

Diamond Hall Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108760
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	377813
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2012
Lead inspector	Jayne Utting HMI

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	306
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Pickering
Headteacher	Sally Collingwood
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jayne Utting
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Jane Beckett

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 29 lessons led by 12 teachers, two key workers and a teaching assistant. Discussions were held with parents and carers, members of the governing body and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school development plan and the safeguarding policy and procedures. The inspectors also analysed 139 questionnaires from parents and carers and others completed by staff.

Information about the school

Diamond Hall is a larger than average-sized infant school located just outside Sunderland city centre, near the main hospital. The catchment area for the school has changed significantly over recent years as the type of housing has changed from owner-occupied to mainly rented accommodation. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average and has increased over the last three years. The percentage of pupils supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below that found nationally. The proportion of pupils from minority-ethnic backgrounds, while similar to the national average, continues to increase. There are currently 18 languages spoken within the school community. Most pupils who join the school after the normal age of admission are new arrivals to the United Kingdom and speak English as an additional language.

The school has a Nursery which supports 61 children on a part-time basis. It is also linked to a Children's Centre and offers extended services to families before and after school. The school has recently become the first school in the North East to be accredited as achieving the core standards for 'Reading Recovery' within the 'Every Child a Reader' national programme.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Diamond Hall Infants is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because too few pupils are attaining at the highest levels, particularly in writing at the end of Key Stage 1. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a clear strength of the school. As a result, pupils develop into considerate, well behaved and caring individuals, who feel safe and clearly demonstrate the school’s key values which include perseverance, respect and kindness.
- Most children enter school with skills and abilities well below those expected for their age. They make good and sometimes better progress throughout the school and leave Year 2 with attainment that is broadly in line with that found nationally. However, there is a recognised need to improve attainment further in writing, particularly in relation to the proportion of children attaining the highest levels. The school has worked with success to ensure that boys, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language make the same good progress as their peers.
- The quality of teaching is mainly good, with some that is outstanding. All staff have high expectations of the children and use their in-depth subject knowledge to challenge children effectively in the classroom. There is a consistently applied, whole-school approach to marking and feedback, which informs pupils as to the next steps in their learning. However, sometimes feedback in books lacks sufficient challenge as pupils have limited opportunities to respond to these comments and edit and improve their work further.
- The ambition and drive of the senior leadership team have been central to the school’s sustained improvement in achievement. This, coupled with rigorous systems for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and management of performance, ensures there is a well developed and knowledgeable staff team who have high expectations for their pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress and attainment in writing by the end of Key Stage 1, so that achievement is in line with other areas by providing them with further opportunities to practise their developing skills independently.
- Further develop the use of constructive marking across the school by ensuring it offers sufficient challenge, to which pupils are able to respond in their books and in subsequent activities.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are below those expected for their age. They respond enthusiastically to the good learning opportunities available to them across the curriculum and, as a result, the progress of all groups has improved rapidly over time and is now good. Attainment is slightly lower in writing, but last year saw a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving at least at a level similar to pupils nationally. The gap between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those from minority-ethnic groups, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has narrowed considerably and, by the end of Year 2, these pupils are performing better than similar pupils nationally. A particular focus on the achievement of boys has secured accelerated progress for the large majority, the gap between their attainment and that of the girls narrowing at a much faster rate than the national trend. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage also receive effective individualised support from skilled teachers and early years practitioners who have a good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. As a result all children, including those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress and achieve well from their starting points.

Robust systems to track pupils' progress are used effectively to identify those pupils who need extra support and to plan appropriate intervention activities. Inspectors observed pupils receiving effective one-to-one teaching to improve their reading and writing, which enabled them to make accelerated progress, thus improving their self-esteem and confidence. The provision of good quality, daily sessions where pupils learn 'the sounds that letters make' has also secured a significant improvement in pupils' reading, with an increasing proportion of pupils now attaining the highest level in national tests at the end of Key Stage 1. This good progress is further consolidated in Year 1, where pupils importantly have the opportunity to read for pleasure, so developing a love of books, a feeling they have throughout their time in school. The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection survey agree that their children make good progress, particularly in relation to the key skills of reading, writing and mathematics.

Quality of teaching

As a result of teaching that is mainly good, with some examples of outstanding practice, pupils are fully engaged in and enthusiastic about their learning. This reflects the significant investment by the school's leadership in supporting improvement and is commented upon as a strength of the school by most parents and carers. Planning procedures are consistent across the school and pupils have a clear understanding of the purpose of the lessons because objectives are shared in pupil-friendly language. This sets a secure context from which pupils can begin their work. Teachers' use of assessment information to plan learning has been significantly strengthened. All teachers have routine access to pupil performance information and most use it well. In the best lessons, careful planning builds successfully upon pupils' prior learning so tasks accurately match pupils' needs. This results in good progress, particularly for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. In a minority of lessons, while teachers have a secure understanding of pupils' needs, this is not adequately reflected in lesson activities. As a result work is sometimes not challenging enough. Relationships with adults are very good and this, combined with good behaviour, provides a secure platform for effective learning and has a positive impact on pupils' social and moral development. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide good quality support for pupils. Given the school's multicultural community, the provision of highly skilled bilingual teaching assistants has had a significant impact, supporting the achievement of pupils for whom English is an additional language.

