



Devonshire Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116187
Local Authority Portsmouth
Inspection number 290451
Inspection dates 8–9 March 2007
Reporting inspector Jo Curd

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Francis Avenue
School category	Community		Southsea
Age range of pupils	4–7		PO4 0AG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02392 734902
Number on roll (school)	178	Fax number	02392 297090
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Barbara Christopher
		Headteacher	Miss Jacqueline Collins
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This two form entry infant school shares a site with a junior school, an independent pre-school and a breakfast club. It is a popular school and, whilst numbers of pupils at nearby schools are falling, its roll is growing. Mobility of pupils is higher than usual. It takes pupils from a wide geographical area and a range of backgrounds. Two thirds of the children are from White British backgrounds. A higher than average proportion are eligible for free school meals, are from minority ethnic backgrounds, speak English as an additional language or have learning difficulties and disabilities. A 10 place development unit takes pupils with a range of learning difficulties and disabilities from across Portsmouth. Largely due to illness, there have been significant changes and organisation of staff over the past year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school in which pupils achieve well and display outstanding personal development. Its popularity is seen in its rising roll, parents' comments and the fact that children could think of little that they could improve about it. One parent said, 'I feel very lucky that my daughter will benefit from this school's experience, care and teaching methods'.

Leadership and management are good. Accurate self-evaluation has led to some effective decisions which have improved provision. These include the appointment of an experienced Foundation Stage leader and the employment of more assistants to support pupils with additional needs, which have contributed well to pupils' enjoyment of school, achievement and personal development. Effective mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation are in place but findings are not always acted upon and sustained. For example, specific issues identified in lesson monitoring are not always addressed. As a result, the school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory, although the improvement since the last inspection is good.

Despite the fact that the current leadership team has only worked together for two full terms and there have been several changes in staff, the ethos of the school is calm, positive and productive. Teaching and learning are good because of extremely positive relationships throughout the school and effective support for pupils with learning difficulties, disabilities or challenging behaviour. Pupils' good achievement is also supported by a good curriculum. All pupils are cared for and supported well. Pupils make good progress because they are supported well however, activities are not always sufficiently varied to match individual learning needs. Pupils are well behaved and always eager to try their best. They are extremely confident and make an outstanding contribution to their school and community. Their opinions are sought, valued and acted upon, for example, suggesting adults in the school who should receive certificates at the weekly 'gold book' assembly and suggestions leading to the very imaginative redecoration of the toilets. Pupils work and play safely together. Their awareness and growing commitment to leading healthy lives through eating fruit and vegetables and taking exercise is outstanding. Because of their excellent levels of confidence, and their good attitudes, cooperation and achievement, their preparation for later life and learning is outstanding.

