



# Damers First School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 113665  
**LEA** Dorset  
**Inspection number** 279214  
**Inspection dates** 7 February 2006 to 8 February 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Bradley Simmons HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Damers Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Dorchester
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 9		Dorset DT1 2LB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01305 264924
<b>Number on roll</b>	375	<b>Fax number</b>	01305 257213
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Robert Potter
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	31 October 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Catherine Le Hal

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 9	<b>Inspection dates</b> 7 February 2006 - 8 February 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 279214
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Damers First School is situated in an area of mixed housing in the county town of Dorchester in Dorset. It has 382 pupils on roll. The school has inclusive provision for 18 pupils who have statements of special educational need for speech and language difficulties. In total, the percentage of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is slightly below the national average. Around 6% of the school's pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, and just under half of these pupils speak English as an additional language. The published percentage of pupils entitled to a free school meal is 9.6%. This is below the national average but may not reflect the true figure; some parents choose not to apply for this concession as the local authority does not provide a hot meal.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The school has a modest view of its performance, judging this to be satisfactory. Inspectors judge the school to be better than this. Damers First is an effective school which provides good value for money. Parents greatly value the balanced education it provides for their children, and pupils certainly enjoy coming to school.

Standards by the end of the Foundation Stage are in line with national expectations because of the sound provision the school makes for pupils' learning. Overall, teaching at the school is good and so pupils make good progress. By the time they leave at the end of Year 4, they attain standards that are slightly above those expected for their age. Pupils with SEN, including those within the school's inclusive speech and language provision, make very good progress. The school recognises that more able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable in mathematics, and that standards in writing could be higher.

The care, support and guidance provided by the school are outstanding. The school promotes excellent multi-agency links to ensure that pupils get the support they need.

Leadership and management are good at all levels, and drive the improvement agenda. Governors challenge and support the school very effectively, but school improvement planning does not enable governors to gain a precise view of the school's ambition for each cohort of pupils. The school has a good grasp of attainment by each cohort of pupils and by different groups of pupils. However, the manner in which data is collated makes the analysis of each cohort's progress over time cumbersome. The upswing in reading results over the past few years demonstrates the school's good capacity for further improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- raise expectations of more able pupils in mathematics so that they attain higher standards
- ensure pupils have sufficient opportunities to write at greater length and in greater depth.
- include annual reading, writing and mathematics targets for each year group within the school improvement plan so governors are better able to hold the school to account.
- rationalise the use of data to facilitate the school's evaluation of pupils' progress over time.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils start the school with levels of attainment that are just in line with national expectations. They settle quickly and make sound progress as they move through their Reception Year. Their rate of progress increases gradually as they move through the school. By the end of Year 2, many pupils meet challenging targets and attain standards that are securely in line with national averages. In 2005, the percentages of pupils reaching the nationally expected Level 2 in reading and mathematics were exceptionally high, whilst the percentage achieving this level in writing was average. Pupils make

slightly better than average progress in Key Stage 2 and, by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4, pupils' attainments are marginally above those expected nationally, although performance in writing remains weaker than that in reading and mathematics.

Data provided by the school demonstrate that looked-after children and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make progress in line with their peers. The progress made by pupils with SEN, including those with statements for speech and language difficulties, is very good and is a real strength of this inclusive school. However, the school has identified that more able pupils could attain better standards in mathematics, and inspectors agree.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good with some outstanding features. Pupils are friendly and confident. They clearly enjoy school and are keen to learn. Their attendance is above average. Pupils understand clearly the difference between right and wrong. The school motto - 'Careful and kind always in my mind' - guides the life of the school. The 'thought for the week' board provides further clear moral guidance. As a result, behaviour is very good both in classrooms and around the school and pupils consistently show respect for one another and for adults.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school community through, for example, using sign language in assembly, and taking part in the 'playground friends' scheme, where pupils learn to resolve conflict. Year 4 pupils take it in turns to act as playground helpers, a duty they undertake with enthusiasm and diligence. Pupils participate in many out-of-school events such as swimming galas and thus develop their social skills as they mix with the wider community. The school council provides pupils with very good opportunities for taking decisions and teaching them how to consider the views of others.

Pupils show a very good understanding of cultures other their own. For example, pupils have found out about and contributed to a display on Jewish heroes to enrich their work on Judaism in religious education.

