



Dalton St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112412
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289279
Inspection date 11 December 2006
Reporting inspector Martin Bradley HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Coronation Drive
School category	Voluntary aided		Dalton-in-Furness, Cumbria
Age range of pupils	3-11		LA15 8QR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01229 462729
Number on roll (school)	231	Fax number	01229 463832
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev Alan Mitchell
		Headteacher	Mrs Susan McWilliam
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

Description of the school

Dalton St Mary's is an average sized school for children aged between three and eleven. The children come from Dalton and the surrounding area; the school is located in the middle of a mixed local authority and privately owned estate. It has 231 pupils on roll, including 26 who attend the Nursery class part time. Attendance in 2004/05 was 95.7% and has been consistently above the national average for some years. The pupils are predominantly of White British origin. The number of pupils having free school meals has risen to above the national average in recent years. The proportion of pupils with additional learning needs and difficulties is slightly above the national average. No pupil has English as an additional language. The Church of England inspected religious education, acts of collective worship and the pupils' spiritual development and reports on these aspects of the school's work separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

All elements of the school's work are at least good and many are outstanding. The overall achievement of the pupils when they leave Year 6 is very high and has been so for some years. Pupils make good progress consistently from the Nursery class through to Year 6. Such progress is extremely well supported by the setting of short and long term individual targets for the pupils.

Many children enter the Foundation Stage with attainment that is below average and whilst the majority attain the levels expected by the end of the Reception Year, there remain a number who do not. For all children, however, this represents significantly good progress especially in their communication skills and in their social development. In Key Stage 1 pupils continue to make good progress and many reach standards that are in line with or above national expectations by the end of Year 2. This good progress continues in Key Stage 2 and by Year 6 attainment is above average for many pupils.

The pupils' personal development is good. It is well supported by the school's links with the church as well the staff's very supportive and caring approach. Pupils are safe and enjoy school. A small minority do not behave as well as the great majority and the school has sought to deal with this in a number of ways. It plans for this work to continue. Buddy systems are in place as are play leaders – older pupils who help younger ones use equipment at break times.

The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. The teaching of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is particularly good. Excellent use is made of challenging targets set for the pupils that are well embedded in the school's planning and curriculum. These targets are an exemplary feature of the school and are a major strength providing excellent guidance to promote pupils' learning. The use made of the targets throughout the school for the core subjects ensures that teachers consistently extend pupils' prior knowledge and skills. Teaching in the foundation subjects is variable from satisfactory to occasionally outstanding, but when only satisfactory does not extend the pupils' creative skills sufficiently.

Curriculum planning is outstanding with good review and monitoring procedures in place. Central to raising pupils' attainment in the core subjects has been the school's view that target setting, planning work and assessment to check pupils' progress and telling pupils how well they are doing are all parts of the same process. The school has a wide range of clubs and also promotes activities which involve older pupils in the wider community.

The leadership of the school is excellent. The governing body is effective and conscientious. It is able to act as a critical friend to the school and supports the leadership in ensuring that the school provides exceptional value for money. The school's self evaluation is particularly robust, if at times modest, and improvement has been well promoted since the last inspection. The school has excellent capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of teaching in all subjects is raised to that of the best.
- Develop further the pupils' awareness of their individual targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The school considered that achievement and standards were good, however in the inspector's judgement they are outstanding. Many children enter Dalton St Mary's with attainment that is below average in communication language and literacy and in creative development. A significant proportion has below average attainment in personal development, especially in their self confidence. By the end of the Foundation Stage many achieve at the nationally expected levels, although there remain a number who are below those levels. For all children, this represents a good progress in their learning. This upward trend continues through Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2 in reading and writing the proportion of boys achieving levels at the national average and above is in line with national figures, whilst more girls achieve at these levels than in similar schools. In mathematics a high proportion of pupils achieve above national expectations at level three and above. By the time pupils get to the end of Key Stage 2 results in English, mathematics and science are all above national averages. Importantly there is little difference between boys' and girls' attainment. Overall progress from the end of Key Stage 1 to the end of Key Stage 2 is at least good. This has been consistently achieved over a number of years despite significant variations in the balance between boys and girls in Year 6 and also despite there being behaviour problems in some year groups. The careful support given to pupils with learning needs and/or difficulties ensures that they make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school has close links with the church, such as holding its Nursery and Reception Year nativity performance there. At a rehearsal the pupils showed good confidence, achieved with the lively support of the staff. The school seeks to provide a good range of cultural experiences for the pupils, developing links with other schools and celebrating other faiths through festivals such as Hanukkah. Attendance is excellent and above national averages. The great majority of the pupils behave particularly well, but a very small minority can be disruptive and some parents spoke of concerns about on-going disruption and bullying by one or two pupils. The school has sought to address this by focusing on behaviour and working through circle time to discuss issues, but the issue remains on its agenda. Pupils are safe and enjoy school. The school's buddy system is seen by the pupils as useful although sometimes the oldest pupils do not always show full commitment to it. Some pupils act as playleaders during break times, to help the younger pupils make good use of the apparatus available. Pupils are aware of healthy lifestyles and the school council is helping to plan a fruit tuck shop for Key

