



St Denys Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116102
Local Authority Southampton
Inspection number 290420
Inspection dates 1–2 November 2006
Reporting inspector Gehane Gordelier HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Dundee Road
School category	Community		Southampton
Age range of pupils	4–11		SO17 2ND
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02380 556982
Number on roll (school)	204	Fax number	02380 399982
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs P Campone
		Headteacher	Mrs C Fayle
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 1–2 November 2006	Inspection number 290420
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Denys is a smaller than average single form entry primary school. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high and there are increasing numbers of pupils who begin school with very little or no English. A higher than average number of pupils has learning difficulties and disabilities although the number of pupils with a statement of educational need is broadly average. The school has made recent improvements to the accommodation. The school has received a Healthy Schools Award with enhanced status as well as Active and Quality Marks.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. There is a caring ethos and good relationships amongst pupils and staff which contribute well to pupils feeling safe, valued and happy. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They are well behaved and demonstrate a good understanding of what they need to lead healthy lifestyles and keep themselves safe. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities which they enjoy. The school makes particularly good use of the school council to enable pupils to contribute to decisions and changes in the school which affect them. The good links with parents contribute effectively to the quality of care and support.

Standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make good progress in science, art, music and physical education (PE). The use of specialists to teach music and PE contributes particularly well to the good standards in these areas. However, progress made by some of the more able pupils as well as the quality of teaching and planning, especially for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) between Years 1 and 4, is not as good as it should be. Extra curricular activities and visits to places of interest enrich curriculum provision and contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of learning.

Although standards in the Foundation Stage are low the quality of the provision for these children is good and they are provided with a stimulating and exciting learning environment. There are very good systems in place to assess and track their development. These children are being suitably well challenged and are making good progress.

The quality of the school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. However, some aspects lack rigour as they do not focus sharply enough on standards and progress. Although the school's improvement planning sets a clear direction, it does not include sufficient information about how targets will be met or identify the intended outcomes for learners. The influence of leaders and managers on raising standards is inconsistent and sometimes weak. Despite increasing levels of shared leadership there is still an over reliance on the headteacher to drive improvement.

The school has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection and has demonstrated that its capacity to make further progress is satisfactory. The school now meets statutory requirements and ensures there is an act of daily worship; the quality of provision for science, information and communication technology (ICT) as well as PE has significantly improved.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure there is consistently good planning and teaching, especially for the more able pupils and those for whom English is an additional language between Years 1 and 4.
- Develop the role of senior and middle managers so that they have a greater impact on standards and take more of a leading role in promoting improvements and higher standards across the curriculum.

- Ensure that school improvement planning is more sharply focused on the intended outcomes for learners and includes more information about how targets will be met.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average. Pupils make satisfactory progress. Their achievement is satisfactory and by the end of the Years 2 and 6 standards are average. Pupils achieve particularly well in science, music, art and PE. Although the school did not meet its challenging targets in 2006 the results show an increase in the proportion of pupils attaining above average levels in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. However, more able pupils in Year 1 to 4 are not challenged sufficiently and they underachieve because teachers do not expect enough from them.

The school recognises the need to review the current assessment procedures including marking and target setting as a way of helping to raise standards. There are improved systems in place to identify underachievement through the more detailed use and interrogation of data. However, until very recently inaccuracies in the teachers' assessments and levelling of pupils' work had impeded the effective use of this data in contributing to improved standards. The improvements made are having a beneficial impact on the school's target setting process and this has helped to accelerate pupils' progress in science. However more needs to be done to raise standards particularly in English. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress and those with emotional and behavioural issues make good progress.

Although pupils with EAL make satisfactory progress they are not all doing as well as they should. The school has yet to track the fluency levels of these pupils and develop effective strategies to fully support their needs and enhance their comprehension and learning during lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The overall quality of pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of right and wrong and behave well towards staff as well as each other. Pupils are happy at school because they like their teachers and particularly enjoy the good range of interesting trips, clubs and special events which enrich the curriculum. However, where the work is uninteresting, and there are insufficient opportunities to be actively involved, pupils do not enjoy their lessons as much.

Pupils are comfortable about approaching staff if they have a problem and are confident that problems or disputes will be resolved swiftly and amicably. Pupils make good progress in their understanding of healthy lifestyles and this is reflected in the healthy food choices they make at break and lunchtimes as well as in their high level of

involvement in physical and sporting activities. The pupils make a positive contribution to the community through the school council, charity fund raising and by acting as helpers and prefects. The school takes the pupils' views seriously which has led to pupils initiating improvements to the quality of some of the facilities and outside play equipment as well as developing a healthy tuck shop. Pupils are developing the skills of teamwork and co-operation very well but there are some inconsistencies in the quality and progression of their learning in some year groups. Pupils' awareness and understanding of other cultures is in the early stages of development. Attendance has improved and is now broadly average. However the number of unauthorised absences is too high.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but there are inconsistencies in quality across the school. Teaching in the Foundation Stage and in Years 5 and 6 are good with some outstanding features. As a result younger and older pupils make good progress. Strengths in the lessons in these year groups include a brisk pace and teaching that is lively and engages pupils actively in their learning from the start. New learning is presented in a way that captures the imagination of pupils by relating it to subjects which are of interest to them or to which they can relate. There is informed use of ICT and good use is made of the skills and talents of additional adults.

