

Darrington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108243
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	309631
Inspection date	20 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Roger Gill

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Oakes
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Young
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2003
School address	Denby Crest Darrington Pontefract West Yorkshire WF8 3SB
Telephone number	01977 722635
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievement; the quality of teaching and learning; the way that leadership and management make judgements about the school. Evidence was gathered from the school's judgements about attainment on entry, test results, teachers' records, observations of teaching, scrutiny of pupils' current work and discussions with senior managers, pupils and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school situated in a relatively advantaged area close to Pontefract. Virtually all pupils are of White British heritage; a few are from mixed heritage backgrounds. A below average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but more than is usually found have a statement of special educational need. A small group of children is looked after in public care. There have been many changes since the school was last inspected, including a new school building, and a new headteacher and deputy headteacher. There was also a period of rapid turnover of staffing in Years 3 to 6. The school renewed its Healthy School award in 2006. On entry into Reception, year groups vary greatly but are generally more capable than is expected for their age nationally. There is an opportunity for children to attend in the mornings up to two terms prior to their fifth birthday.

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 has come through an unsettled period. Pupils love everything about it. They find the lessons enjoyable and the care from staff supportive. The school makes everyone welcome. Parents from families that move into the area say that their children come on 'by leaps and bounds'. According to parents, teaching is 'very enthusiastic,' and this enthusiasm communicates itself to the pupils. Achievement is good in reading, writing, mathematics and science because all pupils are strongly motivated to learn. Confidence is generated in activities such as tag rugby, dramatic productions, playing instruments such as the double bass, or outward bound challenges on the Year 5/6 residential. Older pupils are quite clear that these opportunities give them the impetus to study hard in their academic work.

Standards fluctuate year on year because of the small numbers and the different make up of each year group. Nevertheless, they are regularly above average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Sometimes they are well above average at the end of Year 6, as they were in 2005. Results in English are marginally better than those in mathematics. This is because higher-attaining pupils throughout the school are not always sufficiently challenged in mathematics lessons and could do better. They could do more when solving problems using their arithmetic skills. Pupils make consistently good progress from Reception to Year 2, where standards are invariably above average. The school suffered some rapid staff changes in the last two years, which to some extent hindered the progress of pupils in lower Key Stage 2. Despite this, the progress made by pupils by the end of Year 6 in 2007 was exceptionally good. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Furthermore, the small group in public care succeed well owing to the thought that goes into assisting them.

The good personal development of pupils at Darrington is directly related to the family atmosphere in school and the trust that is built up between pupils and adults. Older pupils are elected to the school council to represent classes lower down the school. They take this role very seriously, particularly in the way that they visit other classes to tell them what the school council has decided. There are many other ways in which pupils can help out. The commitment and friendly atmosphere established means that the school's Christian principles are expressed well in daily life. Healthy living is high on the agenda and pupils know exactly how sport, food and drink choices make them as fit as they are. Pupils have a wide understanding of cultures beyond their own through links with other schools, fund-raising for international charities and big events such as 'All Around the World' week.

Lively teaching makes learning relevant and appealing. For example, in a mathematics lesson, Year 3/4 pupils sang their times tables at regular intervals, between bursts of other work, in such a way that they mastered them without realising it. Similarly, French is taught in an exciting way. Many children claim that information and communication technology (ICT) is their favourite subject because electronic whiteboards and the new suite of computers are used so productively. Lessons pay due regard to the breadth of pupils' attainment, but higher attainers in mathematics are often required to complete the basic work before tackling extra challenges, which can slow down their rate of progress.

The assessment of pupils' learning is good. Moreover, teachers are beginning to implement some useful ways to involve pupils in assessing their own work. Each teacher has, in the past, kept their own detailed records of pupils' progress. The lack of a centralised summary of this

information has hampered governors, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and subject leaders from investigating how well individuals and groups of pupils are doing. They have not had secure information to plan effective strategies for improvement. The school knows that this is a relative weakness, but it is too soon to see any results from their recent efforts to create a comprehensive school record. Nevertheless, leadership and management, spurred on by the insights of the headteacher, have in a relatively short time gained a very clear idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses, accelerated pupils' progress in ICT; and altered the accommodation to benefit children's learning outside. All this has been achieved while maintaining above average standards, which demonstrates the school's good value for money and capacity to capitalise on these successes.

Some parents are concerned that their views are not taken into account enough. However, the inspection finds that the school communicates well with parents and listens to their views. The recent evening to familiarise parents with teaching methods in numeracy was successful in creating stronger links between home and school. Several parents declared that it was an, 'excellent evening', which they would happily recommend to any parent.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Reception class. As a result, many go beyond the nationally expected levels for their age by the end of the year. Occasionally, depending on numbers in the school, some pupils in Year 1 are taught in Reception. The curriculum is adapted well for all the children and they make equally good progress. Teaching is particularly good at helping all children to acquire skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Physical and creative development have received a boost recently because an outside area, full of fascinating things to do, has been established. The school knows that the classroom needs an electronic whiteboard to make learning inside even more interesting. Links with parents are purposeful and productive; several remark on how well their children are welcomed and introduced to school life. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed in a way that recognises what is successful, but also what needs to be improved. For example, staff are aware that higher-attaining children, in particular, lack enough opportunities to practise counting and calculations in as many play situations as possible.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of the most able pupils in mathematics so that they reach the higher levels of attainment by the end of Year 2 and 6.
- Develop the use of information from assessments, at a whole-school level, to evaluate the progress of pupils and plan improvements where necessary.

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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?	2
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	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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	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.

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	3
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your help when I inspected your school. I thoroughly enjoyed my day with you. I was unlucky enough to miss those of you in Years 1 and 2 owing to your visit to a house of historical interest. However, the work in your books made sure that I discovered what you do normally.

You go to a good school, which is improving fast after a time when some of you had several teachers in quick succession. I know that you enjoy yourselves greatly because children at my lunch table told me so. I also saw it with my own eyes in lessons and around the school. I found it fascinating to talk to several of you about your work and how teachers help you though their marking. What impressed me most was how positive you all are about what is on offer at Darrington such as: French; residential trips; links with other schools; sports; visits to a secondary school to make science learning more special; and acting out scenes from Shakespeare in the classroom.

You told me that teaching is good and helps you to learn well, and I agree. I think that the way that your headteacher, ably helped by all the other staff, has made sure that learning is evenly good again, throughout the school, is worth mentioning. You have all done your bit by behaving well and keeping cheerful. You are all growing up to be positive young people who care about yourselves and the world around you.

I know everyone wants to do even better and I have asked your school to do two things to help. These will complement all the other things that you and the adults want to do, such as improving playground equipment. The staff need to make sure that children who can manage harder work in mathematics get a chance to do this more often. Secondly, they need to check that you are all getting on as well as you can by studying the progress you are making annually, and from year to year.

You can all help the school do better by always tackling extension challenges in mathematics with the same enthusiasm that you show in every other respect.