



Dolphinholme Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119526
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291449
Inspection dates 14–15 November 2006
Reporting inspector Carole Cressey

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Dolphinholme
School category	Voluntary aided		Lancaster, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	4–11		LA2 9AN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01524 791530
Number on roll (school)	51	Fax number	01524 791530
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Judith Hayhurst
		Headteacher	Mr Brendan Hassett
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 14–15 November 2006	Inspection number 291449
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector

Description of the school

This small school is set in rural Lancashire. As well as the children from the village who attend the school, a significant number travel from nearby towns and villages. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. No children receive free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average but increasing. The annual intakes of pupils are broadly average in their attainment. An independent committee provides a pre-school and before and after school care service on the school premises.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Dolpinholme is a good school with outstanding features. The school's own evaluation provides a very accurate insight into the quality and impact of its provision. The school's success is due to the outstanding vision of the headteacher who promotes a Christian ethos: care, safety, well-being, and the enjoyment and achievement of every individual pupil are at the centre of the school's work.

Pupils start school with average attainment and all pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, leave having worked hard, done their very best, achieved well and reached above average standards. Pupils often exceed the expected standard for their ages and are well prepared for the next stage of education.

Pupils do well because teaching is good and often outstanding and is very responsive to the pupils' individual needs. Those who learn at a slower rate or have complex learning needs may be taught in a lower age group and gifted pupils can be found working a full year ahead of their chronological age. Pupils believe in themselves and are exceptionally eager to learn; they are successful because their teachers convince them that they can achieve anything they set their minds to. Staff know the pupils well and regular assessments provide detailed information about pupils' attainment. However, the teachers do not use assessment systems to check whether pupils are progressing well enough over time.

The school's curriculum, including that for the Foundation Stage, is very well planned. The school is very aware that pupils need to be prepared well for their transition from a small village school to much larger high schools. This is borne in mind when planning the excellent range of extra-curricular activities, visits, visitors and projects in order for pupils to extend their enjoyment and discover new skills and talents. These activities give pupils many opportunities to meet other pupils and adults from schools, colleges and universities. The school carefully tailors the personal, social and health education programme to the pupils' needs and as a result, they have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe, healthy and to form lasting relationships. Governors and staff have used the school's finances imaginatively and have transformed the school's old Victorian building into a modern learning environment fit for education in the 21st century. Governors have identified that to help improve standards further, the headteacher needs more non-teaching time to monitor teaching and learning even more closely.

This is a successful school that is not limited by its small size and rural location and which gives good value for money. Standards are rising strongly in Year 6 and the school's highly effective self-evaluation ensures that the school is exceptionally well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the teachers use assessment information to help pupils to make even better progress.

- Use management time to monitor and evaluate the quality of the teaching and learning to ensure best practice is implemented across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards by the time they are ready for secondary school. Although the small number of pupils on roll means that test results can fluctuate because a single child's result has a pronounced effect on the whole, the Year 6 results show a strong trend of improvement over time. The school meets its statutory targets set by the governors for Year 6 pupils.

Children join the school with levels of attainment which are broadly average. They make good progress in the Reception class and by the time they move into Year 1 they reach or exceed the learning goals expected for their ages and are well launched into reading, writing and mathematics. This good start is further built on in Years 1 and 2 and all pupils achieve well. Year 2 test results are usually a little above average, as they were in 2005, and a good proportion of pupils exceed the standard expected for their age. The latest 2006 test results indicate further improvements.

Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 2 and the 2005 test results were significantly above the national average and showed that a high proportion of the pupils exceeded the expected standard, especially in mathematics and science. The most recent test results, in 2006, indicate that pupils achieved very well. Most reached the expected level for their age and again a good proportion reached the higher levels. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make very good progress and usually achieve the standards for their age and often exceed them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Parents are delighted that their children are happy, well-behaved and successful learners who flourish in a strong Christian environment. Pupils show a contagious enthusiasm for the wealth of opportunities the school provides. This is reflected in above average attendance and the pupils' high achievement. Pupils say that learning is fun and always challenges them to do their best. This pride which pupils have in their own and other pupils' successes and the care they show to everyone reflect the whole ethos of the school. The whole school is immensely proud that two of their pupils were chosen to visit Buckingham Palace to see the Queen when she presented Lancaster University with an industry award.

