



Downham Feoffees Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110799
LEA CAMBRIDGESHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278516
Inspection dates 8 November 2005 to 9 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs. Helen Ranger LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Main Street
School category	Voluntary controlled		CB6 2ST
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01353699325
Number on roll	177	Fax number	01353698671
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs.Mandy Newman
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs. Susan Burry

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 8 November 2005 - 9 November 2005	Inspection number 278516
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Downham Feoffees is a smaller than average school. It mainly serves the village of Little Downham, although about 30 pupils travel in from nearby farming communities. Pupils come from a broad range of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion who have learning difficulties is below average. The proportion entitled to free school meals is lower than average but rising. Most pupils in the school come from white British backgrounds. About 5% are from a wide range of minority ethnic groups and almost all of these speak English as their main language. The youngest children join the reception class with knowledge and skills that are broadly average for their age. In recent years, a major building programme has modernised and upgraded the accommodation for all age groups.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a school where standards are steadily rising. In recent years, it has coped well with a considerable number of changes to its staff and governors and with an extensive programme of rebuilding. Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that its overall effectiveness is satisfactory at present and that it has a good capacity for further improvement. It is now in a strong position to move forward more rapidly, with a good team of staff and the commitment of newly-appointed governors. Children make a good start in the reception class where they are taught well and reach levels above those expected nationally. By Year 6, pupils achieve standards that are in line with the national average. Satisfactory teaching in recent years has promoted this steady progress. The quality of teaching is improving. It is now often good and occasionally outstanding. This is ensuring that standards are rising, although some lessons still do not cater well enough for the most capable pupils. These improvements to teaching have not yet had a full impact on the school's academic results. Pupils' personal development is good and is promoted well by effective standards of pastoral care and welfare. Teachers increasingly use the information they collect on pupils' progress in their planning of lessons. The school has rightly recognised the need to make this even more effective in promoting efficient learning, and thus raising standards. The headteacher and deputy head lead the school well. The head has ensured that, in spite of the challenges posed by staffing changes and building disruption, there has been sufficient improvement since the last inspection. There has been a considerable turnover of governors and difficulties in recruiting their replacements. The governing body is now in a stronger position than it has been for some years. Governors are inexperienced but there are good plans to support them to play their full part in the school's management. The school manages its budget efficiently and gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve progress by making sure that all lessons cater for the full range of attainment in each class, including sufficient challenge for the more capable pupils. - Ensure that all teachers make the best use of assessment information when setting learning targets for individuals and groups of pupils. - Carry out the plans to ensure that the governing body takes a full part in supporting the school's further development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

From an average starting point when they join the school, the children in reception make good progress and, overall, exceed the nationally expected levels by the end of the year. By Year 2 in recent years, results in English and mathematics have been broadly in line with national averages, although reading has been somewhat better than this. Year 6 pupils have generally reached average levels in the national tests in English, mathematics and science, although their results in 2005 in science show a big

improvement over previous years. Current standards are broadly in line with this recent test performance in both key stages. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are similar to those expected nationally. The school sets challenging targets for its results in English and mathematics in Year 6 but these are not always met. The school's tracking of pupils' achievements shows that they make at least satisfactory progress in relation to their capabilities. This includes those who have learning difficulties. While there is no significant underachievement, the girls often do better than the boys. The school is trying to remedy this by ensuring that lessons cater equally well for both genders. The most recent assessments indicate that the improvements to the quality of teaching are promoting better progress in most year groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils' spiritual development has improved since the last inspection when it was identified as a weakness. The open celebration of pupils' successes develops their self-confidence very well. This encourages them to aim high and, during lessons, they work hard and are keen to answer questions. Pupils and adults get on very well and the school's warm and welcoming atmosphere reflects pupils' strong moral and social awareness. Pupils enjoy coming to school and have very positive attitudes to learning. They attend regularly and there are few unauthorised absences. Pupils of all ages behave well during lessons and around the school. They make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. For example, some pupils in Years 5 and 6 volunteer to become 'playground buddies' and help younger pupils with their reading. The school council makes a valuable contribution to school life and pupils are able to contribute to issues such as the design of the playground markings and how funds would be raised for these. Pupils understand the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. Drinking water is freely available during lessons and they really appreciate being provided with a piece of fruit or vegetable during the morning break. They have a good awareness of safety and look after each other during lunch and playtime. Pupils' good social skills, together with their sound basic skills in literacy and numeracy, equip them well for their future life within the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers know their pupils well and plan interesting lessons that usually engage pupils' full attention. Basic skills in reading, writing, mathematics and ICT are developed securely. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage (reception) is good. The teacher has established an effective balance between activities led by adults and those that the children can choose for themselves. The quality of teaching in the rest of the school is more variable and ranged from