There are some weaknesses in teaching. In some lessons pupils are unclear about what they are expected to learn, in others, pupils' curiosity and involvement are at a low level. Higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently well challenged; additional adults are not always given sufficient guidance about how to support pupils. In these lessons there is also insufficient explicit teaching of key vocabulary, missed opportunities for pupils to share ideas or practise articulating their understanding of what they are learning. This is particularly unhelpful to those pupils who are not confident speakers and those who are at an early stage of learning English.

The quality of teachers' daily planning is very variable and sometimes weak. Where it is good it identifies new and unfamiliar words which need to be taught at the beginning of lessons as well as different activities and strategies to cater for the different needs of pupils. However, during the inspection few examples of teachers' planning included this level of detail. Furthermore, there was limited evidence that teachers are making consistently good use of assessment information to plan subsequent lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Curriculum provision is satisfactory; it includes all the subjects within the National Curriculum and a sufficient amount of time is devoted to each area. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop healthy lifestyles through work on diet and exercise

and for pupils to make a good contribution to the community through school council and charity work. Since the last inspection good progress has been made in the provision of ICT and science.

The school is developing ways of becoming more creative with the curriculum and has reviewed time allocations to subjects as well as possible cross-curricular links. However the latter is in the early stages of development and there are currently insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise and reinforce their literacy skills in other subjects.

There are some inconsistencies in the curriculum which lead to pupils not making the progress that they should in some subjects, particularly in religious education, geography and history. Although the standards are known for the core subjects including ICT, the school does not yet have a consistently clear view of the standards across the curriculum for all subjects and this is hampering the rate of improvement. Even where information about standards is available not all teachers are making use of it to provide sufficient challenge for all pupils.

Pupils benefit enormously from visits and talks provided by fire-fighters, police, theatre and music groups as well as visits to museums and the local farm. The curriculum is further enhanced by the many lunchtime and after-school clubs and by events such as special weeks for health and safety and 'Around the world week'. Specialist provision for music and PE makes a particularly good contribution to pupils' progress in these subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. The school provides a caring environment and staff are strongly committed to ensuring pupils' wellbeing. This is reflected in the good relationships between staff and pupils. One parent commented that the school provides 'a wonderful, caring atmosphere'. The school has good links with parents and this enhances the care and support of pupils as well as their personal development. Procedures for vetting staff and for assessing and managing risks to pupils are satisfactory and help to create a safe environment. The pastoral care of pupils is good, but academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory. This is mainly because not all teachers take sufficient account of assessment information.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school judges that the quality of its leadership and management are good, however, the inspection findings are that they are satisfactory. The quality of governance is satisfactory. The headteacher has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has made improvements to some areas of provision which were previously unsatisfactory. Most middle managers are developing their roles well. They contribute to whole school self-evaluation by undertaking lesson observations, scrutinising pupils' work and producing action plans. However, not all leaders and

managers have a good enough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their area of responsibility. Most have an unsatisfactory knowledge of what the standards are in each year group. Some managers are contributing more effectively than others to leading improvements. However, within the senior leadership team as well as middle managers there is still an over-reliance on the headteacher to drive improvements.

Managers have correctly identified the need to improve standards of writing throughout the school. Furthermore, some of the school's assessment procedures have improved and are leading to more accurate judgements about pupils' levels and progress. Where leadership is most effective this is helping to raise standards, particularly in science and with the more able pupils in English and mathematics in Year 6. Although there are improved levels of shared responsibilities since the time of the last inspection, some key leaders are still not having a good enough impact on raising standards.

The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory although there are some inconsistencies. Improvement plans identify areas for development but there is not always sufficient information about how improvements will be made or what the outcomes will be for learners. Leaders and managers undertake regular monitoring and evaluation of pupils' work, but there is not always sufficient information about the level of pupils' progress or the standard of their work. The school is committed to promoting good levels of inclusion and pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are included fully in school life.

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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?	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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	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	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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
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

As you know two inspectors visited your school recently. I enjoyed speaking with some of you at lunch time and my colleague found the meeting with the school council very helpful. We also observed some lessons and inspected the work of the school. I am writing to thank you for your contribution to the inspection and to share its main findings with you.

We were impressed with how well you all behave and how well you get on with each other as well and the staff. Thank you for sharing with us how much you like your teachers and enjoy the activities, clubs and visits that the school organises for you. The school has improved since the last inspection. These are the things that the school does particularly well.

- The school works well with parents to ensure that you are well cared for and this helps you to feel, safe and happy at school.
- The school has helped you to learn how to be healthy and stay safe.
- Many of you are provided with good opportunities to help around the school.
- The school is interested in your opinions and listens to what your school council representatives have to say.
- The youngest pupils are making good progress.
- You do particularly well in science, art, PE and music.

The following are areas your school should try to do even better.

- Make sure that planning, teaching and lessons are always good, especially for Years 1, 2, 3 and 4, so there is harder work for those who find learning easy and good ways of helping pupils who are learning to speak English.
- The staff who help lead and manage the school need to look more closely at the progress you are making, the standard of your work and to make sure you are making good enough progress in all subjects.
- There needs to be more information in the school's planning about how staff will help you to improve.

I know that you will work hard and help each other to continue to do well. I wish you every success and happiness.

Yours sincerely

G Gordelier, Her Majesty's Inspector