Pupils are encouraged to be healthy by, for example, eating fruit at break times and they take advantage of the many opportunities to take part in physical activities such as swimming.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching is good and, as a result, pupils make good progress and achieve well over time. In the best lessons observed, teachers were confident, had good subject

knowledge and used a variety of teaching styles to ensure pupils were fully engaged with the subject matter. They used questioning effectively to ensure that pupils were challenged at a level appropriate to their capabilities. Throughout the school, there is an effective accent on encouraging pupils to listen carefully to each other, to pause in order to think and to respond clearly and with a sense of audience.

Marking helps pupils to improve their work. Teachers know their pupils well; assessment is used effectively to match tasks to pupils' different abilities. The teaching and assessment of reading is strong, and pupils use their phonetic knowledge when they read and write. The teaching of writing is more variable. There is some outstanding practice, leading pupils to produce writing that is lively and thoughtful. Sometimes, however, lesson introductions are too long and pupils do not have sufficient time to develop and improve a piece of writing.

Teaching is inclusive and resources are very well used to ensure that pupils with SEN are actively engaged in lessons. These pupils are well supported by teaching assistants and they make very good progress. In some mathematics lessons, there is insufficient challenge for more able pupils.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and provides pupils with a broad range of well-planned and exciting activities. A variety of educational visits and visitors to the school add further interest. The provision for physical education is very good. The school's swimming pool is used well to promote high standards in swimming and a good awareness of water safety. There is very good specialist provision for music. Pupils are able to join the school choir and to learn to play an instrument. Pupils' musical enthusiasm was demonstrated during an assembly when Year 2 taught reception children a lively song with actions about dinosaurs. The school has received the 'Artsmark Gold' award for the quality of its creative curriculum.

Much work has been undertaken since the last inspection to develop a curriculum which meets the needs of pupils more effectively. There is now more emphasis on developing their basic skills, particularly in language and communication, and on making links between subjects. However, curriculum planning does not yet provide sufficient challenge for more able pupils in mathematics.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils with SEN receive very good support that enables them to make very good progress. The school has outstanding systems for monitoring the progress of looked after children, Traveller pupils and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds; it ensures that these pupils make social and academic progress in line with their peers. The school has outstanding links with a range of outside agencies, and promotes excellent multi-agency working to ensure that the needs of vulnerable pupils are considered and met.

The health and safety of pupils is taken very seriously and risk assessments are carried out regularly. Pupils are encouraged to behave in a safe manner; they say that they feel safe when they are at school, and that there is someone to whom they can turn if they feel worried. Pupils are given very good guidance on how to deal with bullying. They are taught about the safe and proper use of the Internet. The school has acted robustly but sensitively when following its detailed and very effective child protection procedures.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is well led and managed at all levels. The headteacher has striven to create an inclusive and welcoming school, and in this she has been successful. Several parents of vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEN told inspectors how much they value the school because it meets their children's needs. The headteacher sets a clear direction for the work of the staff. She is ably supported by a talented senior team, who have a very clear view of the strengths of the school and convincing plans to address those areas which require improvement. There are secure systems to keep the performance of the school under review; the school has a good grasp of attainment by each cohort of pupils and by different groups of pupils. However, the manner in which data is collated makes the analysis of each cohort's progress over time cumbersome.

The school regularly canvasses the views of staff, pupils, parents and governors when considering improvements. There is clear evidence that the school has acted upon the views of these groups where appropriate. Governors have a clear overview of the work of the school. They take seriously their role in holding the school to account but school improvement planning does not enable them to gain a precise view of the school's ambition for each cohort of pupils.

Improvements since the last inspection demonstrate that the school has good capacity to continue to develop.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	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	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	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	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Dear Children,

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school recently. We told the school council that we would write to you to tell you what we found out.

Here are just a few of the things we liked about your school:

- You all work well together and every child at the school feels included.
- Your teachers are always thinking about what is best for you.
- Your school is a good school. You are well taught, you work hard and you make good progress.
- You like being at school, and you feel safe there.
- You behave very well, and are friendly to each other and polite to visitors. You clearly think about your school's motto: 'Careful and kind always in my mind'.

There are a few things that we want to be better. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you get more time to practise, improve and finish your writing, and to give some of you harder work in mathematics.

We wish you every success in the future. Keep up the good work!

Bradley Simmons Her Majesty's Inspector