



Dodford First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116670
Local Authority Worcestershire
Inspection number 290587
Inspection date 21 February 2007
Reporting inspector Frances Gillam

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

Type of school	First	School address	Fockbury Road
School category	Community		Dodford
Age range of pupils	4-9		Bromsgrove B61 9AW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01527 831569
Number on roll (school)	53	Fax number	01527 831569
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Roger Lanfeal
		Headteacher	Vanessa Payne
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Dodford is smaller than the average sized first school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is similar to that in most schools. Almost all pupils come from a White British background and the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is much lower than average. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught together in the Key Stage 1 class, and pupils in Years 3 and 4 in the Key Stage 2 class.

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, which provides a warm and caring environment in which pupils achieve well. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and this contributes extremely well to the outstanding progress they make in their personal development and well-being. Many pupils commented, 'This is a school where everyone gets on well together and people care for us.' Pupils really enjoy school. They take very good care of themselves, make sensible choices about their diet and take regular exercise. The emphasis on a healthy lifestyle is a strength of the good curriculum, which is further enriched by the extensive range of activities outside normal lessons. Pupils are active participants in making their school a better place to be. They make a very good contribution to their school and the wider community.

Children's attainment on entry to the Reception Year is broadly as expected and most children achieve the goals for their age on entry to Year 1. The quality of provision in the Reception Year is satisfactory and children do as well as expected. Children's progress in writing is improving but assessment information is not always used well enough to focus support on children who have difficulties with letter formation and spelling. This hinders the progress, particularly of the lower attaining pupils and for a few boys. Good teaching in Years 1 to 4 ensures that most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those from minority ethnic groups, make good progress and reach above average expectations by Year 4. Pupils are interested and excited by what they are learning and this results in high levels of concentration in lessons and pupils working hard. Pupils find the work challenging. This leads to a good rate of learning that is particularly evident in the recent improvements in the quality of writing in these year groups. The 'Big Write' is proving popular with pupils and is increasing their enjoyment of writing. Care, guidance and support are good with a number of strong features. Many parents rightly commented on the high level of care their children enjoy. Pupils thrive because staff value their efforts and praise their achievements. This builds their self-esteem and confidence and enables pupils to work successfully towards the school's mission statement, 'We love to have a go, practise and keep improving.' All pupils have targets for improvement. Older pupils use these targets well but younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 are less sure about how they can improve their work further.

Good leadership and management ensure that staff and governors are well aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher sets a very clear direction for school improvement. She works very effectively with staff and governors to ensure priorities are well focused and that the action to bring about change for the better is implemented successfully. The school's capacity to improve is good and shows in the improved rate of progress made by pupils in Years 3 and 4 and the way issues from the last inspection have been dealt with successfully.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of assessment information to more effectively meet the needs of children in the Reception Year who have difficulties with letter formation and spelling.
- Make sure that pupils in Years 1 and 2 have better guidance about how they can improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good for pupils in Years 1 to 4 and standards are above expectations by the time pupils leave the school. Activities in the Reception Year build satisfactorily on children's experiences before starting school. Recent work to improve the provision in the Foundation Stage has increased the children's rate of learning. This is evident in some children's writing, particularly for the more able but lower attaining pupils and a few boys could be doing better. These children have difficulties, particularly in forming letters. Other children often repeat spelling errors and do not receive enough guidance to help them to be more accurate.