satisfactory to outstanding during the inspection. Some teachers do not always plan sufficiently for the full ability range and the needs of the more able pupils in particular are not always met. Although assessment systems are good, the information obtained is not always fully exploited when planning what pupils should do next. Group targets are provided for pupils of all ages based on their ability, and individual targets for improvement for literacy and numeracy are provided in Years 5 and 6. The work set for younger pupils is not always matched as closely to their needs and they do not make progress as rapidly as they could. Teaching assistants work closely with class teachers to give pupils with learning difficulties consistently good support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets pupils' needs well and its diversity helps them to enjoy the time they spend at school and make steady progress in their work. Provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage is good and weaknesses identified in this age group by the previous inspection have been fully addressed. A good range of popular after-school activities enriches the curriculum and school teams, including football, rugby and netball, successfully compete in inter-school matches and tournaments. Following consultation with parents, several new clubs were established but were subsequently disbanded as a result of poor support. A comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education provides clear information about staying healthy and keeping safe. It also helps pupils to build life skills that help them to become responsible citizens. All pupils in Years 3 to 6 go swimming. The strong emphasis on health awareness results in pupils having a good understanding of the benefits brought by regular exercise and a healthy diet.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The welfare of pupils is at the heart of the school's work and robust procedures are in place to ensure pupils' safety, security and health. As a result, pupils feel safe and very well looked after. Procedures for child protection and first aid are comprehensive and the school receives good support from external specialist agencies in its arrangements for risk assessment. This high level of support and care ensures that pupils feel very positive about coming to school and are in a good frame of mind for learning. Teachers monitor pupils' personal and academic development closely. There is detailed monitoring of the overall development of any pupils who are experiencing particular difficulties. However, the inconsistent use of individual academic targets described earlier means that this aspect of support for pupils is rather patchy. The planned extension of this system to all year groups will help other pupils to focus more clearly on what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has moved forward satisfactorily since its last inspection in spite of the constraints caused by changes of personnel and the building programme. The headteacher has shown resilience in the face of these challenges and has worked determinedly to establish the present team of staff and governors. The ethos of the school is good and its caring atmosphere and commitment to pupils' personal development have remained strengths throughout. There are now timely ambitions to ensure that academic standards rise. The school improvement plan reflects the clear vision for further improvement of the senior management team and details relevant initiatives to realise this vision. The school values all individuals and generally includes all pupils well in its work, although the higher attainers could be stretched more at times. Improving arrangements for self-evaluation mean that the school has a clear view of where it stands and of how it intends to improve further. All interested parties have been consulted well and are kept well informed about developments. Good use has been made of the support available from the local education authority's advisory team and the school has acted well on the recommendations made by these advisers. The school maintains a good partnership with parents, most of whom hold positive views of its provision. The governors currently give satisfactory support. Several new governors have been appointed quite recently and are gradually playing a more effective role in the school's management. The school has been fortunate in securing the help of two very experienced advisory governors from the local authority and they contribute very well to the overall effectiveness of the governing body. The school is in a good position to continue to improve. It has reached a position of stability following a few turbulent years and is well placed to move forward.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and helping us to find out about it. This letter is to tell you about the most important things we saw during our visit. These are some of the best things - You enjoy school, behave well and get on well with the children and adults in your school. - The adults care about each of you as individuals and make sure that you feel safe in school. - You are given plenty of interesting activities, including visits outside school and clubs that are arranged in your spare time. - Mrs Burry has made sure that you have good new teachers, teaching assistants and governors to help you make the most of your time in school. These are things that might be made a bit better - Sometimes lessons do not keep everyone in the class busy and interested, especially those of you who learn quickly. - Each child in Years 5 and 6 has his or her own targets to help them understand what to work on next and we think this system could be used with more of you. - Several of the governors are new and they need to know more about how your school works so that they can help to make it even better. Keep enjoying all that your school offers you.