

St Denys Church of England Infant School, Ibstock

Laud Close, Ibstock, LE67 6NL

Inspection dates 27–28 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders, including governors, provide strong and clear direction for the school. With the full support of governors, the headteacher has ensured that the quality of teaching is good and improving.
- The headteacher has introduced more robust checking of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Together with targeted guidance and support, this has resulted in improving pupil achievement.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Pupils reach expected standards in reading and mathematics. Their attainment in writing was above the national average in 2014.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff know the children very well, and they work together as a team to provide the children with high-quality teaching.
- The good provision for pupils in the specialist resource base ensures that they achieve well from their well-below average starting points.
- The provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs throughout the school is effective and these pupils make good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour around school and in lessons is good and makes a strong contribution to their learning. They enjoy their lessons, listen attentively, and engage positively in the tasks they are given.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average. Pupils feel very safe in school.
- Governors have a very good understanding of how well the school is performing. They are effective in holding leaders to account for the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The teaching of mathematics is not as strong as that of reading and writing. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their numeracy skills in other subjects or to real-life problems.
- Some leaders are new to their roles. The actions taken so far have not been in place long enough for the impact on pupil achievement to be measured.
- Teachers do not consistently provide clear guidance that will help pupils improve their work. They do not check that pupils act on the advice they are given through marking.
- When checking on the quality of teaching, leaders do not always focus enough attention on the provision for and progress of pupils of different abilities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 11 lessons and part lessons, three of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils read.
- Pupils' books and other work were examined from all year groups, including the Early Years Foundation Stage. This included pupil's books from last year.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current progress, documents relating to the school's plans for improvement, its procedures for checking the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Discussions were held with: the headteacher; senior, subject and other leaders; other school staff; a group of pupils; governors; and parents. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 47 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also talked to parents bringing children to school.

Inspection team

Michael Appleby, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Beverley Strange

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Denys Infant School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2012. The deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2013. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader and the leader of mathematics were promoted to these roles from within the school staff in September 2014, and two new teachers also joined the school at this time.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. Known in the school as the MLD Unit, it caters for up to 10 pupils with moderate learning difficulties. There are currently seven pupils on roll.
- The pupil premium provides support for about one in 10 pupils in the school. This additional funding is used to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is 13%. This is broadly in line with the national average.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage has three full-time classes, increased from two in September 2014 due to a rise in the number of children.
- The school has been a member of the Forest Way Teaching School Alliance since September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching of mathematics to raise attainment, especially for the most able, by ensuring that pupils' have more opportunities to apply their skills in other subjects and to real-life problems and investigations.
- Improve the quality of teaching and raise levels of achievement still further by:
 - giving pupils clear guidance so they know what and how to improve
 - ensuring that pupils act on the guidance they are given.
- Further strengthen the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that:
 - subject and other leaders are given the time and training to carry out their roles effectively
 - leaders' visits to lessons to check on the quality of teaching focus on the provision and progress of pupils of different abilities.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has led the school well since her appointment. She is well supported by other senior leaders and the governing body. School leaders are strongly committed to driving the school forward. The headteacher's actions have led to improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement. Teachers are very aware of the high expectations the headteacher has of their work to help pupils improve.
- The school experienced some instability in staffing last year. Robust action was taken by the headteacher to tackle some underperformance in teaching. Coaching, mentoring and regular monitoring by the headteacher has resulted in a steady improvement in the quality of teaching across the school. These actions have ensured that pupils' achievement improved.
- Senior leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching because they make good use of the different forms of assessment available to them. Good use is made of assessments, staffing and funds to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- The subject and phase leaders of the school are nearly all new appointments and so they have not had time to make a significant impact on teaching or pupils' achievement. They have made a good start, and show a good understanding of assessment data but, because they do not have any management time for this role, they have not been able to visit lessons to assess the quality of teaching at first hand.
- The new arrangements introduced by the headteacher to check the effectiveness of teaching and pupils' learning are rigorous. Leaders' visits to lessons to check on the quality of teaching do not always focus closely enough on the provision for pupils of different abilities and the progress they make in the lesson.
- The management of the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in the MLD Unit is good. The lead teacher, who has specialist special educational needs qualifications, ensures that expectations regarding learning and behaviour are high. The MLD Unit is monitored closely by the headteacher and governors. The provision is very well resourced, both in terms of staffing and equipment.
- The school is developing its preferred approach to assessment following the removal of National Curriculum levels by working with other local schools to create an agreed approach.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to support those pupils for whom it is intended. The spending is having a positive impact on eligible pupils' achievement and attendance.
- The school is implementing the new curriculum requirements through well-planned links between subject skills and topics. The school is introducing 'skills ladders' to ensure that pupils progressively learn specific skills for different subjects in a planned way.
- The primary school sport funding is used to broaden sporting opportunities for pupils while developing the expertise of staff, using specialist coaches. This has, for example, led to increased opportunities in activities such as gymnastics, tennis and multi-skills. As a result, more pupils are taking part in a wider range of sporting activities to help them stay healthy and promote their well-being.
- The school is strongly committed to promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Effective activities to increase pupils' understanding of different cultures and religions promote a strong respect for others which is preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The local authority has provided a low level of monitoring and support as the school was judged to be a good school and annual check-ups have not raised any concerns. The school makes good use of its links to the Teaching Alliance and a range of other external agencies to validate and improve its work.

