

Dorset Road Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101607
Local Authority	Bromley
Inspection number	307754
Inspection date	13 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheila Nolan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr T Edwards
Headteacher	Mrs E Keable
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2005
School address	Dorset Road Mottingham London SE9 4QX
Telephone number	020 8857 3742
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Dorset Road School serves a local community that is socially, economically and culturally very diverse. A third of the school population, an above average proportion, is from a wide range of ethnic heritages. A small number begin school with little knowledge of English. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is above the national average as is that of pupils who have specific learning, communication or behavioural difficulties. In some year groups, a high percentage of the pupils joins or leaves the school other than at standard times.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Dorset Road is a good and happy school, a view endorsed by the staff, parents and pupils. As one parent rightly said, 'the teachers are dedicated to the children's needs and they have exciting ideas to keep a child stimulated and interested in learning.' Pupils get a very good start to their education and this prepares them well for their future education.

A real strength of the school is the way pupils thrive in a friendly, safe environment. High quality care, guidance and support result in outstanding personal development for all pupils. The overwhelming majority of pupils enjoy school, attend regularly and behave responsibly both in and out of class. They have a thorough understanding of healthy living and are keen participants in physical activities, including after-hours sports clubs. Pupils contribute regularly to school improvement, offering good ideas and suggestions at circle times and assemblies. This helps them to live up to the school's motto of 'high standards on a small scale'. Pupils follow the strong spiritual and moral lead given by adults and this is reflected in their excellent spiritual, social and cultural development. They value their racial and cultural diversity and celebrate the many traditions among them. Pupils thrive on the many opportunities to make a difference to others both within school and in the wider community. For example, they helpfully decorate the village Christmas tree in the Church grounds.

Leadership and management are good. The committed headteacher, with her determined and collegiate approach, has guided the school well since the last inspection. All staff work together successfully, are ambitious for the children, and, since the last inspection, have made a significant difference to their future life chances. From often low starting points in the Reception class, children make good progress. By the end of Year 2, standards are in line with national expectations overall but higher in mathematics, where they are above average, than in reading and writing. Pupils with specific learning difficulties also achieve well. 'Every effort has been made to help my child and to understand her needs,' wrote a parent. The headteacher and governors have an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and this ensures the school's good capacity to improve further. They are clear, for example, that standards in literacy have yet to match the above average standards in mathematics.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons engage pupils well and encourage them to become independent learners. Teachers involve pupils successfully in understanding how well they are doing. The good topic-based curriculum is well managed and planning issues from the last inspection have been carefully addressed. Teachers now build meticulously on previous learning. Out-of-hours activities such as the mathematics club, sport and French effectively promote children's personal and academic development.

The school is rightly proud of its excellent partnership with parents who are generous in their contributions to the school. They have made valuable improvements to the school site but there is a general consensus that there is more to do. The main school playground does not yet provide a stimulating environment for recreation and quiet activities, hindering spontaneous play and learning.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good quality provision supports the children's development well. They join the school with a range of skills that are generally below those expected for their age. Their communication skills

are often particularly low. Excellent relationships with parents involve them in the day-to-day life of the school and this helps children settle quickly. The well-led Reception team nurtures the children's social and emotional development effectively so that they grow in confidence in a safe, supportive environment. Specific learning needs are identified rapidly, irrespective of when children start school. Teachers are careful to identify those with little knowledge of English who are able learners. As a result, all groups of children, including the vulnerable, make good progress. Despite good teaching and a stimulating curriculum, not all children are working securely within the expected early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1. Weaknesses remain in areas such as linking sounds and letters.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the current average standards in reading and writing rise to match the above average standards in mathematics.
- Develop the main-school playground to provide a stimulating outdoor environment.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most pupils enter Year 1 with levels of knowledge and skills that are below those normally expected for that age group, particularly in communication, language and literacy skills. They progress well in Years 1 and 2 as a result of high levels of personal and academic guidance and good teaching. By the end of Year 2, standards are average overall. In 2007, Year 2 pupils reached above average standards in mathematics, continuing a three-year trend of improvement. In both reading and writing, standards have fluctuated from year to year but are in line with national expectations. Pupils' achievement in writing slightly exceeds that in reading because of the school's sharp focus on encouraging pupils to write imaginatively. Many children continue to find linking sounds and letters challenging and this slows their progress in reading. Pupils make rapid progress in mathematics. Their success is underpinned by good teaching because tasks are tailored closely to meet the needs and abilities of all the pupils.

