

Darton Primary School

Station Road, Darton, Barnsley South, South Yorkshire, S75 5AD

Inspection dates 11–12 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' progress in writing requires improvement. This is because, since the previous inspection, it has been too slow and as a result, pupils' attainment in writing is below average.
- Teaching requires improvement. This is because the teaching of writing over time has not been good enough to prevent standards declining and progress slowing in this subject.
- Marking and the targets that teachers set for pupils are not used consistently to help pupils make the best possible progress.
- Leadership and management require improvement. Not all subject leaders and teachers are fully accountable for pupils' progress and the standards they reach, and the governing body is not yet focusing enough on achievement when holding the school to account.
- The checks that leaders make on lessons, particularly those in writing, do not focus sharply enough on how well pupils learn.
- Reception-aged children taught in the class with Year 1 pupils do not have constant access to the good quality provision enjoyed by Reception children in the Foundation Unit.

The school has the following strengths

- The Foundation Unit gives children a good start to their schooling.
- Pupils feel safe and like their school.
- There are good relationships at all levels.
- Pupils behave well in classrooms, the playground and around the school.
- Pupils make good progress in reading.
- Senior leaders are committed to improving the school and teamwork is strong.
- Teaching is much better than it was, with an increasing proportion that is good.
- The rich curriculum provides enjoyment, interest and motivation for pupils, and helps to explain their above-average attendance.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 18 lessons taught by 10 teachers, two of which were joint observations carried out with the headteacher.
- They held meetings with governors, staff and pupils and talked to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- Inspectors observed pupils' work in all classes, especially focusing on Years 2, 4 and 6.
- Inspectors studied a range of documents including: the school's own evaluation documents; plans for the school's future development; a recent local authority evaluation of aspects of the school's work; notes from leaders' observations of lessons; safeguarding policies and records; the school's analysis of data on pupils' progress; and attendance information.
- The 44 responses on the online questionnaire, Parent View, were analysed. Inspectors spoke with a small number of parents during the inspection, taking account of their views.

Inspection team

Derek Pattinson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Peter Bailey	Additional Inspector
David Matthews	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an above average-sized primary school.
- Fewer pupils than in other primary schools join or leave at times other than the usual times.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium provides funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and the children of service personnel.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The Reception age children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught either in the Foundation Unit together with nursery-age children, or with Year 1 pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on improvements made to the quality of teaching so that all is at least good with more that is outstanding, in order to accelerate progress and raise attainment further, especially in writing, by:
 - eliminating the small amount of teaching that requires improvement
 - checking that activities are always challenging
 - making certain that the pace of learning is good in all lessons and providing pupils with more time to work independently
 - building on the work already started to ensure that all pupils have regular opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and in a wide range of subjects
 - ensuring that pupils always have clear steps to success so that they can measure the progress they are making
 - ensuring that pupils always have targets and that marking helps them to achieve them by giving them clear guidance about how to improve
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management in order to increase the pace of school improvement by:
 - making subject leaders and teachers fully accountable for pupils' standards and progress and the presentation of pupils' work
 - ensuring that the governing body focuses more sharply on pupils' achievement, especially writing, in order to more effectively hold the school to account
 - focusing more clearly on how well teachers help pupils make good progress, especially in writing, when checking on the quality of teaching and pupils' work.
- Provide the same good quality provision at all times for the Reception children in the mixed-age Reception and Year 1 class that children in the Foundation Unit receive.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement in the school is not yet good because standards in writing have declined since the last inspection, and not enough has yet been done to arrest the decline until relatively recently. As a result progress in writing has slowed, with some pupils underachieving in the 2012 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 2. Attainment in writing was below average for this group. However, initiatives to boost writing, including giving pupils more opportunities to write for different purposes, improved teaching, more rigorous analysis of data and targeted help for pupils who need it most, are now starting to show success in helping to drive up standards in this subject.
- This improving picture includes pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs and those receiving the pupil premium but some of these pupils performed less well than the same groups nationally and less well than others in the school in 2012. This illustrates that their achievement still requires improvement. Nevertheless, better teaching and the increased use of carefully targeted support has improved outcomes for these pupils. For example all but one of the pupils known to be entitled to free school meals made expected progress in English in 2012 compared to only half the group in 2011.
- Progress in mathematics is largely as expected with pupils reaching broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Moreover, results in 2012 were the best for five years with a higher percentage of pupils than nationally achieving the highest level possible for age.
- Children's skills and abilities when they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage vary from year to year but are usually below what are typical. Children get off to a good start because of good teaching and provision. As a result, children both in the Foundation Unit and reception children in the mixed class with Year 1 pupils make up lost ground and are where they should be when they move into Key Stage 1. However, Reception children taught in the mixed class do not have constant access to the good quality provision enjoyed by children in the Foundation Unit.
- In the most recent national check on children's ability to link letters to the sounds they make (phonics), which is carried out at the end of Year 1, pupils performed close to that typical nationally, although the performance of boys was stronger than girls. Nevertheless, both boys and girls make good progress in learning to read accurately and fluently for pleasure, information and enjoyment as they move from Year 1 to Year 6. This is due to initiatives, such as the creation of a new library area, regular reading and phonics sessions and a renewed focus on writing for different purposes, language structure and spelling.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it has not been good enough over time to prevent standards and progress in writing declining since the previous inspection. Nevertheless, inspection evidence indicates that teaching is improving with much that is now good, and a little of which is outstanding, which is starting to accelerate progress and narrow gaps in performance among different groups. This is most evident in reading and mathematics but also increasingly the case in writing.
- All teachers successfully establish good working relationships with their pupils. As a result teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, often with the skilled use of encouragement and praise. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins the school's work and is effectively promoted.
- However, sometimes the pace of a lesson is not brisk enough and the time available for independent work is restricted, especially in enabling pupils to improve their writing skills. Very occasionally, the work set is too easy or too hard. These negative features slow progress.
- Teaching assistants are usually used well to support the less-able pupils and those with special educational needs, helping them make similar progress to their classmates.

