

Dronfield Infant School

School Lane, Dronfield, S18 1RY

Inspection dates 12–13 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils in all groups make outstanding progress from their starting points. As a result, they consistently leave the school at the end of Year 2 with standards well above those normally expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make such excellent progress because the quality of teaching, in all phases, is outstanding. Teachers, and highly skilled teaching assistants, are exceptionally good at identifying the needs of all pupils, and at ensuring that the work they set for pupils is closely matched to their individual needs.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. In lessons, they focus their energies completely on learning. This is because teachers ensure that activities are exciting and enjoyable for them. Pupils' behaviour in other areas of the school, including in the playground, is impeccable.
- Parents and carers hold the school in very high regard.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is further reflected by their consistently above average attendance, which continues to improve.
- Pupils learn about an exciting range of topics and subjects, which fully meet their needs. Learning is very effectively brought to life through a frequent and varied range of school trips. As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Teachers frequently mark pupils' writing books and make very helpful comments, to help pupils to understand how they can improve their work.
- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The inspirational headteacher is supported by a highly skilled and dedicated senior leadership team. Leaders have successfully maintained, and further improved upon, the high standards of the school.
- The experienced governing body has a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and continually challenges the school's leaders to continue to improve, with marked impact.

Information about this inspection

- Eighteen lessons were observed by inspectors. Two of these were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, senior members of staff, and representatives of the governing body including the Chair. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority. Inspectors spoke informally to a number of parents and carers in the playground as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including school improvement plans, documents showing how leaders check teachers' work, and the school's systems to check the suitability of employees who work with children. Inspectors also checked the school's records of pupils' progress.
- Inspectors looked closely at pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors took account of the 52 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Twenty eight questionnaires received from staff were also analysed.

Inspection team

Jeremy Spencer, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Malcolm Johnstone

Additional Inspector

Lucy Maughan

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized school of its type.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those from families in the armed services.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action, school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs are below average.
- Children begin the school in the Reception classes and have a broad range of experiences prior to starting school. For example, in September 2012 pupils came from seventeen different pre-school settings in the local community.
- Breakfast, after-school, and holiday clubs operate on the school site. However, these are managed privately and are subject to separate inspection.
- The school is a designated NLE (National Leader of Education) school and uses expertise within the school to support the improvement of other schools across the country.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that children make the same outstanding progress in learning phonics (the sounds that letters make) skills, as they do in all other areas of learning, particularly during the time before they begin in Year 2.
- Ensure that the quality of teachers' marking is consistently excellent in all subjects, so that pupils very clearly understand the next steps of learning they need to take.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- 'My boy really looks forward to coming to school every day and he is making excellent progress here.' These were the words of a parent, to an inspector, as she dropped her child off at school in the morning. Many other parents and carers made similar comments. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View also believe that their child makes good progress. Inspection findings confirm that children make outstanding progress at Dronfield Infant School.
- Children typically begin the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills broadly in line with those expected for their age. However, an increasing proportion demonstrate skills below those normally expected, particularly in communication and language skills. As a result of outstanding teaching, children make outstanding progress in the Reception classes and continue to make excellent progress in Years 1 and 2. They leave Year 2 with standards well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents outstanding overall achievement. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Different groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and pupils supported through the pupil premium, make outstanding progress. This is because staff track and review their progress very carefully. They successfully ensure that if their progress begins to slow down, teaching activities are adapted immediately to help them to catch up again. At the time of the last inspection, boys made slower progress in developing writing skills than girls. This is no longer the case because teachers have worked hard to make learning topics more appealing to boys. They have been successful in doing so.
- Parents and carers spoken to by inspectors feel that the school values all of its pupils equally. They regard all staff as being highly approachable and supportive and the small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups also make exceptional progress.
- Pupils make very good progress in developing reading skills during their time at the school. Discussions with pupils show that they also enjoy reading. However, their progress in developing phonics (the sounds that letters make) skills is not evenly distributed as they move through the school. Consequently, pupils leave Year 1 with phonics skills broadly in line with average, but not above average, as they do in all other areas of learning. They soon make up for this as they move through Year 2.
- Pupils make excellent gains in their knowledge and understanding of subjects other than English and mathematics. For example, work in their topic books, and on school displays, indicates that they have gained a thorough understanding of different countries and their cultures. This has been further supported with a link to a school in the Palestinian Territories. During the inspection, pupils in Year 2 were observed making excellent progress in developing ball sending and receiving skills in a physical education lesson.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The large majority of parents and carers who spoke with inspectors, or who responded to Parent View, believe that their child is well taught at the school. Inspection findings indicate that pupils are very well taught by staff.
- Excellence in the quality of teaching at this school underpins pupils' outstanding achievement.

