

Darnhall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111133
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	378239
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Shirley Herring

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Strachan
Headteacher	Simon Kidwell
Date of previous school inspection	09 March 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed nine teachers in 16 lessons. They held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff and spoke to parents and carers informally in the playground. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, all documentation regarding the safeguarding of pupils, assessments and tracking of pupils' progress, the analysis of progress of different groups of pupils, the school development plan and reports from the School Improvement Partner. They scrutinised 40 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as those completed by pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which inconsistencies in teaching hold back pupils' attainment and their rate of progress.
- Whether any challenging behaviour impairs the quality of pupils' learning.
- The extent to which the actions to improve attendance have been successful.
- The strategies adopted by school leaders and their success in accelerating and sustaining pupils' progress across the school.

Information about the school

The vast majority of pupils in this average-size primary school are White British. More than half of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The school hosts a base resourced by the local authority which takes pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This means that the school has a much larger proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs than average. The school runs a breakfast club.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. Among its strengths are the curriculum, the quality of its care, guidance and support and the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Attainment is broadly average and pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. After a time when attainment was below average at the end of Key Stage 1 there is a trend of improvement. There has been similar improvement in pupils' attainment in Key Stage 2 and it is now broadly average by the end of Year 6.

While pupils make satisfactory progress overall, the rate varies from class to class dependent on the quality of teaching. In the best lessons, learning moves at a fast pace because teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do and provide good support and challenge to help them to achieve. In the weaker lessons, tasks are pitched at too low a level, and pupils themselves say that work in some lessons is too easy, particularly for more-able pupils. Senior leaders have put in place extensive training and support to improve the quality of teaching, and this has helped to reduce the pockets of weakness. The policy for marking pupils' work is being used consistently throughout the school and has contributed to the improvement in the quality of pupils' writing. However, the overall use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory because on occasion teachers' knowledge of pupils' prior learning is not used as effectively as it might to match tasks closely enough to pupils' needs. The school's behaviour policy is clear and where it is used well it is effective in moderating pupils' behaviour. However, it is not used consistently and occasionally the poor behaviour of a few reduces the quality of learning of others. Elements of pupils' personal development are good. Pupils take on many responsibilities in school and some older pupils have represented their school in a regional conference. They generally work well together and have a good understanding of how to keep safe.

The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate and provides a good basis for moving the school forward, although some work remains to be done. There has been good recent improvement in attainment, pupils' progress in writing, in the curriculum, and in attendance. Members of the governing body are knowledgeable about the strengths and areas for the school's development and provide good challenge to the leadership team in setting priorities. These attributes demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress in English and mathematics by:
 - making sure that there are suitably high expectations of pupils in all classes by sharing the good practice that exists in the school
 - increasing the pace and challenge in lessons for the more-able pupils
 - more rigorously applying the behaviour policy so that some poor behaviour of a few pupils does not impact negatively on the learning of the large majority.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enjoy learning, particularly when lessons are interesting and they are actively engaged. This was evident in a writing lesson in Year 6, when pupils dressed as characters to help them to recount a story from the viewpoint of different characters. Learning is less successful when pupils spend too much time listening to the teacher as a class before getting on with activities more suited to their ability. While the majority of pupils behave well, the challenging behaviour of a small minority sometimes disrupts learning.

Pupils enter the school with a range of skills that overall are below what is usual for their age, particularly in language and social skills. They make satisfactory progress overall but this varies between classes, reflecting the quality of the teaching. Attainment is broadly average at the end of Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs achieve well, particularly in English, because of the very effective support they receive.

Pupils say they feel safe and are well aware of the potential dangers associated with using the internet. They have a satisfactory understanding of the requirements of a balanced diet and an increasing number of pupils cycle to school. They make a good contribution to the school community as school councillors and eco-warriors and are extensively involved in the wider community, for example, taking part in an inclusive dance project with pupils from local special schools and representing their school at a conference in London. Attendance is average but improving and this outcome, together with pupils' average academic attainment, means that pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their future. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and generally get on well together. Their knowledge of different world faiths is less well developed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory, although its quality is inconsistent across the school. In the most effective lessons, explanations are clear and pupils move quickly onto independent tasks that are well matched to their ability. In some lessons, however, the pace of learning is slower as teachers spend too long addressing the whole class, meaning that some pupils become disengaged and more-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Pupils learn well from one another when working together. For example, in a Year 5 literacy lesson when pupils cooperated well in pairs to word-process sentences to give commands. Behaviour is generally managed well, but in a small number of lessons teachers do not always correct poor behaviour when needed and this disrupts other pupils' learning. Pupils who need extra help are supported well in lessons, though occasionally adults help pupils too much and do not give enough scope for them to complete tasks for themselves.

The school quite rightly places high priority on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. There is a good focus on providing the stimulus to encourage pupils to produce extended pieces of their own writing. This is achieved through increased opportunities for writing which are often linked to cross-curricular themes and visits. Consequently, the quality of writing has improved significantly. The school is aware that further initiatives are needed in mathematics to enable pupils to acquire more confidence in investigating and solving problems. Well-organised intervention activities, such as that designed to help pupils catch up in reading, are helping those pupils who are falling behind with their work. Activities to challenge more-able pupils in order to raise their aspirations are less well developed. There is a wide range of stimulating additional activities, including residential visits, which are enjoyed by large numbers of pupils.

