

Dagnall School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110218
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310223
Inspection date	17 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Christopher Parker

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	36
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Victoria Lee
Headteacher	Mrs Jennifer Marriner-Kyle
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Main Road South Dagnall Berkhamsted HP4 1QX
Telephone number	01442 842473
Fax number	01442 842473

Age group	4–7
Inspection date	17 June 2008
Inspection number	310223

© 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 an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. He investigated how the school ensures that pupils make good progress, how well they respond to the range of opportunities the school offers and how effectively the leadership plans, monitors and evaluates improvement. Evidence was gathered from the analysis of pupils' progress, samples of their work, observation of lessons, parents' questionnaires, discussions with a group of pupils, the headteacher, the chair of governors and the teachers responsible for English and mathematics. 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

The school is much smaller than average. Almost all of the pupils are from white British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. None of the pupils take free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is lower than average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'Dagnall School provides a happy and safe environment. The children are always involved in lots of activities that make learning interesting and enjoyable. My child is very happy here.'

This comment encapsulates the very positive views of almost all of the parents who returned the questionnaire. Although small in number, the parents play a significant role in supporting the school's work, notably by raising considerable funds that enable the school to extend its provision and resources.

This is a good school. Pupils make good progress and their personal development is outstanding. The headteacher provides strong leadership. She has generated an ethos of excellent care and support for pupils. The school takes full advantage of small class sizes to develop confident and cooperative children who are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

The size and make up of cohorts varies from year to year. Consequently, standards at the end of Year 2 fluctuate but, generally, they are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's tracking system shows that pupils, including those experiencing difficulties in literacy and numeracy, make good progress from when they start school in the Reception class to leaving at the end of Year 2.

Currently, the teachers are concentrating on accelerating progress in writing and mathematics. The teachers who lead these subjects make good use of the training they receive to help their colleagues to develop their teaching and incorporate the recent changes to the curriculum. Along with the headteacher, they monitor the quality of teaching and check that pupils are on course to reach their target levels. In one analysis of the pupils' work the headteacher noted inconsistencies in the quality of marking. Steps were taken to adopt a consistent approach and as a result marking now helps pupils to improve their work. The teachers set targets for the pupils in Years 1 and 2 for literacy and numeracy. Many of these targets, in writing for example, are too broad and relate solely to punctuation and handwriting at the expense of more precise targets that help the pupils to develop the structure and organisation of their work and move to the next level in their learning.

The school has a broad and interesting curriculum. As part of their review of writing and mathematics, the subject leaders have, rightly, highlighted the need to provide more opportunities for the pupils to use and extend their literacy and numeracy skills throughout the curriculum. In addition to lessons, the school provides an excellent range of lunchtime and after school clubs that the pupils greatly enjoy. They talk animatedly about Football Fever, tennis, Yoga Bugs, gardening club and, 'doing the hurdles and long jump' at the school sports festival. Trips to places of interest, such as the museum in Luton to look at the history of toys, also significantly enhance the curriculum.

The wide range of opportunities, along with the excellent care and support the school provides, make a major contribution to the outstanding personal development of the pupils. The pupils behave very well and respond enthusiastically in lessons. In assembly, they listen carefully and participate wholeheartedly, singing tunefully with audible and visible enjoyment. They are also thoughtful. This was also evident in the assembly where they considered the impact of getting cross with others. The school makes excellent use of the local community and its membership of a network of small schools. The pupils benefit greatly from meeting and working with pupils from other schools on a range of interesting projects; the most recent being a music workshop. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 meet with the chair of the parish council to give their views on local

issues. The school has just received the Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark in recognition of the opportunities it provides for the pupils and their excellent understanding of the importance of being fit and healthy. In each class, the day begins with an 'Activate' session.

The pupils say they feel safe at school and, in a questionnaire of their views, most cited an adult who they would turn to if they needed help. All responded very positively to the questions. Replying to the question, 'What do you like about school?' one five-year-old wrote, 'it is fun'. Lessons are fun because the teachers plan interesting and engaging activities. They create a very positive atmosphere in which the pupils work and play successfully. The small number of pupils allows the teachers to tailor work to meet the needs of individuals. It also gives them the flexibility to organise groupings to challenge the most able and support those with learning difficulties. They do this to good effect when, for example, teaching phonics.

Since the school was last inspected, the headteacher and governors have made many improvements, not least to the accommodation. The school is well placed to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The children get off to a good start in the Reception class because they are well taught and are encouraged to be independent. They participate in an interesting range of activities both led by adults and those they chose themselves. As a result, they grow in confidence. The recently developed outdoor area adds significantly to the curriculum.

The children listen carefully and enter confidently into conversation, for example, when they were measuring the ingredients to make salt-dough. The adults encouraged the children to experiment and observe how the ingredients changed. Their skilful questioning successfully developed the children's vocabulary and extended their understanding.

The children make good progress. The standards they reach frequently meet and, for some, exceed expectations for the end of the Reception Year. The children are well prepared for Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that the targets set for pupils are sufficiently precise and detailed to help them to improve their work.
- Extend the range of opportunities for pupils to use and develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

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?	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	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?	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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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	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

27 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dagnall School, Berkhamsted, HP4 1QX

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed the day.

You go to a good school and do well because the headteacher and teachers give you many interesting things to do. You are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. You told me that the teachers make lessons fun. They mark your work so that you know how well you are doing but some of the targets in the front of your books are rather broad. I have asked the teachers to give you more detail so you know what you need to do to improve your work to reach even higher standards. I have also asked them to give you more opportunities use your literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.

The staff care for you and support you extremely well. Your behaviour is excellent and you really enjoy the clubs you attend. You get on very well with each other and really enjoy working together. I saw you getting the day off to a very energetic start with an Activate session and you told me all about the school sports festival. These things have helped you to understand how important it is to be fit. I enjoyed assembly - it made me think about not getting cross too! I was very impressed by your singing.

I hope you continue to enjoy school and to do well.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker

Lead Inspector