

Diamond Hall Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108759
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	309793
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Rodger

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	345
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Snaith
Headteacher	Mrs Kim Bennett
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2006
School address	Well Street Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR4 6JF
Telephone number	0191 5537630
Fax number	0191 5537631

Age group	7–11
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2008
Inspection number	309793

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: 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

This large junior school is situated in a socially and economically deprived area close to the city centre. An above average proportion of pupils is eligible for a free school meal. There is an average number of pupils from minority ethnic groups; an above average proportion of whom do not have English as their first language. A small number of pupils are learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school has achieved a Silver Artsmark, Silver Healthy School award and an Anti-Bullying Charter Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Diamond Hall Junior School is a good school. The headteacher, staff and governors have succeeded in improving the school in every respect since the previous inspection. Pupils achieve well from their below average starting points. Standards are improving in all subjects, especially in mathematics, because rigorous systems track the progress of each child and provide additional support for pupils where needed. Teaching and learning are good because the senior leadership team have high expectations and the regular monitoring, training and coaching has improved the quality of teaching.

The headteacher and staff work productively to 'make a difference' to every pupil's achievement. Parental views endorse the inspection judgements. Parents are pleased with the approachability of the headteacher and the guidance they have to help with their children's homework. Comments such as, 'Diamond Hall provides many opportunities for children to broaden their horizons beyond the core curriculum' are typical.

All pupils achieve well. The detailed analysis of the progress of all groups of pupils shows that a substantial number make better than expected progress term by term. Year 6 pupils are on track to exceed the results of the past few years. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. They benefit from the well targeted use of information and communication technology (ICT) to assist their learning. As a result, they make good progress. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils thrive and develop good levels of confidence and great enjoyment in many of the enrichment activities the school offers. This is most evident in the pride with which they show their singing talents and the ease with which pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included in all activities.

The quality of teaching has improved in recent months. It is good with outstanding features. Organisation and the pace of learning are strong elements. Good use is made of ICT to inspire enjoyment and marking is very helpful in ensuring pupils know what to do to improve. Weaker features are that sometimes pupils sit and listen for too long and instructions are unclear. As a result, pupils start to lose concentration. Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Assessment information for every child is meticulous. The school makes effective use of this information to provide additional support for pupils making less than expected progress. Very good provision for vulnerable pupils enables them to settle happily into school.

- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has worked with strong determination to improve the contribution of subject leaders. Robust systems to check teaching and learning are effective in improving the overall quality across the school. Governors provide the correct balance between challenge and support because they are very well informed. Good improvements have been made since the previous inspection. The school has a good capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure introductions are not too long and instructions are clear in all lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good from below average starting points in Year 3. Standards are improving, especially in mathematics. Current standards in lessons, and from the school's detailed tracking system, show that Year 6 pupils are on track to meet their challenging targets this year. Standards were below average in the 2007 national tests, but are currently average across the school. The current good progress has not had time to affect the national test results. The improvements result from the impact of better teaching and good use of detailed analysis of past and current performance. This effectively challenges and supports pupils in lessons. The arrangements to group pupils on the basis of their prior standards for English and mathematics are ensuring that the individual needs of pupils are met. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because they have well targeted additional support. The school has identified some underachievement by girls with English as an additional language. Support from skilled adults ensures these girls make good progress. The majority of pupils who have English as an additional language achieve well. They reach standards above the national expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils enjoy school. They say staff are kind, fair and always ready to help. Pupils describe their lessons as fun and are enthusiastic about playtimes because of organised games and exciting resources. They say they feel safe and know how to keep healthy. Pupils appreciate the school's procedures to protect them from Internet danger and frequently praise staff vigilance. Pupils' views are considered and they cite the newly refurbished toilets as evidence of this. They also notice changes in their own learning and feel they have a better understanding of their own performance. Taking part in community events, such as raising funds for charity and attending 'Christingle' at the local church, are some of the ways in which pupils understand the wider community. They also speak proudly of the choir's success and parents' enjoyment of school productions. Pupils are cooperative in lessons and teamwork is a strong feature of their learning. Behaviour is good and well exemplified by the courtesy and consideration they show towards others. Attendance is average. Pupils' standards in English and mathematics prepare them satisfactorily for secondary education.