The school's records for the current Year 2 pupils shows a similar pattern of success in mathematics and improvements in reading and writing. All but one of the pupils is at or above the expected levels for the age group. Pupils with behavioural and communication difficulties make good progress as do those who are at the early stages of learning English. Their success is underpinned by effective teaching because mathematics tasks are carefully designed to meet pupils' needs and abilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development, is outstanding. Children feel secure, enjoy school and attend very regularly. Behaviour is excellent, both in lessons and at breaks. Pupils say they really 'love school' and like the interesting range of play equipment. They are also pleased that adults are always on hand should there be a problem. Most pupils have responded well to the school's promotion of healthy meals and snacks. Breakfast, with its wholemeal cereals, fruit and yoghurt is popular, as are the 'special lunches' and selected birthday treats. Many pupils are able to choose a healthy picnic and explain why. Energetic activities at break and lunchtimes complement the many after-hours sports that most enjoy.

Pupils talk enthusiastically about their tasks around the school. They are rightly proud of the tidiness of the playground and the tubs of flowers they grow. They are especially pleased by the reward system that emphasises caring for others and taking responsibility for their actions. They share their views confidently on school and other matters in circle times. In the local community, pupils visit elderly residents, deliver harvest gifts and share their singing and drama with them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good quality teaching fosters pupils' positive attitudes to their learning. Interesting topic-based activities build well on earlier learning. A favourite lesson for many is mathematics because, as pupils say, '...it is fun' and '...it makes you think or you get caught out.' Pupils at all levels are challenged to extend their thinking through a strong emphasis on spoken and written communication skills. Support by classroom assistants is well-directed and there is a good balance between whole-class teaching and work in groups. Information and communications technology and visual resources are well used to model tasks and demonstrate ideas. Meticulous planning helps meet the needs of those pupils with specific learning difficulties. Among the wide range of methods used to check on pupils' learning, the 'star award board' is a clear favourite with Year 2. They consult it regularly to know how well they are doing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good topic-based curriculum allows pupils to apply their skills in reading, writing and mathematics across a range of subjects and activities so that tasks become more relevant and meaningful. Breakfast and after-school clubs provide good opportunities for pupils to socialise and widen their experiences. These enrichment opportunities are varied and include visits to local landmarks, presentations by visitors as well as French, dance, chess and sport. Pupils also know about a number of local jobs through visits to the library, the garden centre and pharmacy. Visitors, too, widen pupils' horizons through discussions about far-away places and unusual ventures. Pupils were entranced recently by the exploits of an engineer on the British Antarctic Survey. Seasonal events and festivities mark the cycle of the many traditions dear to the families that the school serves. Activities to help the transition to local junior schools are well managed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils are cared for exceptionally well. The caring ethos pervades every aspect of school life so that whatever the need, it is well met. Well-focussed support both in lessons and around the school keeps children safe and happy. Health and safety procedures and risk assessments are robust. Children at the early stages of learning English are supported well and teachers accurately assess their learning needs. Parents are very happy with the education their children receive. One parent commented, 'My son has enjoyed every day at school and has blossomed during his time from being a shy, nervous boy into a self-confident, happy, bright young man.' Arrangements for pupils' academic guidance are very effective. Regular checks on pupils' progress identify rapidly where intervention is needed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's clear vision for taking the school forward is shared whole-heartedly by staff and governors. Because of the strong teamwork in this small school, all teachers and support staff share responsibilities and tasks for assuring and maintaining good quality provision. Monitoring and evaluation are systematic and rigorous. Accurate judgements of how well the school is doing have provided a clear direction for the improvements which have been steadily sustained since the last inspection. Whole-school targets are realistic and increasingly challenging. The school is rightly determined to ensure that in future pupils achieve as successfully in literacy as in numeracy. Governance is good. Governors both support and challenge the school where necessary. Parents feel truly involved in the school and have a helpful and productive voice in its smooth running. Links with the local community are strong. Great efforts to make maximum use of limited space have created a very stimulating and well-kept learning environment. However, there is one thing further to do. The main school playground provides limited stimuli for play and few opportunities for quiet activities.

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Annex A

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
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	2

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	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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	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

22 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Dorset Road Infant School, London, SE9 4QX

Thank you very much for making us so welcome and for being so friendly when we visited your school recently. We did enjoy our visit. We were very pleased to hear from you how much you enjoyed school and to see how well you worked in lessons.

We think you go to a good school that not only helps you to learn well, particularly in mathematics, writing and reading, but it also looks after you exceptionally well. We think it gives you a really good start. We were very impressed by your behaviour and the way you work well together. There are many things that are good about your school but we would like to single out your teachers and helpers who encourage and support you both in lessons and in the interesting clubs. You say grown-ups listen to your ideas and they are always willing to listen if you have a problem. You enjoy fresh fruit, vegetables and know how to choose healthy appetising meals. The school is run well by your very special headteacher and staff. They try hard to make sure you have the best possible education.

Before we left, we talked to your teachers about how the school could do even better. They agree with us that staff need to do some more work with you to help you make better progress in reading and writing so that standards will be as high as they are in mathematics. We think you will be able to manage this quite well because your standards in literacy have already begun to rise. We also have suggested that the school explores ways to make your playground more attractive and stimulating. Perhaps you could share your ideas for doing this with your teachers.

We would like to wish you and your school every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Nolan

Lead Inspector