

Dickens Heath Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	133720
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	395561
Inspection dates	3–4 July 2012
Lead inspector	Julie Price Grimshaw

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	420
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Bloxham
Headteacher	Jacque Nicholls
Date of previous school inspection	04 February 2009
School address	Three Acres Lane Dickens Heath Solihull B90 1NA
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Julie Price Grimshaw

Additional Inspector

Jason Smith

Additional Inspector

Frances Millett

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 14 lessons taught by 14 teachers. In addition, they carried out a series of short visits to other lessons across the school and observed an assembly. Meetings were held with pupils, parents, staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at examples of pupils' work, national published data and the school's own data on pupils' progress, as well as documents relating to self-evaluation, improvement planning and safeguarding. Inspectors also listened to pupils read. Questionnaire responses from 165 parents and carers, 101 pupils and 43 staff were analysed and considered.

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average-sized primary school and serves the village of Dickens Heath, although a minority of pupils travel from further afield. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. A higher than average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action plus, or have a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

The school was opened in 2002 and the number of pupils has increased year-on-year since then; hence there are currently many more pupils on roll than at the time of the last inspection. Since the last inspection there have been significant changes to staffing, particularly at senior management level; the current headteacher took up post in September 2010.

The Acorns Childcare setting, which provides before-school and after-school care for children aged 3–11 and is managed by the governing body, was included in this inspection.

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	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school that provides a wide variety of rich learning opportunities for its pupils. It is not outstanding because learning occasionally slows when staff do not check pupils' progress frequently enough during lessons. In addition, although the school's improvement planning reflects the leadership's clear awareness of areas for development, plans are not tightly focused on the most important priorities.
- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress from their individual starting points and overall attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. A particular strength is pupils' achievement in reading, which enhances their progress across the curriculum.
- Teachers plan lessons very carefully and pay close attention to matching work to pupils' individual needs. There are numerous opportunities in all lessons for pupils to develop independent learning skills. Marking of pupils' work is of consistently good quality. In Acorns, planning is well structured, experienced and qualified staff work exceptionally well with children and pupils, and relationships are very positive.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they have an excellent awareness of how to stay safe. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and are polite and courteous to each other and to adults. The very small minority of pupils who have difficulties in managing their own behaviour are dealt with sensitively and effectively by staff.
- Senior leaders have successfully driven improvements to provision and outcomes. Teaching and staff performance are managed well. The curriculum is outstanding, as is the school's promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a strong focus on creativity and pupils' personal development as well as academic achievement. The Acorns Childcare provision is outstanding. It provides a wide range of activities for children and pupils to

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enjoy before and after school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that staff check pupils' progress frequently during lessons, particularly when they are engaged in independent activities, in order to accelerate learning.
- Accelerate the rate of the school's ongoing improvement by refining development planning so that it is sharply focused on key priorities.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils join the Nursery with skills that are generally close to national expectations for their age. They make good progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage in all areas of learning. The school's high expectations in terms of behaviour are evident in all sessions, including those for the youngest children, who happily share resources and support each other's learning. As a result of the highly effective teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make), children quickly acquire the skills they need to read unfamiliar words and this in turn has a positive impact on their writing skills. During the inspection, a group of children in the Nursery made outstanding progress in developing their writing skills as they sat in a beautifully decorated outbuilding known as the 'deep dark wood' to write about one of their favourite books, 'The Gruffalo'.

The emphasis on reading is evident throughout the school and attainment in reading is above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Pupils read with expression and enthusiasm and are keen to discuss their love of books. For example, one pupil from Year 2 said, 'My favourite non-fiction books are about dinosaurs, but I like fiction books about dragons and knights.'

Attainment by the end of Year 6 is typically above average in English and mathematics. Year 6 results for 2011 showed that there had been a drop in the rate of progress made across Key Stage 2, particularly by the most able. However, the school responded to this uncharacteristic dip and current pupils are making good progress across the school. Progress for the most able has accelerated and gaps in achievement are closing. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make at least good progress from their individual starting points. Other groups, including pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from minority ethnic groups, also make good progress.

Pupils are keen and enthusiastic learners. They develop good skills of organisation and are happy to work on their own and in small groups, although occasionally their progress slows a little when they work for extended periods without adult

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intervention. The great majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel that their children are making good progress, a typical comment being 'In the time our daughter has been at the school we have continued to be impressed and, at times, amazed at her progress.

Quality of teaching

The high-quality displays of pupils' work in the corridors and classrooms create a stimulating and attractive learning environment. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly, taking account of the ability levels of individuals and groups within their classes. The level of challenge for the most able pupils has been increased over the past year. Lessons include a variety of planned activities that motivate pupils, and often make good links between subjects and topics. In one lesson observed during the inspection, groups of pupils enthusiastically discussed mathematical problems related to a story they had covered as part of their topic work. The teacher gave clear time-limited tasks and stopped occasionally to review pupils' learning. As a result, pupils made rapid progress. Another teacher took on the character of a pirate and carried out some excellent creative work with small groups of pupils. This was highly effective in developing their language skills as well as their imagination. Reading skills, including phonics, are very well taught and consequently pupils are making rapid progress.