Stage 2 pupils. Pupils also contribute to the community by visiting a nearby Abbeyfield home each week and by fund raising through a good variety of activities, such as art days, discos, non-uniform days and school fairs. Along with their academic learning, these activities help them to develop awareness and skills that will contribute to their future economic well being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils make at least good and consistent progress throughout the school, especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. They are particularly well supported by teaching which is carefully linked to well-identified targets and, when given the opportunity, are able to work independently. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. None of the teaching seen was less than satisfactory and in two thirds of lessons it was good or outstanding. In the youngest classes activities generally have clear purposes and are enthusiastically developed by the pupils, such as when they use the dressing up costumes to re-enact the nativity story. The Nursery and Reception classes work effectively together in planning and assessing work. This enables common practices to be developed across the two classes, although these are constrained by the Nursery being in a separate building not linked to the main school. This inhibits joint working during sessions. A particularly good and consistent feature of teaching in Key Stage 1 is the teachers' close attention to ensuring that all pupils grasp core ideas, such as basic addition and subtraction or counting in twos or fives, going over examples and using the whiteboards effectively. This enables pupils to make good progress in their learning. By contrast, at other times some art and design activities do not develop the pupils' creative skills sufficiently. Extremely effective use of the whiteboard by the pupils showed concentration and persistence in solving difficulties independently when trying to put names to the figures on a nativity scene, including trying to use the computer keyboard as well as the pen. When given the opportunity pupils are able to use and apply the skills and knowledge gained in the core subjects across the curriculum.

In Key Stage 2 good marking strategies provide supportive comments to develop the pupils' skills and to remind them of their targets. Lessons are planned well, with different tasks being set for pupils at different stages in their learning. At times teachers use a lot of worksheets, some of which do not enable pupils to develop extended answers or to apply their skills fully. As in Key Stage 1, skills in creative areas of learning are less well developed than the effective work in core subjects. Whilst the targets are fully embedded in teachers' planning in all classes, there is a continuing need to make sure that the children and their parents fully understand how these link to National Curriculum levels, especially in the older classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding in the core subjects and information and communication technology (ICT). It is also wide ranging, especially in the provision of after school clubs. Targets are well used to structure the curriculum and to establish progression in the pupils' learning. These systems are now well embedded in the curriculum organisation. Statutory requirements are fully met. French is taught to all pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 and there is a German club for Year 1 pupils. Other clubs include JAFFA (Jesus and fun for all) and clog dancing as well as sports, music and a website club. In some classes good opportunities are taken to include cooking, such as in Year 6 as part of a Victorian theme. Some older pupils showed good ICT skills and independent working when designing posters for the proposed fruit tuck shop. There are particularly good systems for monitoring the curriculum linked to monitoring teaching and assessment. Pupils in Year 6 hold coffee mornings for their parents and grandparents, with over 70 attending for that organised during the inspection and more coming the next day. Such occasions when they deal with any money, serve refreshments and work with one another, prepare the pupils extremely well for later life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care guidance and support given to the pupils are good in all respects and are exemplary in significant elements. Staff are highly committed to the pupils and promote their health and safety extremely well. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are very robust and are regularly reviewed. Good risk assessments are made. Pupils are given outstanding guidance in their learning and reach challenging targets. Any learners at risk or in need of support are identified very early and there is close liaison with outside agencies such as the speech and language therapist which begins before children enter the Nursery when home visits are made. Day to day implementation of the individual education plans produced for identified pupils is well recorded and monitored. Over half the parents responded to the inspection questionnaire and were overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They are kept well informed about their pupils' progress, and the school is aware of the need to ensure that the meanings of targets and assessments are fully explained.

The school provides the pupils with very good guidance and motivation on how to improve their work. The procedures begin with particularly good monitoring in the Nursery and Reception classes, starting with home visits from Nursery staff. They continue with regular recorded assessments of the children's progress. The information gained is used well by staff when pupils enter Year 1 and detailed tracking begins. This makes good use of predictive targets in the core subjects for the end of the year and the end of the key stage. This very well organised and meticulous process, which is carefully monitored by the senior staff, continues throughout the school and forms the backbone of the school's tracking of pupils' progress from Nursery to Year 6. Along with carefully planned intervention work, such detailed analysis identifies individual

pupils' learning needs and then seeks to address these. Learners are enabled to make outstanding gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding at a good and consistent rate across all key stages.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school's assessment of the quality of leadership and management was that it was good, however in the inspector's view it is outstanding. There is a constant focus upon the well-being of learners and raising standards. The clear direction given by senior staff, supported effectively by the governors, promotes improvement and high standards through the use of challenging targets, whilst remaining aware of areas for development. Staff share a common sense of purpose and direction and have the inclusion of all learners as central to their objectives. The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are good. The school's self-evaluation is thoughtful, if modest regarding its achievements. All staff are aware of the few behaviour issues and seek to address these so that all pupils achieve as well as they can. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The pupils feel secure and the school deserves its good reputation locally. The governors act as critical friends to the school and carefully fulfil their roles. Resources are well used and the proposals under extended school status are being carefully considered. As has been shown since the last inspection, the school has good capacity to improve and provides excellent value for money.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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.

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

Dalton St Mary's CofE Primary School

Coronation Drive

Dalton-in-Furness

Cumbria

LA15 8QR

11 December 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed meeting you and really appreciated the help you gave me, especially in sharing your work and ideas about the school.

I think that your school is extremely good and that you work very hard. This shows in the success you have in your assessments and test results throughout the school, especially by the end of Year Six, and also in the other work which you do. It is most unusual to see such good progress being made throughout a whole school from the Nursery to Year Six. The teachers and the classroom assistants work very hard to help you with your work and all the other activities which the school provides. Besides the class lessons, it was good to see the Nursery and Reception class rehearsals for the nativity play in church, the coffee morning which Year 6 organised for parents and the clog dancing club. Your teachers have done very well indeed to plan targets for your work in such detail and I was pleased to see how well you knew what these were. The school is also trying hard to make sure that your behaviour is good. Many of you help your teachers with this and I am sure you will help persuade others to give of their best and behave well.

I have asked the teachers to do some things to make sure you all do as well as possible by the time you leave Year Six. These are to make sure that all lessons are as good as the best ones and to continue to help you to know your targets and so improve your work.

With all good wishes for your future success!

Yours sincerely

Martin Bradley

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools