

Doverly Down Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109516
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	288408
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Marianne Harris

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	134
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Pickering
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Melitus
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2002
School address	Heath Road Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire LU7 3AG
Telephone number	01525 377233
Fax number	01525 217663

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small lower school that admits pupils aged four to nine. When they join the school children's ability varies but it is generally average. There is a small proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities, and a small number of these have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils usually come from outside the immediate area of the school and are mainly of White British heritage, with few from a minority ethnic background.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils make excellent progress. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and know that their children achieve very well. Pupils really like school and are particularly appreciative of all of the opportunities they have to learn, both in and out of lessons.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school's own self assessment is particularly accurate and thorough. All staff work very well together as a team to ensure that pupils make excellent progress during their time in school. Consequently teaching and learning are excellent, with staff and pupils working together to make learning interesting and enjoyable. Marking is of a very high quality and gives pupils' encouragement as well as ideas on how to improve their work. Most lessons move at a very good pace, although there are a few in which pupils sit on the carpet for a little too long, lose concentration and then do not always find it easy to settle to work.

Governors are fully involved in the life of the school and have a very good understanding of its strengths and where improvements are needed. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection and the headteacher has been most successful in raising standards and in ensuring that pupils in Years 3 and 4 receive the same high quality teaching as they do lower down the school. There is excellent capacity to improve further.

Children in the Foundation Stage are given a very good start because provision is excellent. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 2 standards are above average in writing and mathematics, and well above average in reading. The school has had a strong focus on teaching the skills that pupils need to become motivated readers and this is having a significant impact on their writing. So, by the time they reach the end of Year 4, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above average, with most pupils making much more than the expected rate of progress. Achievement is excellent for all pupils, whatever their ability.

Pupils' personal development receives the same high priority as their academic achievement. Pupils are friendly, confident and polite. Their behaviour is exemplary because, as one child pointed out, 'We have a set discipline code and everyone sticks to it'. They have a very good understanding of how to keep healthy and lessons are very well planned, for example, to help them understand about the dangers of misusing drugs. Many comment on the very good school dinners. They have a very keen understanding of how to keep safe indoors and out. The curriculum is outstanding because it is very well planned, with many opportunities for pupils to learn outside normal lessons. Care, guidance and support are excellent. The school has been most successful in ensuring that pupils and their parents are fully involved in setting targets for learning so that everyone knows what they are aiming for.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that teachers do not talk for too long in lessons so that pupils maintain full concentration.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

From a broadly average starting point pupils make excellent progress. By the time they enter Year 1, children in the Foundation Stage have made good progress to reach standards that are