■ The governance of the school:

- The members of the governing body provide a wide range of experience and expertise which they use effectively to strengthen school leadership. They are strongly committed to continued improvement.
- The governing body monitors the leadership and performance of the school through such activities as visits to classes, looking at pupils' work, analysing achievement data, reviewing policies, receiving reports, and talking to pupils about their experiences at school. They ask challenging questions about the quality of teaching, pupils' progress and the school's actions for improvement.
- Governors have been actively involved in the evaluation of the school's performance and the school plans for improvement. This includes canvassing the views of parents. They check closely on the management of teachers' performance and ensure that decisions about teachers' pay are appropriately linked to pupils' progress.
- Finances are monitored closely. Governors are fully involved in decisions about spending, such as the funding for disadvantaged pupils and the school's sports funding. They make sure that money is spent appropriately and effectively.
- All safeguarding requirements are met and governors fulfil their statutory duties well, such as following safer recruitment procedures when appointing new staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite, well mannered and willing to help each other and adults. There are very positive relationships between pupils and adults.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning in their lessons. They behave well during lessons and at lunchtimes, and play together harmoniously at playtimes. During the inspection, pupils' movement around the school was calm and orderly.
- Reception children are happy and secure in their well-organised classrooms. They know the routines well, enjoy the activities provided, and quickly comply with the requests of teachers and other staff. These positive features are built on successfully in the Key Stage 1 classes.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Expectations of good behaviour are very high across the school and staff manage behaviour very well. Staff continually model appropriate responses or behaviour when opportunities arise. In the Reception class, for example, a teaching assistant patiently guided a boy on how to ask if he could have a turn wrapping presents with Christmas wrapping paper.
- In lessons, pupils are enthusiastic and keen to learn. Pupils' consistently good behaviour ensures that lessons are able to progress without disruption. Most pupils sustain their concentration in lessons. They listen closely to questions and explanations, and are keen to offer answers and ideas.
- All parents who responded to Parent View and those who spoke to inspectors agree that their children are happy, looked after well and that pupils are well behaved. Pupils also say that their classmates generally behave well. However, they say that, sometimes, teachers have to deal firmly with some pupils who lose concentration and misbehave in lessons.
- Attendance has steadily improved and currently is above the national average. Pupils arrive at school on time and there was no evidence of late arrivals to lessons. The school is vigilant in following up all absences. Where attendance is less than good in the MLD Unit, it is usually due to medical reasons and hospital visits.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure, including in the MLD Unit, is good. The school site is secure and access to it is strictly regulated. Staff and parents are very positive about pupils' safety and well-being in school. Pupils say that the grown-ups take very good care of them in school.