- Teaching is best where the pace is brisk, time is used well, pupils of all abilities are challenged and pupils' understanding is regularly checked as the lesson proceeds. These positive features were seen in an outstanding lower Key Stage 2 lesson, in which pupils were totally engrossed in measuring angles and giving directions, using the eight points of a compass.
- Successful learning also takes place where teachers' subject knowledge is secure, good questioning helps pupils to move forward and resources are used well to interest and involve pupils. These features were observed in a successful Year 6 lesson in which pupils were using their mathematical skills and knowledge to work out the numerical value of different two-dimensional shapes as an introduction to algebra.
- Teachers' marking gives praise where it is due. The recently introduced blue hardback writing books provide evidence of marking which helps pupils to improve. However, marking does not always give clear pointers on how to improve their work. Pupils are sometimes unsure of their targets and are not always given clear steps to success. These omissions reduce pupils' ability to take their own initiative in moving their learning forward.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good. This is confirmed by records, observations and discussions with pupils.
- Behaviour in lessons is almost always good, such as when children in the Foundation Unit were making 'crazy creepy crawlies' and pupils in Years 5 and 6 were concentrating on writing a letter to the Minister for Education advising him of ideas for a new curriculum. However, occasional restlessness occurs when work is not set at the right level or when pupils are required to sit for too long before moving on to independent work.
- Behaviour is, nevertheless, almost always managed well. Pupils say they like and understand the reward system involving, for example, the allocation of 'own choice time' and the award of merits. They like too the weekly celebration assemblies where effort and achievement are rewarded to help boost self-esteem. Examples of inappropriate behaviour are rare and are not allowed to impinge on pupils' learning.
- Most parents and pupils are unreservedly positive about behaviour. Pupils say that occasional fall-outs in the playground are always dealt with and that most of the time pupils play and work happily together. They know about different forms of bullying, say that it is rare and that there is no racism.
- Pupils conduct around the school is good. For example, they enter the hall for assemblies quietly, listen respectfully and answer politely. The atmosphere in the dining room is calm and settled with lots of pupils chatting in friendly conversation.
- Pupils enjoy school because they say that, 'Teachers make learning fun.' and that all adults help them learn. This helps to explain their good punctuality and attendance, which is above average.
- Pupils feel safe and secure in school and understand the importance of safe practices. For example, they comment positively about the locked gates, the 'modern locks' and the well supervised playground.
- Assemblies, class discussions, a link with a multicultural school in Newham and the many opportunities provided for pupils to work together contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is given strong emphasis. As a result pupils have positive attitudes to learning.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher provides an effective steer for the school's work. He has the full support of colleagues. The local authority has worked with the school to identify and provide regular, well focused challenge and support. Morale is high and team spirit is strong. All staff are committed to continued improvement. Professional development, informed by secure performance management, is given much emphasis. For example, it has helped to improve teaching through regular checks of its quality. However, checks do not yet focus clearly enough on how well

teachers help pupils to make good progress, especially in writing, in order to help to drive up standards.

- Most priorities for development focus on accelerating pupils' progress, with clear deadlines set to help secure their achievement. Leaders know the priorities, such as to raise standards in writing. Teachers now give this area increasing emphasis, such as through displays celebrating pupils' efforts and 'working walls' of 'wow' words to help increase pupils' vocabulary. This work is beginning to help secure needed improvement in the subject.
- Subject leaders are at different stages in developing their subjects. For example, the literacy leader is successfully leading the drive to improve writing and the mathematics leader, although new to the role, is increasingly effective. Other leaders also know what needs doing. However, subject leaders are not yet fully accountable for pupils' attainment and progress because they are not yet routinely involved in observing lessons.
- The checks on test results and the school's own assessment information help leaders to identify how well pupils are doing and enable them to give support for those who are falling behind. The school's targets for improvement are based on an increasing range of appropriate evidence but they have not yet had full impact on improving pupils' progress in writing.
- Topics and themes, such as, 'the Terrible Tudors', 'Buried Treasure' and 'Crash, Bang, Wallop' provide evidence of a rich and varied curriculum. 'Wow' events, such as a visit to Manchester Airport, inspire pupils and provide the stimulus for a Key Stage 2 travel show and much relevant work with strong links made between different subjects to enhance learning. Visits, such as to a Tudor house, provide the impetus for pupils to write interesting accounts of their experiences.
- Safeguarding and child-protection arrangements meet requirements. For example, arrangements for site safety are secure.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. However, a small number of parents do not believe that they receive valuable information about their child's progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body, which has undergone recent changes in membership and now has a new Chair, is securely increasing its involvement in the work of the school. Best value principles of financial accountability are applied and financial management is secure. For example, the governing body checks that pupil premium funding benefits relevant groups. The governing body are improving their knowledge of data and the quality of teaching. Although there is still more to do to make certain that any decline in achievement, including pupils' progress in writing, is rapidly identified and challenged.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	106574
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	412320

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	305
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mandy Grosse
Headteacher	Mike Porter
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2010
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