

# Duncombe Primary School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100403
<b>Local Authority</b>	Islington
<b>Inspection number</b>	307382
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Barnard Payne

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	418
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Lucy Garrett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Barrie O'Shea
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 December 2001
<b>School address</b>	Sussex Way Islington London N19 4JA
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7272 5620
<b>Fax number</b>	020 7281 9180

---

<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 September 2007
<b>Inspection number</b>	307382

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Pupils at this large primary school come from a wide variety of backgrounds and a high proportion have a first language other than English. The school serves communities where there is a high level of social and economic deprivation. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is high. More pupils have special educational needs than in most other schools. A significant number of pupils join or leave the school during the course of each school year. A high proportion of pupils are from refugee and asylum seeking families.

## 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 with many outstanding features. The high level of parental support is due to the outstanding work the school undertakes to support families with their children's education. One parent writes that the 'The school has a very dedicated and hard working set of teachers and staff who are also welcoming and friendly and definitely put the children first.'

Pupils' achievement is good. Their positive attitudes aid their progress significantly. One young pupil, asked what she most liked doing in school, replied 'Learning.' Many pupils join the school with limited literacy skills. Writing, in particular, is a challenge. In 2006, following a drop in standards in writing in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics and science in Key Stage 2, the school made a careful analysis of the progress made by different groups of pupils. This led to very successful implementation of improvement strategies and a significant rise in standards in 2007. Key Stage 2 pupils reached national standards in English, mathematics and science, representing good progress. However, in Key Stage 1, while pupils reached national standards in reading and mathematics, standards in writing were still low.

Teaching is good, enabling pupils both to enjoy learning and to achieve. Although there is some inconsistency in the quality of planning, teachers mostly plan effectively to cater for all abilities. A few examples of teachers' own inaccuracies in written grammar and language do not provide the pupils with good models to use themselves. There is very effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and these pupils make good progress. The school's curriculum serves pupils' needs well and they have many opportunities to develop their skills and interests.

Pupils' outstanding personal development reflects the excellent provision for their care, support and guidance. With over fifty nationalities represented in the school, many have to learn English very quickly. The ethos of shared values, support and ambition enables pupils to feel safe and secure. Behaviour is good and pupils treat their school with care. They have a very clear understanding of healthy lifestyles. They appreciate the school's improved, healthier, meals and many take part in extra-curricular sports. They also learn to deal well with life's challenges. Their participation in school life and decision-making provides valuable skills to use in their future lives, as does their acquisition of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT).

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. This has resulted in outstanding personal development and rapidly increasing progress. This is because all staff share the school's vision, where equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work. The school's leaders do not use the challenging social context of the school as an excuse; instead, the school's leadership focuses on finding ways to get pupils to at least the same standards as their peers nationally. The significant improvements in 2007 show that it has the ability to sustain and improve the progress it has made. The school has progressed well since its last inspection. It has outstanding capacity to make further improvements.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children have settled well into the daily routines of class life. Very effective links with parents, including home visits, help children to settle quickly. Many children start the Foundation Stage with well below average language skills. A good curriculum supports them well. This fully meets the needs of the children so that they are willing and eager to try out the new activities on

offer, and make good progress towards the Early Learning Goals. The manager of the Foundation Stage has a clear and accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in writing at Key Stage 1.
- Improve the consistency of teaching to anticipate the needs of higher attaining pupils and ensure good models of writing.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress, particularly in relation to their starting points in English, which are well below national levels. The standards in writing are low in Key Stage 1, but pupils attain broadly average standards in reading and mathematics. School leaders and managers are well aware of weaknesses in writing. They have introduced a number of initiatives in order to help pupils to improve, including extra support given to the groups who need it. The school is highly successful in including children's families in their learning and this is a major factor in improving standards. As pupils move through the school, they continue to make good progress. The induction of newcomers, who join the school other than at the start of the year, is very effective. These pupils make rapid progress, particularly in acquiring English. Consequently, standards, which have been below national averages for the last 3 years, are rising and in 2007 the test results for the oldest pupils show them to be broadly average in English, mathematics and science. The consistent methods to teach reading and writing skills and set challenging targets account for the good progress pupils make. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities also make good progress towards their individual targets.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Cultural differences are valued and celebrated very effectively and this is an integral part of the school's family ethos. Cultural awareness is very strong because of the school's rich provision in the arts. Pupils are reflective and they have a strong sense of fairness and empathy. This is evident in their efforts to raise money for many local and national charities.