Pupils make good progress in Years 1 to 4. Improvements in the teaching of writing have increased the rate of progress pupils now make throughout the school. The school has put in place some good strategies to help all pupils improve their writing including the 'Big Write'. These are working well. Challenging targets and the careful tracking of pupils' progress are setting clear direction for staff. This has raised the expectations of what pupils can achieve and contributes to the good progress pupils make now in reading, writing and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils work and play together very well. They show a high level of care for one another and consider carefully their actions and how these may affect others. School council members take their role very seriously and work effectively on behalf of their fellow pupils. Pupils are eager to contribute to their school community and also to the wider community. It was their idea to raise funds for Red Nose Day because they recognise that there are others less fortunate than themselves. Pupils' attendance is good. Many pupils said their school is a happy place to be and how much they enjoy school. Pupils work well together and learn from an early age to take responsibility for their own learning. These positive aspects of personal development, along with the pupils' good literacy and numeracy skills, help to prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers in Years 1 to 4 plan well for the differing abilities and age groups in their classes. They explain to pupils what they are going to learn and why. This gives clear direction to pupils' learning and helps them settle quickly to their work. Written comments on pupils' work encourage them to try hard. Many pupils said they enjoy challenging work and lessons are often interesting and exciting. Staff monitor the achievements of pupils carefully and most use the information well to plan the next steps in learning. This is effective in meeting pupils' needs and enables them to make good progress by Year 4. While this is proving successful in Years 1 to 4, lower attaining children and a few boys in the Reception Year do not do as well as they should. Their difficulties in spelling and letter formation are not picked up and dealt with as quickly as they might be. Learning support assistants work well with pupils. They provide sensitive and timely support, which enables pupils with learning difficulties to have the confidence to 'have a go' and succeed in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a broad range of exciting learning activities which build well on what pupils have learned before. Pupils make very good use of the wide and extensive range of activities outside normal lessons. These include sporting clubs, visits to places of interest and more recently whole school topic weeks. These activities support pupils' learning, contribute very well to their enjoyment of school and help pupils to develop healthy lifestyles. The whole school topic week focuses on a number of interests and on developing learning links between the different subjects of the curriculum. Teachers already plan some good opportunities for pupils to use and develop their writing skills, for example in history, and their numeracy skills in science, but the school recognises it is yet to fully develop links across all subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Many parents and the children commented on the warm and caring school environment. Parents are confident their children are safe and well cared for and this shows in the well established child protection procedures and the way staff are quick to respond to any concerns the pupils may have. Staff treat pupils with respect and set very good examples for the pupils to follow. They promote a healthy way of life and remind pupils about the need to take care of themselves and others. This contributes very well to the pupils' personal development and well-being. All pupils have learning targets, which are challenging and encourage them to do better although pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not so sure about how they can improve their work and do even better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school, which is strongly focused on raising pupils' achievements. With staff and governors she has established good systems to monitor and evaluate the school's effectiveness and to identify the right priorities for improvement. This has resulted in action that has brought about change for the better, particularly in writing. The school is fully aware of the need to ensure that children in Reception Year are given every opportunity to make good progress. There are well thought out plans about how it intends to do this. The school has established extremely good links with parents and outside agencies and this ensures that parents are involved in their children's learning. Work with outside agencies successfully enriches the support offered to pupils with learning difficulties.

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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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	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	2

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	2
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 making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed my day spent seeing all the exciting things you were doing.

You have a good school. The people in charge and most of your teachers do a good job and this is helping you to make good progress. The standards you attain by the time you leave school are above those expected for Year 4.

Here are some of the most important things I found to be good about your school

- You work hard and this helps you to do well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- You enjoy your lessons because they are exciting and fun.
- You get on very well together. I agree with you, your behaviour is excellent!
- You eat plenty of fruit and vegetables and take regular exercise because you want to grow up fit and healthy. You make very good use of the extra activities you have outside your lessons.
- School council members work hard on your behalf and make good decisions about how to make your school a better place to be.
- You play safely and sensibly and all the staff make sure you are kept safe and free from harm.
- You really like school and this shows in your good attendance.

To improve the school still further we have asked the people in charge and your teachers to work together on two things

- To make sure that children in the Reception Year have all the support they need to help them write their letters properly and get better at their spelling.
- To make sure that pupils in Years 1 and 2 really know how they can improve their work and do even better.

You can all help by keeping up the hard work.

With best wishes for the future,