Parents and carers say how much they value the fact that staff know all the pupils as individuals. The school provides good support for those needing extra help, and seeks additional advice from other professionals where needed. Very well-targeted

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

support for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities enables them to make good progress. There is also good support to enable most pupils with a statement of special educational needs attached to the resource base to be included in the mainstream classes. Since the start of the term The Rainbow Room has provided intensive support for the a very small number of pupils with more challenging behaviour, and after just a few weeks these pupils are showing signs of improvement in their ability to control emotions and to demonstrate more positive social dispositions. There are good procedures for introducing pupils to school and as they move on to the next stage of education. The school’s clear policy to manage pupils’ behaviour is largely successful. However, in a small number of lessons the agreed sanctions and rewards are not always consistently applied. The Breakfast Club successfully extends care beyond the school day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders monitor the work of the school rigorously and use the information well to plan improvements. Actions to improve the quality of teaching have had some success but some inconsistencies remain. The whole-school focus on writing has led to good improvements in pupils’ attainment and progress in this subject throughout the school. Some middle managers are comparatively new to their role but are already introducing useful strategies to improve teaching and learning in mathematics and in assessment procedures. Governance is good. As well as effectively challenging senior leaders, the governing body is well aware of its responsibilities to safeguard pupils and staff and to work closely with the school to ensure that all the necessary policies and procedures are fully in place and regularly reviewed. This ensures that systems for safeguarding pupils and staff are good.

The school’s effective links with the local authority have supported improvements in teaching and in helping to support families and pupils where needed. Productive partnerships with the music service provide all pupils with opportunities to make music. The school’s engagement with parents and carers is good and an increasing number attend workshops, assemblies and other events in school. The school’s work with parents and carers has also been effective in reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

The school's promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. It monitors the progress of different groups carefully and pupils are fully included in all activities. This has had a positive effect on closing gaps between groups and in bringing about more positive attitudes among all pupils. The school recognises the need to provide more challenge for the more-able pupils but is not yet fully effective enough in doing this. The school is at the heart of its community and welcomes many community groups who use the school’s grounds. These include the community police officers

and a carers group. The school has a high profile in the Winsford Education Partnership and supports events for both teachers and children. Pupils have played an active part in the 'Pupil Voice Project' in conjunction with other schools further afield. The school is developing global links to promote understanding by working with a school partner in India and has organised workshops for Bollywood dancing for parents and carers.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery with a range of skills that overall are lower than is usual for their age, particularly in language and social skills. They make satisfactory progress, but nevertheless, attainment is lower than is typical by the time they enter Year 1. All adults take every opportunity to talk to children, whatever the activity, to develop their speaking and listening skills. Letter sounds are taught systematically and well so children make good progress in this area. Those activities which are led by an adult are generally successful in promoting children's learning. However, those activities which children choose for themselves, particularly outside, are not always sufficiently focused on what children need to learn. Teaching is most effective when areas of learning are linked together. This was seen in the nursery when children recited Humpty Dumpty, counted the bricks to build his wall and made egg shapes using play dough. The outdoor area is fairly large but there is a lot of equipment outdoors and this limits the space available for the children. The bikes and cars are popular but sometimes children are hindered because of the lack of usable space. There are appropriate systems for assessing children's progress and the information is used to plan activities for groups of children of similar ability as the year progresses. Children are developing a good understanding of hygiene and respond well to timely reminders to wash their hands before eating.

All systems for safeguarding children are in place and staff are suitably trained. There are good procedures for introducing children to school, including home visits, and parents and carers are welcomed into school for 'stay and play' time. The school is introducing meetings for parents and carers to give them more information about various aspects of this stage of learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Approximately one fifth of parents and carers returned a completed questionnaire which is below average for primary schools. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school’s provision but a small number expressed some concern about pupils’ behaviour. Inspectors found that pupils’ behaviour is satisfactory overall but that in a few lessons minor disruption is not always rigorously addressed. Some parents and carers took the trouble to come to speak to inspectors in the playground to say how much they appreciated the good support the school had provided for their families. The inspection evidence shows that the school looks after children well and keeps them safe and behaviour is satisfactory.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Darnhall Primary 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 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 220 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	58	15	38	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	58	15	38	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	60	15	38	0	0	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	58	14	35	2	5	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	25	63	12	30	1	3	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	55	17	43	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	45	18	45	3	8	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)	22	55	16	40	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	55	15	38	0	0	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	30	25	63	1	3	2	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	45	17	43	3	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	55	17	43	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	65	12	30	1	3	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



29 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Darnhall Primary School, Winsford CW7 1JL

Thank you for making the inspection team and I so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you in lessons and in groups and we found it very useful to hear your views. You go to a satisfactory school, which means there are a number of good things about it. However, there are some things that could be improved. We agree with you and your parents and carers that the school takes good care of you all and there is always an adult around to give you extra help when you need it. Teachers take a lot of time in marking your work and they give you good advice on what you need to do to improve. This has been particularly helpful in writing and we were impressed to see how much your writing has improved. We were pleased to see that fewer pupils are taking unnecessary time off school. Well done!

Almost all of you behave well in lessons but I know a small number of you find this difficult at times. We hope you learn to find this easier with the help of all the adults in school.

We have suggested some ways for improving your school. These are to:

- increase the pace and challenge in lessons for those of you who find work easier
- set higher expectations for what you can do and achieve
- apply the school's behaviour policy more rigorously in some classes so that the poor behaviour of a few does not disrupt everyone's learning.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Herring
Lead inspector

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