

Dearne Highgate Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106581
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	287551
Inspection dates	17–18 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Terry McDermott

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 on roll	
School	299
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Waldron
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Williams
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002
School address	Nicholas Lane Goldthorpe Rotherham South Yorkshire S63 9AS
Telephone number	01709 892160
Fax number	01709 888169

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average size primary school the village of Goldthorpe to the east of Barnsley, and serves a mixed area with some social and economic disadvantage. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small number of pupils do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is average, but the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school holds the Investors in People Award and the Bronze Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Dearne Highgate is a satisfactory school. It gives satisfactory value for money. It has clear strengths in the good care, guidance and support it provides. This leads directly to the good personal development and well-being of pupils. It is a happy place, reflected in the smiling faces of the pupils.

Achievement is satisfactory overall, although standards are below average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Standards at both key stages are too low because teaching is not always of a good enough quality to ensure that pupils are able to make the best possible progress in all lessons. On entry to the Reception class, pupils' knowledge and understanding is low compared with what is typical for children of their age. Most do not understand how books work and have little idea of number or counting. Progress in the Foundation Stage is inadequate because teachers do not ensure that provision focuses on meeting the goals set for pupils of this age.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is good because of the strong focus on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which pervades the school. All adults work effectively to instil in pupils strongly held values of fairness and respect. They look after the pupils well. Parents are happy with the work of the school, as recognised in the comment, 'I am pleased with the encouragement my child receives to do well.' However, despite the school's best efforts, attendance remains below average. When pupils leave school at the end of Year 6 they are polite, patient, mature and well mannered individuals, prepared and ready for the next stage of their lives.

Teachers are dedicated to their pupils and committed to striving for improvement. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but there are inconsistencies. Some lessons are exciting, but some are mundane. When lessons are good, teachers have high expectation that pupils will meet the challenges they have been set. Work matches the needs of the pupils well. Pupils engage promptly and learn quickly. Progress in these lessons is good. In satisfactory lessons, the pace of learning is slower because teachers talk too much and do not focus pupils' attention closely enough on learning skills and improving their understanding of English, mathematics and science. This is particularly true in the Foundation Stage where too much time is spent on unstructured and unproductive activity, which does not help children to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher knows the strengths and weaknesses of her school. She is well supported by an able group of senior and middle managers in seeking to improve achievement. There is a clear focus on raising standards and a good commitment to working in partnership with others to widen opportunities for pupils and to secure good care, guidance and support. Though the school is now implementing well-founded strategies to improve the rate at which pupils learn, these are only recent and have yet to show their full effect.

There is evidence of good improvement since the last inspection and the school has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate of learning in English, mathematics and science in order to raise standards.
- Improve provision in the Foundation Stage so that children progress at a faster rate, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

- Remove inconsistencies in the quality of teaching throughout the school.
- Improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory, although standards are below average. Children enter the Foundation Stage with low skills when compared with others of their age. Their communication, language and literacy skills, and their numeracy skills, are the weakest aspects. Because teaching in the Foundation Stage is not focused enough on developing these skills, children do not make enough progress and standards remain too low by the time children move into Year 1. Though standards remain below average in the national tests at both end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6, they are improving at a rate faster than the national average. Progress during these years is satisfactory. The school does not always meet all of its agreed performance targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe from threats of bullying or harassment and are confident that they can turn to staff if they feel threatened. Good relationships abound and behaviour is good in consequence. The good range of sporting activities and a very successful focus on healthy eating successfully promote pupils' excellent understanding of the need to make healthy lifestyle choices. Pupils enjoy school very much and willingly take on responsibility. They work well in lessons when not directly supervised. They participate eagerly in group discussions and readily take part in a range of charity events through the year, facilitated by the very active student council. Younger pupils are helped to voice their opinions by older pupils, who chair their class councils. The school prepares pupils satisfactorily for their economic well-being, through their good use, knowledge and understanding of information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils have a growing understanding of multicultural aspects of society, for example, through such experiences as French food tasting and celebrating Chinese New Year. The school works relentlessly to improve attendance, which stubbornly remains below average. The large majority of pupils who attend regularly have very positive attitudes towards school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching slow the pace of learning. The school's own monitoring shows this, though its assessment in the self-evaluation form took a more optimistic view. In good lessons, teachers set challenging tasks and move forward quickly, so that pupils are enthusiastic and motivated to learn. They work well independently and are always ready to share new learning with their peers. In these lessons pupils learn well. In other lessons, teachers talk too much and pupils sit patiently waiting to work. In consequence, the pace of learning dips. Teachers' specific skills are often deployed thoughtfully, for example, when changing classes to use specialist knowledge to improve learning. A good range of carefully chosen

