initiatives. Highly committed staff contribute to the school's strong collective leadership and excellent use is made of partnerships with other small schools and outside agencies. The school has an accurate understanding of strengths and of improvement needed but the school development plan does not yet identify rigorous success criteria which governors can use to evaluate the cost effectiveness of their spending decisions.

The school has good capacity for improvement, as demonstrated by accurate self-evaluation, the improvement in targets set for pupils, the use of literacy and numeracy into other subjects, and the maintenance of pupils' good progress and achievement since the last inspection.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise standards in writing by making better use of information from assessments in order to challenge more-able pupils.
- Improve pupils' rates of progress in mental mathematics by providing more opportunities for them to learn their number bonds.
- Improve the school development plan by identifying clear success criteria so that the governing body can monitor the cost effectiveness of its spending decisions.

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

2

Pupils are passionate about learning and thoroughly enjoy school, as demonstrated in their improved attendance, which is now satisfactory. They are eager to be involved in all aspects of school life, from being music monitors to classroom helpers.

In lessons, pupils read well, listen attentively and question the teacher in role as the baker from the Great Fire of London as to how the fire started. They are confident when predicting outcomes of stories and they work well in groups. Progress in writing is satisfactory but occasionally more-able pupils are not being challenged enough to write in extended sentences. In mathematics, they enjoy problem solving but their recall of mental arithmetic, especially number bonds, is not as good as their skills of calculation.

Learning is characterised by pupils listening eagerly to teachers' instructions, asking questions if they do not understand, and concentrating hard on getting their work finished. The school has a good track record of pupils exceeding the national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics and, over four years, standards were significantly higher than the national average. This year, pupils will attain average standards as their attainment on entry was not as high as that of pupils of previous years. There are no significant differences between the achievement of different groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Pupils are excellent ambassadors for their school. Behaviour is impeccable; respect, care for the community and consideration of others are at the heart of its work. The elderly of the community are thrilled to be entertained by the pupils at harvest and Christmas

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celebrations. Pupils grow their own vegetables and have good knowledge of healthy eating.

Pupils show exceptional awareness of personal safety. They know when to ask for help and how to report any signs of emotional upset. The Safer Routes to School project enables them to walk through the allotments rather than go onto the main road.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to both the local and national community by fund raising for charities such as Leukaemia Research and Heart Foundation. The school's hard work has been recognised by the many awards it has received, especially the Quality Mark for Basic Skills which confirms the pupils being well prepared for their entry to junior school. Pupils cost and make smoothies and receive advice from the local Business Link. These entrepreneurial skills, coupled with good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), provide a good contribution to their future economic well-being.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

**How effective is the provision?**

Consistently good teaching leads to good achievement and progress for all pupils. Key strengths in teaching include very warm relationships, a lively pace in lessons, good use of resources, especially teaching assistants, and constant checking of pupils' understanding. Pupils thrive in lessons. Timely reminders during lessons keep pupils on track. Teachers

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manage behaviour well using a variety of strategies to maintain pupils' attention successfully such as questioning, paired discussion and group work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good teaching and high levels of care and attention. This contributes to their good achievement.

The curriculum is well planned and is enhanced by a good range of visits and visitors. The headteacher has been instrumental in developing excellent links with other small schools, sharing the cost of visits and visitors, thereby ensuring that the tight budget provides good learning experiences. Parents and carers say that this helps their children become highly motivated learners.

The curriculum is underpinned by a very detailed programme for personal, social and health education. Pupils can explain their needs and know that help is always at hand.

Care, guidance and support of pupils are outstanding and contribute significantly to pupils' high self-esteem and excellent knowledge of keeping safe. Pupils are exceptionally cautious in not invading one another's space in the playground. They have very good knowledge of internet safety and know that they must inform teachers of anything that makes them feel uncomfortable. Parents and carers really appreciate the support and care given to their children, one commenting 'This is a fantastic school, staff and children really care about each other!' Teachers have good knowledge of pupils' attainment and progress but do not always use data sufficiently well to target the most-able pupils.