Attendance is good and has improved year on year. Pupils enjoy coming to school because it offers them exciting activities in lessons and clubs. Relationships between pupils are good. Disputes and bullying are rare and quickly resolved. Peer counsellors ensure that break and lunchtime are happy experiences. Pupils feel safe and very well supported by staff. They are friendly, polite, behave well and act responsibly. They have a very clear understanding of healthy lifestyles, and learn to become confident in themselves. Pupils have learnt about democratic processes, such as accepting majority decisions from the school council, and make an outstanding contribution to the community. They have campaigned for road safety to the local council and have a 'pelican crossing' as a result. Pupils' very positive attitudes, competent basic skills and ability to work in teams prepare them very effectively for their future lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' good progress and positive attitudes are due to effective teaching. There are outstanding examples. In an English lesson, pupils edited and improved their writing and, with excellent support, were highly motivated to extend their ideas. In a few instances, the planning is not analytical enough in anticipating learners' needs, leading, for example, to higher attaining pupils not extending their thinking enough. There are a few examples of teachers' own inaccuracies in written grammar and language, which do not provide the pupils with good models to use themselves. In the great majority of lessons teachers plan the work well, with clear objectives and well-judged levels of challenge that take full account of the range of ability. Teachers' management keeps classes engaged. Accurate assessments of pupils' performance and learning needs lead to effective support strategies. Teaching assistants provide high quality support, showing a firm grasp of objectives. The provision made for pupils with learning difficulties is of high quality, with clearly identified steps enabling pupils to make good progress. The school's outstanding work with parents plays a key role in helping pupils succeed at school.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy their education and achieve well because the curriculum serves their needs effectively. The school provides very well for pupils' personal development. It meets statutory requirements in full and responds effectively to local needs, for example, catering for parents' needs very effectively as part its provision. The school provides well for pupils' key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to school life and take responsibility. The school takes account of the needs of all abilities and has identified where it needs to make adjustments in provision to cater for all groups. It prepares pupils well for their future lives. They have good opportunities through the range of extracurricular activities the school provides. The school has gained both Artsmark and Activemark, showing external validation of its arts and sports provision. Music provision, where local authority staff work with Year 4 pupils, leads to outstanding progress.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

The outstanding care, guidance and support the school provides reflect the way it values its pupils. It provides pupils with a very safe and secure environment. All adults in the school show a high level of commitment in promoting health and safety. The school's policies and procedures for risk assessment and child protection are securely in place and well understood by staff. The school keeps very good records of the checks made on the background of the staff and other adults working in the school. The personal, social and health education programme pays very good attention to the development of safe and healthy life styles.

Very good links with external agencies support pupils who have learning difficulties, disabilities and medical problems. The school's learning mentor successfully supports pupils who experience social and emotional difficulties so that any effects on learning are minimised. Very good tracking of pupils' progress ensures that any concerns are identified quickly. Records are used very effectively to plan lessons and meet pupils' needs.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The leadership of the school is focused on raising standards and achievement. A strong, shared commitment puts the pupils' learning at the heart of all that the school does. The headteacher's leadership is outstanding. The inclusion of learners in the life of the school, along with their families, is also outstanding and is central to the leadership's vision. As one bilingual parent commented, 'The head teacher is actively engaged in the process of developing a school with great parent and pupil involvement.' The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate. The leadership team thoroughly analysed the dip in attainment in 2006. The team has a very good understanding of the performance of different groups of learners. Consequently, effective strategies have been quickly implemented to support learners' achievement and already many are showing good progress. An example is the support given to Somali families to encourage their children to read, resulting in a substantial improvement in results. The governing body is fully committed to the development of the school. They ask relevant and searching questions, are fully aware of the strengths and areas for development and are highly supportive of all that the school does.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

### 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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	1

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	1
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

25 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Duncombe Primary School, Islington, London, N19 4JA

As you know, we recently visited your school to look at what you do and to see how well the school helps you to make progress. Thank you for making our visit so enjoyable. We really enjoyed talking to you and seeing your work in lessons. We were very impressed with how polite and helpful you are.

We know that you and your parents have a very high opinion of Duncombe. The inspectors agree with you. Your school is very successful in making you feel safe and in giving you many interesting things to do. This helps you to make good progress in school. The way you learn to take responsibility and help others is excellent. Mr O'Shea, all the teachers and other staff in school, work very hard to make sure that you get the help and support you need to work well. That is why the rate of progress pupils make is improving so rapidly. We know that many pupils arrive in school and have to learn English in a very short time, but they have shown that they can catch up very quickly.

To improve further, we have asked the school to help younger pupils make the progress they need in writing to reach the level expected of seven-year-olds. We have also asked the school to make sure that teachers always set work that is challenging enough for all pupils and that they always show you good examples of writing.

Barnard Payne

Lead inspector