Teachers, including those who are newly qualified, are highly skilled and understand how to get the very best from their pupils. For example, they provide frequent opportunities in lessons for pupils to discuss what they are learning to do. As a result, pupils become highly focused learners.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children work, play and learn together in highly stimulating, safe and well-organised environments. Staff successfully ensure that there is an excellent range of activities for children to choose to engage with, in both indoor and outdoor learning areas. Children bristle with excitement as they interact positively with each other and make excellent progress in developing their skills. Staff observe their learning closely and intervene at exactly the right moments to help children to further develop their thinking and understanding.
- Teachers continue to perform to the very highest standards in Years 1 and 2. They make sure that pupils are very well challenged by learning activities. For example, in an outstanding mathematics lesson in Year 2, pupils solved problems involving money. One pupil said, 'This is really making me think!' Teachers also ask excellent questions to check pupils' understanding.
- Teaching assistants make a very strong contribution to pupils' successful learning in this school. They provide discreet, timely and highly effective support to pupils of different abilities in lessons. During the inspection, teaching assistants were observed expertly helping pupils to grasp the concept of odd and even numbers, in a mathematics lesson, through the use of song and rhyme. Teaching assistants' interactions with pupils are warm, caring and often include a smile.
- Teachers mark pupils' English books thoughtfully and with notable impact on pupils' accelerated learning. They make it very clear to pupils exactly what they need to do to improve, and pupils respond to this. Teachers frequently mark pupils' work in other subjects. They often make comments about pupils' work and reward them for doing well. However, teachers' comments about what pupils need to do to improve are not as clear and specific as they are in English.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View, or who spoke with inspectors, believe that the school ensures its pupils are well behaved. Inspection findings confirm that pupils' behaviour is of the highest standard. Pupils are very considerate of each others' needs and have excellent social skills. For example, they hold doors open for each other, and for staff and visitors without prompting.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is outstanding. Almost without exception, they are attentive and ready to learn at the beginning of lessons. As lessons progress they very quickly become absorbed in their learning activities.
- Pupils were observed behaving very well in school assemblies. They demonstrated very strong spiritual awareness as they prayed respectfully and sang together. Pupils also behave very well on the playground and in other areas of the school. Pupils' excellent behaviour reflects their strong moral understanding.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of safety for their age. They can explain clearly why visitors need to wear badges in a school setting. They also show their understanding of safety by taking care to move considerately around different areas of the school. Pupils have a secure understanding of what constitutes bullying and are confident that teachers deal effectively with very rare cases of bullying.

- Pupils' attendance is well-above average and has been so for a number of years. Pupils' attendance continues to rise. This is because the school's strategies to promote improved attendance are highly successful and also because pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The experienced headteacher provides inspirational leadership. She is very well supported by a dedicated and highly skilled senior leadership team. Leaders have worked tirelessly to ensure that Dronfield Infant School continues to be an outstanding school and also continues to improve. Leaders have also been successful in using their expertise to support other schools to improve, both locally and nationally.
- Senior leaders evaluate the performance of the school accurately. They have a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to maintain its high standards and continue to improve. Leaders devise sharply focused action plans to communicate to staff and the governing body how the school will improve, and how improvements will be measured.
- Leaders make very good use of detailed information about pupils' progress to swiftly identify if any pupils are not making very good progress. They implement very effective systems to support these pupils to catch up with their peers. As a result, all groups of pupils, including those supported through the pupil premium, make excellent progress. This shows that the school promotes equality of opportunity very well.
- Senior leaders frequently and robustly check the quality of teaching across the school. They are highly effective in taking action through the management of staff performance to improve any areas of weakness.
- The curriculum (the subjects and topics that pupils learn about) is outstanding. Pupils learn about a broad range of subjects and topics, enhanced by frequent school trips and visitors to the school. During the inspection, a group of Year 1 pupils sparkled with enthusiasm as they returned from their trip to a local butterfly farm. A broad range of after-school clubs also support pupils' excellent all round development.
- The large majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View, and all parents who spoke with inspectors during the inspection, believe that the school is well led.
- The local authority has a high regard for the abilities of the school's leadership team, and offers 'light touch' support to the school. This level of support is entirely appropriate for the school as it continues to thrive.

The governance of the school:

- Governors are experienced and highly dedicated. They come from a diverse range of backgrounds and bring a broad range of relevant skills and knowledge to the school. Governors receive detailed information about the school from senior leaders, but also make frequent visits to the school to check things for themselves. As a result, the governing body has an excellent understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. It knows about the school's strengths and also has the knowledge and skills to successfully challenge senior leaders to continue to improve. For example, governors used data very effectively to hold leaders to account about a small gap between the progress made by boys and girls in writing. The gap has now been closed. Governors know what the school is doing to reward good teaching and to tackle any underperformance. Governors are well-trained, including in

safeguarding, and ensure that their statutory duties are fully met.

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	112540
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	422035
Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	255
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Gilson
Headteacher	Kay Lovegrove
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2007
Telephone number	01246 412302
Email address	enquiries@dronfield-inf.derbyshire.sch.uk

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