There has been a significant investment in the teaching of reading across the school, including through targeted interventions such as the 'Reading Recovery' programme. The focus to improve pupils' attainment across the school has been less successful in writing to date. This is partly because pupils are sometimes over-supported in lessons, resulting in these pupils having fewer opportunities to write in a truly independent manner. Marking in pupils' books is focused and informs pupils of the next steps in their learning but there are too few opportunities for pupils to respond to these good comments and complete corrections.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour throughout the school is good. Pupils are polite and courteous and show respect towards each other as well as towards staff and visitors. This is a clear reflection of the nurturing ethos of the school, which strives to ensure that every child is able to, 'succeed and meet the challenges of an ever changing world'. On the rare occasions when challenging behaviour occurs, the school employs consistent strategies to address it, ensuring it does not impact adversely on others. There are few significant instances of bullying or racism recorded, and most parents and carers express confidence in the school's systems for dealing with any issues that might arise and for keeping their children safe. Concerted efforts to encourage regular attendance are having some demonstrable impact in reducing persistent absence. These efforts are facilitated by the good work undertaken in partnership with key local authority agencies as well as the support of the school's family support worker.

The large majority of pupils say they feel safe at school and all have confidence in their teachers to support them, a sentiment reflected both in their pride and enjoyment of all aspects of school life. They especially enjoy the well-resourced outdoor areas, thriving in this environment, particularly in relation to their personal development and well-being. Pupils are confident to talk about a range of incidents and issues they might encounter in and out of school and their feeling of safety is facilitated by the school's structured 'protective curriculum' which helps them to find strategies to deal with risk. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the effective key-worker system ensures children have positive relationships with adults and helps them to feel safe and secure in the school environment. The school is acutely aware of its cultural make-up and have been proactive in ensuring that pupils begin to develop an understanding of their place as part of a multicultural society. Pupils are also able to learn about the heritage of where they live as they complete their school passport, visiting the, 'ten best places in Sunderland' during their time at the school.

Leadership and management

The headteacher sets very clear expectations of her staff and has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Together with her senior leadership team, she has ensured that all staff share her vision, have good opportunities to improve their practice continuously, and are fully involved in driving improvement in their subject areas. Monitoring is a collective responsibility and staff are responsible for using data to evaluate how different groups of pupils are performing in lessons. This ensures equality of opportunity and eradicates discrimination and underachievement. Senior leaders have an accurate view of their strengths and weaknesses through rigorous self-assessment procedures. The recent improvements to teaching and pupils' learning, together with the school's continued promotion of pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, show there is a good capacity to sustain these improvements. The provision of a well-designed, broad and balanced curriculum underpins the development of pupils' basic skills through meaningful termly 'themes' which are based on pupils' interests and so engage and motivate them to learn. This has a positive impact on their attitudes towards work, particularly for boys.

The governing body is knowledgeable about the school and, as a result, members are able to offer an appropriate balance of support for and challenge to the leadership. Members are regular visitors and adopt particular areas of interest which afford them a unique insight into the impact of school improvement strategies. The school's arrangements for safeguarding children meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern.

Regular newsletters, trips and activities, home-school books, and 'learning journals' facilitate communications between parents, carers and school. Parents and carers particularly enjoyed coming to school in their pyjamas for the hugely successful 'Everyone, Every Night' activity, designed to encourage them to read their children a bedtime story. As a result a high proportion of parents and carers report that they feel well informed by the school about their children's progress and learning. The school also been proactive in establishing links with outside partners, other schools and health professionals for the benefit of all the pupils in its care.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
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.



22 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Diamond Hall Infant School, Sunderland, SR4 6JF

I would like to begin by thanking you all for the very warm welcome we received when we visited your school. We are particularly grateful to all of you who gave up your time to speak to us in meetings, in lessons and around the school and to those of you who read so beautifully to us.

We consider that Diamond Hall Infant school is a good school, and we know, because you told us, that you agree with this. Your headteacher, members of the governing body and all the other staff in your school are working together really well to ensure you all achieve as well as you can, and they are being successful. We consider that the care and support that you receive is excellent and a real strength of your school. This is reflected by your views as you tell us you feel safe and supported at school and have faith in the staff to help you if you should need them. You are also helping to make your school a great place to be through your kindness to one another and through your good behaviour.

In order to make your school even better we have asked the governing body and staff to focus on two things in particular. First we would like them to help you make even better progress in writing. Second, we would like all the teachers to give you more opportunity to respond to the comments they make in your books when they mark them so that this helps you do even better in your work. You can help your school too, by making sure you all keep coming to school regularly – remember you do not know what you are missing if you are not there!

I know you all care a lot about your school, so I am sure you will help the headteacher and all the staff to make these improvements. Please accept the best wishes of all the inspection team, and good luck to you all in the future.

Yours sincerely

Jayne Utting
Her Majesty's Inspector

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