Achievement is good because pupils are keen to learn, teaching is effective and the curriculum is interesting. Attainment on entry to the Reception class is lower than expected for this age. Due to good provision in the Foundation Stage and a suitable curriculum, all the children make good progress. However, because of their low starting points, most have still not reached the goals expected by the start of Year 1. Good progress continues in Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2, standards are generally in line with the national average. Pupils in the development unit have particularly complex learning difficulties and disabilities. They are taught and cared for sensitively and well and their progress is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that findings from monitoring and evaluation are used effectively to raise achievement and improve teaching and learning.
- Use assessment more effectively to plan appropriate activities and to guide pupils in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Standards on entry to the Reception class are below national expectations. Progress in the Foundation Stage is good but most children do not reach the goals expected by the time they enter Year 1. Good teaching and effective support ensure that good progress is maintained. By the end of Year 2, standards are generally in line with the national average. In 2006, standards dropped below average in English, especially in writing. Staff changes, the absence of the head teacher for six months and a high percentage of pupils with learning difficulties in Year 2 contributed to this outcome. Given their complex learning difficulties and disabilities progress of pupils in the development unit is good. This is particularly due to the good teaching, very good care and sensitive but firm approaches of staff. Although activities are not always sufficiently well matched to individual learning needs, pupils are well supported and make good progress both in lessons and withdrawal groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development is outstanding. Almost all pupils behave very well and are eager to learn. Pupils with challenging behaviour in and out of the unit are eager, happy and settled. High levels of confidence are evident in the way all pupils speak in assemblies, greet visitors and participate in lessons. Pupils enjoy school very much. Wise decisions by leadership and management to employ familiar supply staff mean that, despite changes in personnel, relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils' contribution to their school and community, including serving on the school council, reading to younger pupils at lunch times and singing to senior citizens, is outstanding. Pupils' opinions are welcomed, valued and, where appropriate, acted upon. Their suggestions to change the lunch break so that it did not coincide with that of the adjacent junior school have increased the safety of all. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' outstanding awareness of, and growing commitment to, leading healthy lives through eating fruit and vegetables and taking exercise are evident in their discussions and role play. The majority of pupils attend well. Despite very good links with parents, the above average absence of some pupils means that overall attendance is broadly average. The confidence pupils develop, the way they cooperate and their good achievement prepare them all extremely well for later life and learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and contribute well to pupils' achievement and enjoyment. When asked whether he would change anything about the school, one pupil said he wished there was 'more literacy and numeracy'. The pace of learning, enabled by very good behaviour in lessons, is generally good. Some activities are not sufficiently well matched to individual learning needs and some introductions to lessons are too long. Learning is enhanced by good relationships and praise. Effective communication and teamwork between all members of staff contribute well to the good achievement of all pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities or who are learning English as an additional language are supported well and are making good progress. Pupils who learn more quickly benefit from being taught in smaller groups by literacy and numeracy support teachers. Plentiful, good quality resources are generally used well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and covers all the required areas. It is relevant to pupils' lives, successfully extends their experiences and helps prepare them for later life and learning. A wide range of initiatives, including a local four year arts project, healthy schools awards and local music festivals have been embraced. These contribute well to pupils' achievement, enjoyment and personal development. As a parent said 'These activities help pupils' creativity, confidence and team building skills.' The curriculum in the Foundation Stage has been improved by giving more emphasis to practical activities and using outdoor areas more. The curriculum in the unit is adapted well to pupils' needs through a good balance of direct teaching and activities which pupils engage in independently. The curriculum is enriched well through a wide range of clubs, special days, visits and visitors. Links between subjects are adequate but underdeveloped. Consequently pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to apply skills they have learned across the curriculum. Although pupils use information and communications technology well they do not yet use it independently as a tool for enquiry and learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The good care given to all the pupils contributes well to their high level of confidence. Pupils also care well for each other. One girl reported how she looked after and tried to help a classmate with challenging behaviour at playtimes. Systems and checks to ensure the safety and well being of all the pupils are secure. Pupils with learning difficulties, disabilities and challenging behaviour are supported well. Guidance for learning is good but has some weaker elements. Clear

learning objectives successfully make the aims of lessons clear to pupils. Marking is clear and up to date but does not always show pupils the next steps for learning. Although targets for learning have recently been introduced not all pupils are yet aware of these.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The relatively new leadership team has quickly identified what needs to be done in order to raise standards further, including improvements to the Foundation Stage. Space, resources and learning support assistants are used more effectively and an appropriate focus is placed on developing pupils' communication and language skills. The school development plan contains achievable short-term objectives and all staff and governors are involved in its construction. Governors keep the school closely under review with regular visits from both the chair and vice chair, who are familiar parts of the school community. Procedures for monitoring and evaluation are in place but findings are not always implemented. The views of staff, parents and pupils are regularly sought and acted upon. Parents are pleased with the way the staff '...acknowledge all the parents and listen to any issues with caring and understanding'. The whole school community is pleased with the school, especially its opportunities for personal development and well being. As one parent said, 'Devonshire is a school to be proud of!'

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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?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	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	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?	2
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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Thank you for being so friendly and for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently.

We agree with you that you have a good school, that you are all well looked after and that you are all making good progress in your learning. Your personal development and well-being are excellent. This includes your confidence, attitudes and how you help and give your ideas around the school. You all have a very good awareness and growing commitment to leading healthy lives.

There are just two things which we have asked your teachers to improve. Your teachers know a lot about your school and how good it is, we have asked your school to use this information to make further improvements. Your teachers know how well you are all doing, we have asked them to use this information to make sure activities are suitable for you all and to clearly show you the next steps in your learning.

Perhaps you could help by telling your teachers if activities are too easy or difficult for you and whether their comments in marking help you learn more.

We wish you and your families all the best for the future.

Jo Curd

Lead Inspector