Excellent links with education psychologists, the mobile library unit, community officers, sports partnerships and local playgroup contribute to good learning opportunities and high self-esteem and confidence in learning.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher stops at nothing to ensure that all pupils have excellent equality of opportunity in learning. She has successfully provided a firm steer to the school's work, embedding ambition and driving improvement by providing staff with good training. She monitors teaching and learning regularly and has made an effective start at developing the role of middle managers. Procedures for health and safety, child protection and safeguarding are exceptionally informative, meticulously recorded and all staff are very well trained in all aspects of safeguarding. Equality of opportunity is exceptionally well promoted through very thorough analysis of data which is shared with all staff. There are no incidents of racist behaviour but secure procedures are in place should they arise.

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Partnerships with parents and carers are excellent and parents and carers rightly see the school as 'their school'. The open door policy, friendliness of the secretary and willingness to give every family the help they need results in a very harmonious community.

Members of the governing body have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are very knowledgeable, supportive and are regular visitors to the school. They regularly undertake audits of the school's provision but they have not yet evaluated the cost effectiveness of their spending. They have worked wonders at managing the budget, ensuring that the school has a good range of resources in all subjects to support learning. The governing body regularly evaluates the race relations policy.

Community cohesion is excellent, especially in relation to ensuring that the pupils are fully engaged in all local community events. The school has excellent links with Nairobi and celebrates a wide variety of faiths, customs and music. Links with a multicultural primary school have ensured that pupils have excellent knowledge of what life is like in different communities.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

On entry to the Reception class, each child's uniqueness is celebrated so that children feel that they are valuable members of the school community. Children settle in very quickly and they make good progress in all areas of learning, quickly learning about how to keep healthy. They use computers effectively and take turns in composing music. On entry to Year 1, the vast majority are already working on the early levels of the National Curriculum in English and mathematics.



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The good development of literacy and numeracy skills begins as soon as children start school. They recognise letter sounds, count the amount of bricks needed to build the three little pigs' house and give accurate instructions to the programmable toy, ensuring that it reaches its destination. Teaching is good; there is an appropriate balance between activities that are directed by adults and those children choose for themselves. Adults model language well for children and this increases their vocabulary and correct sentence construction. Children know their numbers and can count to 100.

Leadership is good. Detailed records are kept of children's achievement with next steps of learning clearly identified. The welfare of the children is at the centre of every undertaking. 'Our children are very well looked after,' said one very happy parent. Regular risk assessments are carried out both indoors and outdoors. Children know they need to wear their hard hats when undertaking building work. Good quality resources are used well to support children's development. Well-planned outdoor activities support children's learning and reflect the activities that are planned indoors. However, there are some missed opportunities outdoors for more- able children to practise correct letter formation.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

**Views of parents and carers**

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are unanimous in their praise of the school. They agree that their children are very safe and well looked after. They receive good information about their children's progress, thanks to the good teaching. They are very appreciative of the leadership of the school because the headteacher and staff see them as true partners in their children's learning. Parents' and carers' positive views reflect inspection findings.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dagnall School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 18 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 23 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	67	6	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	15	83	3	17	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	13	72	5	28	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	50	8	44	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	11	61	6	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	67	6	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	67	6	33	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	8	44	9	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	50	9	50	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	44	10	56	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	50	9	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	61	7	39	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	72	5	28	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## 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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**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.**



4 March 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Dagnall School, Berkhamsted, HP4 1QX**

Thank you so much for welcoming me and telling me all about the wonderful things you do in school. I so enjoyed our chat and your views helped me to come to the decision that you attend a good school. I would like to share with you some of the things that I found out about your school during my stay with you.

- You have excellent knowledge of keeping safe and all adults take good care of you and help you if you have any problems.
- You understand what it means to be healthy and your school meals are delicious.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you work hard in lessons.
- You contribute very well to both your local community and to raising funds for those not as fortunate as you are.
- Teaching is good and you make good progress.
- Your headteacher and governing body lead the school well.
- You enjoy the good range of extra school activities and you are very happy in school.

Although things are working well, there are three things that could be better. I have asked your teachers to give those of you who find learning easy more opportunities to write as you are capable of doing harder work. I have also asked your teachers to give you more practice in learning your number bonds. I have asked your headteacher to give the governing body more information about the success of actions taken by the school to improve so that it can assess how well it is spending its money. All of you can play your part in helping your school become even better by trying hard in your writing and learning your number bonds. You could also help by telling the members of the governing body if new toys and equipment help in your learning.

Once again, thank you for making me feel so welcome.

Yours sincerely

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

Lead Inspector

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