resources, such as interactive whiteboards, and well-judged project work undertaken on residential visits, builds pupils' learning skills and personal confidence.

In the Foundation Stage teaching lacks structure in that many opportunities for children to gain literacy and numeracy skills are missed and progress is not good enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 provides good opportunities for learning. It is enriched with many visits and visitors. Extra-curricular clubs are well attended and broaden pupils' experience. The focus on creativity and sports encourages pupils to improve their self-discipline and this has a positive effect on their personal development. A good example is the school's website, which is maintained and updated weekly by pupils. ICT is used well to link subjects and pupils are proficient and confident in both researching and displaying their work. Through a 'Family Learning' project, the school is successfully involving parents in helping their children develop reading skills. Plans are in place to extend this work into writing and number. The impact of the curriculum in the Foundation Stage is restricted because opportunities for children to develop basic skills of literacy and numeracy are missed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes its responsibilities for safeguarding pupils very seriously and meets current requirements. Health and safety procedures are good and, as a result, pupils say they feel safe. Arrangements for identifying pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good and their progress is tracked carefully against national targets, as is the progress of pupils who do not speak English as their first language. Pupils receive good guidance on their work and, as a result, are very aware of what they need to do to improve. Pupils could confidently state their targets, without any prompting, in English, mathematics and science. Constructive supervision at playtimes promotes positive play. Pupils are encouraged to explore their own feelings, for example, by role playing and identifying with characters in the novel 'Children of the Dark'. School assemblies help pupils understand their feelings on overcoming change as they transfer to secondary school. Learning mentors are effective in managing pupils who find it difficult to behave and, as a result, the rate of exclusions is low.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher is held in high regard by staff, parents and governors for her work in building the self-esteem and confidence of pupils. The school is very successful in promoting pupils' personal development. School leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have recently implemented a range of strategies to bring about improvement in standards. However, these initiatives, and others, are at an early stage and have not yet shown significant impact. Performance data is now being used by many teachers to set short term targets for individual pupils. Governors have a great deal of commitment to the school and give generously of their time in supporting its work. They do not yet hold school leaders sufficiently to account for the school's standards and achievement.

Because the school is now regularly monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, and using its reliable tracking system to quickly identify underachievement, it has shown it has good capacity to make further improvements.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Dearne Highgate Primary School, Nicholas Lane, Goldthorpe, Rotherham, S63 9AS

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We were very impressed with your good behaviour, excellent manners and the very considerate way you get on with each other.

We feel that your school is satisfactory overall, because you make satisfactory progress.

Here are some of the good things we found about your school:

- you have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy
- you really enjoy being in school, particularly when you are able to work independently in lessons, and when helping others
- every adult in the school, and particularly your headteacher, pays close attention to ensuring that the school is a safe and calm place; they all have your best interests at heart and look after you well.

We have asked the school to work on some things, so that you will learn more and make better progress:

- improve provision in the Foundation Stage
- improve the rate at which you learn things in English, mathematics and science
- ensure that all teaching enables you to make good progress
- improve attendance for those pupils who do not come to school as often as they should.

You can make a difference as well, by continuing to work hard in lessons and trying to learn as much as you possibly can.

Thank you for helping to make our short stay with you so interesting and good luck to all of you for the future.