- Pupils feel safe and are very aware of who to go to if they feel anxious or unhappy. Parents confirm that instances of bullying are very rare.
- Pupils have a sensible, age-appropriate view of everyday risks and know some of the steps they can take to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- Pupils are well supervised at break times and any incidents or minor injuries are properly recorded and dealt with immediately. Risk assessments and safeguarding procedures are completed diligently.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils make good progress because the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is of good quality across the school. This is confirmed by observations made in lessons, work in pupils' books and the school's own records of pupils' progress. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively so little lesson time is lost.
- Teachers know their pupils well and are well aware of individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Clear and well-prepared explanations and effective modelling given by teachers ensure that pupils understand what to do when they move on to work on their own. Teacher's planning builds on what pupils already know, and work is adapted for pupils' different abilities. Work for the most-able pupils usually, but not always, provides suitable challenge.
- The teaching of early reading and writing skills is effective. Pupils are taught letter sounds (phonics) and pupils are expected to use them in their reading and writing. Children in the Reception class wrote their own Christmas card messages and labels using letter sounds to spell words.
- The teaching of phonics has been improved through more frequent lessons, staff training, a better match of work to ability and regular assessments. These actions have resulted in an improvement in the number of pupils achieving the expected and higher levels in reading and writing.
- Individual pupils in the MLD Unit are intensively supported and close monitoring enables them to achieve well. Well-established routines create a calm atmosphere which has a very positive impact on the behaviour and progress of these pupils.
- Teaching assistants are effective because they are skilled in helping individual pupils or small groups to engage successfully in lessons. They also work very effectively with disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs on improving particular weaknesses in reading, writing or mathematics.
- Homework is used effectively to support the learning that pupils do in school. For example, pupils in Year 1 had prepared an information sheet at home about a famous sports person, which they used very effectively in their lesson about factual writing.
- The quality of feedback and guidance given to pupils is much better in writing than it is in mathematics. All teachers mark work frequently, but there is inconsistency across the school in the amount and quality of written guidance given to pupils about what they need to do to improve. Teachers do not check that pupils respond to marking by making corrections or improvements to their work.
- Although there is evidence of writing skills being used and developed in other subjects this is not the case with mathematical skills.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Reception class with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. Their skills are weakest in reading and writing. Good teaching enables them to learn quickly and make good progress. The proportion of children in the Reception Year who achieved a good level of development improved rapidly from below the national average in 2013 to above in 2014.

- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has improved over the past three years. In 2014, the proportion of pupils achieving the age-expected level increased and was above the national average for writing and mathematics. The proportion attaining the higher level was similar to the national average. This also represented an improvement on previous years.
- The progress seen in lessons, together with work in books from the current and previous year, confirms the school's assessment that most pupils make good progress. Boys and girls achieve equally well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's work to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is increasingly effective. The gap between their achievement and their classmates has narrowed considerably. In Year 2 in 2014, the attainment gap was around a term and a half in mathematics. It was less than a term in reading and writing. When compared to pupils nationally, the gap has closed in reading, and disadvantaged pupils at St Denys did better than pupils nationally in writing. Disadvantaged pupils were less than a term behind pupils nationally in mathematics.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to other pupils. This is because these pupils receive carefully targeted support that meets their specific learning needs. Those pupils in the MLD Unit make good progress from their well below-average starting points because of the individualised learning provision made for these pupils.
- Achievement of the most-able pupils is good. The proportion of Year 2 pupils reaching the higher levels has improved. These pupils' good progress is evident in the challenging work currently seen in lessons. For example, in a poetry writing lesson, the most-able pupils included and correctly identified various grammatical features such as adjectives, verbs and nouns.

The early years provision

is good

- All children make good progress in the early years. The proportion reaching a good level of development was above the national average in 2014: three quarters of the children reached the expected level in reading and writing, and an even higher proportion did so in mathematics. Children are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- The new leader has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in this key stage. She has worked closely with the two new teachers in the Reception classes to establish high expectations for planning and teaching. She closely checks the accuracy of their assessments of how well children are doing.
- The school's close liaison with parents and other early years settings prior to the children starting school pays off, so that children settle quickly and develop excellent attitudes to school and to learning. Parents are happy and feel well informed about how well their children are doing.
- Teaching is good. Teachers make good use of the resources available to them to organise interesting activities. They have high expectations, and build warm relationships with the children. Staff know the children well, and adapt learning to meet their individual learning needs. Children's learning is planned well and it is assessed, recorded and tracked effectively.
- Clear routines have been established and, as a result, children work happily together and behave well. Some children are able to concentrate and persevere for extended periods of time because they are enjoying the challenges they receive, especially the most able.
- Adults take every opportunity to talk with children, building their confidence and encouraging them to extend their learning. They use questions and discussions effectively to explore children's understanding and move their learning forward.

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	120138
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	448677

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jo Bal
Headteacher	Cortina Newton
Date of previous school inspection	15 June 2010
Telephone number	01530 260004
Fax number	01530 263406
Email address	stdenys.office@st-denys-inf.leics.sch.uk

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