The 'Buddy system' is so strong that long after pupils have left the school they still ask after each other's welfare and expect regular updates. Pupils show a very good awareness of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They particularly enjoy the visits from specialist physical education coaches who not only teach them the skills of sport but also equip them with important life skills. They are rightly very proud of

their involvement in a recent anti-bullying conference and showed a mature understanding of what constitutes bullying and what to do if it occurs. Pupils in this school are learning to be very independent, to be in charge of their own destiny, make the right choices, consider the impact of their actions on others and be responsible, respected members of their community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and some lessons are outstanding. A significant strength of the teaching is the way each lesson is thoughtfully planned to meet the needs of individual pupils in mixed-age classes. Groupings are flexible enough to include pupils of different ages, abilities and personal qualities, and teaching assistants are deployed very effectively to provide additional support. This ensures that pupils are challenged and achieve well. When teaching is outstanding staff are in tune with the different learning styles of their pupils, provide them with a very good range of practical high quality challenging tasks and give pupils responsibility for their learning. Assessments of pupils' learning are regular features in lessons and at end of units of work. The pupils have excellent opportunities to assess their own work against the lessons' learning objectives. They are encouraged to discuss with the teacher whether they are working at the right level and can ask for more challenging work or sometimes less challenging work. However, the teachers do not always use their assessments effectively in order to spot quickly any potential underachievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The exceptionally well-planned curriculum is underpinned by the school's Christian faith and values which continually inspire pupils to learn, and which challenge them to be the very best they can. The curriculum is imaginatively planned to enable pupils to experience all that might be on offer in a much larger urban school. Special themed weeks, Funky Friday and Thrilling Thursday bring learning alive for pupils. What better way to extend pupils' mathematical, scientific and design skills than to build a giant Tetrahedron in the school hall? Professional sports coaches, musicians, French teachers, a wealth of visits and after-school activities enrich pupils' learning and make a significant contribution to pupils' academic and personal success. There is a very strong emphasis on developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and information technology skills to ensure they are well prepared to be global citizens of the 21st century. Pupils receive an excellent grounding in personal health and safety, and develop a very mature and caring attitude to God's creation.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils' care, guidance and support are outstanding. Every child really does matter in this school and their individuality is valued. Very effective procedures are in place to safeguard children's welfare, health and safety. Pupils with learning difficulties receive a very high level of care and support and as a result become confident and very successful learners. Parents say staff are especially caring of pupils who are new to the school or who are reluctant learners. One parent described how the school has helped her child who had considerable difficulties in numeracy to 'believe in himself and have bags of confidence in his abilities'. This is a school which goes the extra mile to care for its pupils. Pupils know that their national tests will be less stressful because the headteacher provides them with hot chocolate, crumpets and soothing background music to create a calming atmosphere that gives pupils the confidence to do their best. The school monitors pupils' progress accurately and this enables the governors to set challenging targets for the oldest pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good with outstanding features.

The headteacher and governing body lead and manage the school with outstanding vision and flair. The headteacher is passionate about the importance of the individuality of each pupil and developing in them the belief that they can achieve anything if they set their mind to it. This ethos has been pivotal to the school's success in improving all aspects of its work since the last inspection. Leadership is highly successful in combating the limitations of a very small school and providing a very challenging and exciting learning environment for the pupils. The headteacher has galvanised all concerned within the school to tap into a wide range of valuable initiatives and develop a range of partners to improve the provision and ensure that standards rise. The use of specialist sports and music teachers ensures that pupils receive high quality teaching in these areas whilst at the same time providing staff with very valuable preparation time. The planned work with other schools to develop problem-solving skills incorporating dance, design and technology, and science are all contributing to raising attainment and promoting confident independent thinking.

Governors are committed to continue to raise standards and to provide the best education for the pupils. The headteacher has a heavy teaching commitment and although he monitors teaching and learning, it is not done rigorously enough across the whole school. New teaching staff have now been appointed so that the headteacher can fulfil this role even more effectively in order to continue to raise standards. The parents' overwhelming confidence in the leadership and management of the school is rightly placed.

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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	2
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?	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	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?	2
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	2
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	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

Dolphinhholme Church of England Primary School

Dolphinhholme

Lancaster

Lancashire

LA2 9AN

14 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you so much for being so friendly and welcoming when I visited your school a short while ago. The last time inspectors visited Dolphinhholme School they said it was a satisfactory school. I am so pleased to tell you that your teachers have worked very hard to make things better and your school is now a good school with lots of really exciting things happening

There were so many things about your school that I liked and here are just a few of them.

- You all behave exceptionally well, work really hard and reach high standards in your work.
- I will remember for a very long time your great enthusiasm for all the many exciting activities, games, trips and visitors your teachers provide for you to help you to become successful learners.
- You all seem to know the importance of eating sensible food and taking lots of exercise. Do keep that up because it is so important to stay healthy and happy.
- You all seemed to know a lot about bullying so I was not surprised to hear that you had been asked to attend a very grown-up conference about it. You also know how to keep yourselves safe at Halloween and Bonfire time.
- You all seem to care a great deal for each other and stay friends with your buddies and each other long after you have left the school.

I was particularly interested to learn that two pupils from your school were invited to Buckingham Palace to see the Queen and to have tea in the House of Commons. I expect that these children will remember that even when they are grown up. I think you are very lucky to go to such a good school where your headteacher and teachers work so hard to make lessons fun and help you learn such a lot. I think that your teachers could look at your work a little more closely to be sure that you are all working as hard as you possibly can. I do hope you continue to enjoy school as much as you do now and I am sure that it will help you to become happy and successful adults

Yours sincerely

Carole Cressey

(Additional Inspector)