



Dry Sandford Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123063
Local Authority Oxfordshire
Inspection number 292573
Inspection dates 13–14 November 2006
Reporting inspector Christopher Scola

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lashford Lane
School category	Community		Dry Sandford
Age range of pupils	4–11		Abingdon OX13 6EE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01865 730432
Number on roll (school)	111	Fax number	01865 730432
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Nikki Taylor
		Headteacher	Mrs Karen Harrington
Date of previous school inspection	22 April 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school in a village community which also serves a local army base and this causes high levels of mobility in some year groups. A new headteacher was appointed in April 2006 and there has been a reduction and some changes of staff because of falling rolls. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above average. There are more boys with learning difficulties than girls. Virtually all pupils are of White British heritage. Boys outnumber girls considerably in some year groups. Attainment on entry varies from year to year but is generally below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Dry Sandford is a good school, which recognises its strengths and weaknesses accurately. It has successfully come through a period of staff changes. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection. Strong leadership has clearly identified areas still to improve and put in place effective measures to tackle them.

Children make good progress in the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average in mathematics and science and average in English, mainly because pupils' writing is not as good as their reading. Standards in writing are not high enough. Achievement is good as pupils improve well from a low starting point. Overall the performance of girls is better than that of boys. However, teachers increasingly take account of the different ways pupils learn and adapt their approach which is having a positive impact on boys' achievement.

The strong leadership of the new headteacher has improved the quality of teaching and learning which is predominantly good. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support learning. Assessment is now used more effectively to set appropriately challenging goals for all pupils. The school's much improved tracking system gives the school's management a clear picture of pupils' progress and has been used well to pinpoint where extra support is needed. In some lessons the teaching is only satisfactory because not all groups of pupils are consistently challenged.

Pupils enjoy school, behaviour is good and bullying virtually unknown. The school council is playing an increasingly strong role in the school's development and has recently interviewed candidates for the headship. All of these factors indicate that pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are prepared well to meet future challenges.

A key factor influencing the recent improvements is the way the headteacher and governors have worked together successfully to support the school through a challenging time. They have made an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher takes a good lead and has set up good systems to monitor and evaluate the school's performance. This robust approach has already led to good improvement and shows that the school has the capacity to build on its strengths.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing across the school.
- Ensure that the teaching throughout the school provides sufficient challenge for pupils of all abilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Standards are mostly above average. There is a wide variation in the levels of skill that children bring when they start school. Most of them are working at levels which are below those expected for their age. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage because there is a good range of activities to interest and stimulate their learning.

Most pupils make good progress in Years 1 to 6. However, their progress in writing is satisfactory and this is partly due to the lack of challenge in some lessons. More able pupils should do better in their written work. By the end of Year 6, pupils' performance in national tests shows that they attain well above average standards in mathematics. Standards in science have improved steadily since the previous inspection and pupils enjoy the practical nature of this subject. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because they have well focused support and additional resources to aid their understanding.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils show high levels of enjoyment. Their parents overwhelmingly agree that this aspect is a strength. Pupils particularly appreciate the spacious grounds and the opportunities to work in other schools especially in art and physical education. Pupils know how to keep safe supported by visits from the emergency services.

Pupils' behaviour is good. They respond well to the wide range of initiatives to help them to lead healthy lives. They love the 'Wake up Shake Up'. One Year 5 pupil said, 'It really does wake you up and get you going'. Pupils have enjoyed Chinese, Indian and Italian meals organised by the school council to develop their understanding of the foods of other countries. Pupils enjoy challenging and exciting outdoor activities during their residential visit, and take part in a wide range of sports.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop high levels of self-confidence because of the good relationships they enjoy with adults and one another. They take a very active part in fund raising, give public performances such as 'Oliver Twist' and contribute to the wider community well. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their understanding of other cultures and beliefs such as when a Year 2 pupil explained the rituals of worshipping in a Mosque.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. The teaching seen in Years 5 and 6 is of high quality because work is well targeted to different abilities and there is a high level of challenge. This is not the case everywhere. In some lessons insufficient account is taken of the range of abilities and this has an impact on the quality of work produced, especially by the more able. It is most apparent in the teaching of writing. New systems to sharpen up target setting are beginning to improve this situation but more consistency is needed.

Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are good because there is a balance between practical activities and direct teaching so that children have opportunities to experiment and explore. There is a team of skilled and committed teaching assistants who work very efficiently in helping pupils through the school to improve their skills in reading. Another strength is way in which staff support those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, being broad and well-balanced. In the Foundation Stage there is a well-planned and integrated curriculum which links the areas of learning. Older pupils say how much they enjoy challenging work in mathematics provided by an additional teacher from a local private school. In addition, the school makes good provision for extra help for those with particular learning difficulties. Provision for ICT has vastly improved and is increasingly used across the curriculum to support other subjects. These improvements to the curriculum since the previous inspection enhance pupils' enjoyment of school and contribute well to their personal development.

A good range of visits such as trips to science fairs, museums, geological sites and local shops enriches learning. There are many visitors to the school, and good links with local secondary schools where teachers and other adults support learning through their specialist expertise. All pupils have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. There is a good range of extra curricular clubs such as gardening, football, netball and judo.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. They have a positive impact on pupils' capacity to learn and on their self-confidence. Pupils feel safe in school and form trusting relationships with adults and one another. The good induction arrangements and support for new arrivals helpful pupils to settle quickly into school. The staff are careful to follow all procedures to ensure the health, safety and well-being

of the pupils. The good knowledge of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities needs enables staff to provide well-targeted and sensitive support. Academic guidance has improved with the introduction of target setting although this needs to be sharper to ensure that the more able are challenged.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher, although only recently appointed, has quickly identified exactly what the school needs to do to improve. The school's plans are well focused and clearly guide staff and governors on the next steps. Everyone is clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses and effective self evaluation has resulted in the correct priorities for improvement. There is good potential for further improvement as illustrated by the way in which issues have been tackled and the school's success in raising standards and in improving the consistency of teaching. The headteacher has quickly gained the trust and respect of the staff who have seen many changes recently and who all work very hard to make the school successful.

The governors have a good understanding of how to support the school. There is a good structure whereby they monitor and evaluate the school's effectiveness. They ably fulfil their role as the school's critical friends. The headteacher, staff and governors are not complacent and recognise the need to raise standards in writing and ensure that the quality of teaching continues to improve.

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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	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	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 very much for your friendliness and help during my visit to your school. You certainly let me know how many interesting things go on at your school and why you like it. Thank you for telling me about them. I think the school council has come up with some great ideas to improve the school further. Good luck with your magazine and the suggestion box.

There were many things that were good about your school, but I would like to tell you what impressed me most.

- You behave very well and are friendly and kind to one another.
- You learn lots of interesting things, especially in mathematics, and enjoy some exciting activities.
- You enjoy school and like your teachers.
- You try hard and do well with your work.
- All the adults who work in your school work very hard to keep you safe and healthy.
- You tell the adults who run your school how you think it could be improved, and they listen to you!

The headteacher and the governors in charge of your school run it well. They know that making your writing better is their next priority. I have also asked the headteacher to make sure that the work in all classes is challenging enough.

Thank you for helping me with my work.

Yours sincerely

Chris ScolaLead Inspector