Inspection report: Diamond Hall Junior School, 13–14 March 2008 7 of 11 Document reference number: HMI 250701 September 2007
Inspection report: Diamond Hall Junior School, 13–14 March 2008 6 of 11 Document reference number: HMI 250701 September 2007

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good with some outstanding features. Teachers' planning makes it clear what pupils are expected to learn. Questioning is often probing and demonstrations are helpful in addressing misconceptions. As a result, pupils make good progress and enjoy learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and explain well, for example, when teaching pupils how to multiply by hundreds, tens and units. There are high levels of challenge

for more able pupils, such as calculating the number of slabs needed to build a patio. Teaching assistants are skilful when working with pupils with English as an additional language and with those pupils having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Sometimes teachers' explanations are unclear and pupils spend too long sitting on the carpet. This means pupils' interest flags and lessons lose pace. Good marking of pupils' work gives pupils pointers for improvement and encouragement to respond with their own comments.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum contributes well to pupils' enjoyment and improvements in their basic skills. Fast paced ICT programs help pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities catch up and improve their reading and numeracy skills. Projects are well planned and link several subjects together in topics such as the Roman invasion of Britain and global warming. This leads to good improvements in pupils' writing. Several enrichment activities are provided in school as well as an extensive programme of after school clubs. A range of visitors helps to broaden pupils' understanding of other cultures. Business enterprise is effectively fostered by making gift tags for sale and calculating profit and loss. French is taught across the school. Musical tuition is given a high priority, resulting in above average competence in singing by many pupils. There are 'booster' after school clubs as well as ICT, sports and mathematics. The school web site is an informative resource and provides pupils with additional homework.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils' care, guidance and support are good. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. They are comprehensive, clear and detailed. Vulnerable pupils are well supported in a twice daily 'nurture group'. This provides a positive and secure environment in which pupils learn to share experiences, discuss concerns and explore their feelings. Target setting is well developed and pupils understand their role in assessing their learning admirably. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is extensive with good use made of external agencies when necessary. Support staff are effective in helping pupils to learn. Additional support for pupils learning to speak English is good. All staff demonstrate good levels of care and understanding. Health and safety checks are robustly carried out to ensure pupils are safe outside school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good at all levels. The headteacher, with capable support from the deputy headteacher, has set about raising standards and improving achievement. They have a firm determination and clear resolve that all pupils will succeed. The senior management team have introduced a comprehensive range of systems to check the progress of all pupils on a regular basis. The analysis of this information is used rigorously to provide intervention programmes to support pupils making less than expected progress. This, as seen in the school's tracking files and assessments, is having a good impact on raising standards throughout the school. Actions to tackle underachievement of specific groups, especially girls from minority ethnic backgrounds, are making a good impact on pupils' progress.

Self-evaluation has involved all staff in a campaign to improve everything about the school in the past year. The impact on improving standards is the most marked. Formal classroom monitoring of teaching and detailed feedback involving all staff with management responsibilities has been extremely well received. It has helped create a strong team with a palpably shared vision to improve the school. The senior staff are fully aware there is still room for improvement in the quality of teaching in a small number of classes. The chair of governors supports the headteacher well. The school's evaluation of itself is modest in respect of the achievement of pupils and has not taken account of the rapid progress made in recent months. Partnerships with parents and external agencies are good.

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.

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?	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?	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	3
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	3

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	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

15 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Diamond Hall Junior School, Sunderland, SR4 6JF

Thank you all for the welcome you have given to me in school. My colleagues and I enjoyed seeing all the exciting and fun things you do in school. Your singing is fantastic. I hope you do well in the competition. Please extend our thanks to your parents for completing the questionnaire. Your school has made a lot of progress in the past year and is a good school. You all work hard and are doing so much better in all your work. Keep up the progress you are making and continue to work hard to meet your challenging targets.

You find out about so much and use ICT really well to complete your work and to research topics you are studying in school. The work of Year 4 on global warming is very interesting. I trust you know what to do to help protect the environment too. You are taught well and there is really good use of the whiteboards and many good displays in the classroom to help your learning. Sometimes you have to sit and listen for too long, begin to get bored and forget what you have to do. I have asked that all lessons are made interesting and that all of you know exactly what your tasks are.

Good luck and thank you once again for being so helpful and kind when we were in school.

Best wishes

Rosemary Rodger

Lead inspector