The school's marking policy is used consistently across the school by all staff and also by the pupils themselves. The 'green for growth' approach to identifying areas for improvement helps pupils to gain confidence in developing their work. All lessons include numerous opportunities for pupils to work independently. However, on a few occasions, staff do not check frequently enough on the progress pupils are making. As a result, the rate of progress for some pupils, including the most able, slows down.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well and receive consistently good quality tailored support from the school's capable teaching assistants. Teaching assistants are involved in the planning process and this enables them to use their own initiative, within a structured framework, to make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. A large majority of parents and carers feel that their children are taught well, as reflected in the comment that 'teaching is well structured and learning is made fun.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour over time is excellent. Pupils are exceptionally well-mannered and staff constantly reinforce this outstanding behaviour by regularly praising them for their politeness and courtesy. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and say how much they enjoy school, as reflected in their above average attendance. They have a very good awareness of the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying and persistent name calling, and recognise that they have a part to play in preventing

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and tackling such behaviour. Pupils said that any incidents of bullying are very rare and are dealt with swiftly by staff; as one pupil said, 'when you tell a member of staff that you are worried, you know it will be dealt with.' Pupils have an excellent awareness of how to stay safe, particularly when using the internet. A small minority of pupils occasionally exhibit challenging behaviour and staff deal with this well. Records show that some of these pupils have made excellent progress in improving their behaviour as a result of such support. Almost all parents and carers agreed that there is a good standard of behaviour at the school, and that the school keeps their children safe.

In the Acorns, children are able to choose from a range of healthy options for breakfast and staff make good use of this opportunity to reinforce the development of social skills. As a result of the high standard of care and support, those attending develop confidence and self-esteem.

Leadership and management

School leaders and staff show a strong commitment to the school. All staff expressed the view that they are proud to work at Dickens Heath. Staff performance is managed well; the monitoring of teaching and learning enables senior leaders to identify areas for improvement at a whole staff level as well as for individuals. Training for staff has had a good impact across the school; for example, the effective school-wide approach to marking is now firmly embedded, and training to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessment has been successful. This, in turn, has led to improvements in pupils' achievement over the past year.

Governors provide support and challenge to senior leaders and are effectively involved in evaluating the quality of the school's work. The school successfully ensures that all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of background or ability. Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements in the main school and in Acorns. Leaders and governors have a secure awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development. Self-evaluation is linked to improvement planning, but plans often contain too much detail to enable leaders and managers to focus sufficiently on the key priorities for development. Nevertheless, the school's track record and accurate self-evaluation show that there is capacity for sustained improvement. Within Acorns, leadership and management are outstanding, with detailed plans that clearly identify how the provision can continue to improve.

The curriculum is outstanding because it appeals to pupils' interests and meets their needs exceptionally well. In lessons, themed links across all subjects enliven learning and build pupils' creative skills. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to practice their literacy, numeracy and communication skills across a range of subject areas. Art and music are particularly strong and a large proportion of pupils are skilled performers. The curriculum is enhanced through a variety of sporting and artistic opportunities, including activities such as jewellery making. A number of parents and carers commented positively on the quality of the curriculum, for example, 'I have been so impressed with how creative and exciting my son's lessons

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have been.’ The great majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are very happy with the quality of their children’s education.

Topics and themes within the curriculum often have a strong emphasis on pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The outstanding work of the ‘human rights writing group’ exemplifies the school’s approach to developing pupils’ awareness of international issues; pupils in the group were keen to talk about their letters to various world leaders and the events run by the school to raise funds for charities.

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.



5 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dickens Heath Community Primary School, Solihull, B90 1NA

As you know, I visited your school recently with two other inspectors to find out how well you are doing. On behalf of the other inspectors, I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for sharing your views with us, including those some of you expressed in questionnaires.

You attend a good school. You achieve well and your attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 is above average. One of the things that impressed us most was your excellent behaviour. You were all so polite and courteous, not just to us but towards each other. We can see why the staff are so proud of you! You told us that there are lots of exciting and interesting things for you to do at school, both in your lessons and in the after-school clubs. We agree with you and we have judged that the curriculum at Dickens Heath is outstanding. The 'human rights writing group' have done some fantastic work and we were delighted to see that so many of you are involved in raising funds for charities. We have judged that the Acorns group is outstanding, and those of you that attend were clearly enjoying yourselves very much when we visited!

You are well taught and your teachers take a great deal of care in planning lots of interesting activities for you. We could see that you are used to working on your own and in groups, but we have asked the staff to make more frequent checks on your learning so that you always make at least good progress.

Your headteacher and the other adults who lead and manage the school are very committed to making Dickens Heath even better. We have asked them to focus very closely on the most important things that will help your school to improve. You can help by making sure that you always work at a good pace, especially when you are asked to work on your own.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Julie Price Grimshaw
Lead inspector

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