generally above average, except in some aspects of language, where standards are average. By the end of Year 2, pupils continue to make very good progress in all aspects of their learning and reach standards that are above average in writing and mathematics, and well above average in reading. The trend in recent years has been one of improvement; standards have been above average since 2003. The school and local authority data show that standards are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 4. Pupils make much more than the expected gains in their learning during Years 3 and 4 because they are very well prepared with work that matches their ability. All pupils achieve extremely well whatever their ability. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities often reach nationally expected standards because their progress is very well tracked and appropriate support put in place.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are excellent. Attendance is above average because pupils really enjoy coming to school. Pupils have a very good understanding about how to eat healthily and keep safe. They talk confidently about how they learn road safety and how to stay out of danger. They are justly proud of their charity work, both locally and nationally, and of the many schools in other countries that they correspond with. This has a very significant impact on their multi-cultural understanding. The school council plays a great part in the life of the school. Representatives know that their views are listened to and acted on. They are most proud of their part in making sure that everyone has a friend to play with. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities in the school and every class has specific jobs for pupils to do. By the end of Year 4, pupils are mature and very sensible and this has a very positive effect on their learning. They are keen and eager to learn and all report that they love coming to school. All pupils are well equipped with the skills they need for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Pupils know exactly what they are going to learn in each lesson and teachers explain clearly what pupils have to do. Work is marked to a very high standard and older pupils often assess for themselves how well they have done. Pupils praise the 'traffic light' system through which they can review their targets and discuss their progress. Lessons are very well planned and work is set that matches the abilities in each class. Teaching assistants work very well with individuals and groups, sometimes supporting less able pupils and sometimes working with those who are more able to extend their learning. Most lessons move at a cracking pace so that all pupils remain involved in their learning. Where available, interactive whiteboards are used very well to keep pupils interested. There are, however, a few occasions when pupils sit on the carpet for too long listening to the teacher talk. When this happens pupils lose concentration and they do not enough time to finish the tasks that have been planned.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an excellent curriculum that is very well enriched with many extra activities. Pupils especially like all the visits they go on that help them learn about various topics, such as Roman Britain and the local area. Pupils in Year 4 talk excitedly about their residential trip when they stay away from home for a few nights. Wherever possible, subjects are linked together so that learning is made relevant to the needs of all pupils. The school offers many opportunities for pupils to learn outside normal lessons. Pupils really appreciate the sporting events and music sessions. Theme days, such as the Tudor Experience and Fairy Tale Day, make learning come alive for pupils and all are eager to participate. In discussions pupils remark on the good programme for personal, social and health education that helps them to learn about the issues they will face as they grow up.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for pupils. Academic progress is accurately tracked and checked regularly. If any child is seen to be falling behind good support is put in place to help them achieve very well. Targets are discussed fully with the pupils and their parents and everyone knows what they are aiming for. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have individual targets, and very effective support is put in place to make sure that they achieve as well as they can. Pupils know that there is someone they can go to if they have a problem. As one pupil commented, 'Things are always sorted out'. Child protection procedures are well established and all requirements for making sure pupils are safe are fully in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management at all levels are excellent. This is a small school and staff have to take on many areas of responsibility. All work extremely well together as a team and are constantly reviewing how well the school is performing. Targets for standards at the end of Years 2 and 4 are challenging and exceed the local authority expectations. These targets are usually achieved because teaching and learning are monitored to make sure that pupils are making the expected gains. The school's plan for developing further is based on accurate analysis of the strengths and areas for development, and governors are fully involved in this. They take on responsibility for monitoring a subject area and ask challenging questions. They are frequent visitors to the school and understand what is successful and where developments need to be made. Issues identified at the time of the last inspection have been tackled very effectively. Standards have risen and the quality of teaching has improved. Pupils make more rapid progress now than they did previously and this is a continuing trend. Although the school focuses on academic standards it has not lost sight of what makes learning fun for pupils and supports their personal development. This is just as important to the staff as academic progress. Parents are extremely happy with the work of the school and one commented, 'My children really love coming to school.'

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

26 March 2007

Dear Children,

Dovery Down Lower School, Heath Road, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 3AG

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school recently. I especially enjoyed talking to you all and would like to thank the school council for a wonderful lunch. As promised, I am now writing to tell you what I found out.

I think you go to an excellent school. You all work very hard and get along together very well. Your behaviour is exemplary and you were keen to tell me that it was because your discipline code is very well known and everyone sticks to it. I really liked hearing all about your charity work and about the children you write to in other schools. Many of you told me about all the opportunities you get to visit other places and about the special days that you have. Some of you in Year 4 told me all about the residential trip and it all sounded very exciting.

All your teachers work together very well and make sure that you all make excellent progress. You are all involved in setting your own targets and in reviewing how well you are doing. Lessons are enjoyable and I have asked your teachers to make them even more so by not expecting you to sit on the carpet for too long. When this happens you sometimes lose concentration and begin to fidget. You could help your teachers by really concentrating when you are sitting on the carpet and trying not to fidget.

Thank you once again for all your help; it was lovely to meet you all and maybe we will meet again sometime. Meanwhile, I wish you all good luck in the future.

Marianne Harris Lead Inspector