

Denby Free Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112881
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	311037
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Raymond Jardine

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	116
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Tracey Gill
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Street Denby Village Ripley Derbyshire DE5 8PH

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Denby Free is a smaller than average primary that serves Denby Village and increasingly the surrounding area. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds but a few come from a range of other ethnicities; none are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. An average proportion has learning difficulties, mainly moderate learning or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Attainment on entry to Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is wide in range. It has fallen a little since the last inspection and is broadly in line with that expected for children of this age. The school has achieved a number of awards in recognition of aspects of its work, including Activemark, International School and Eco-School awards. At the time of the inspection there was significant new building work going on that is affecting some school routines.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Denby Free is a satisfactory and improving school. It has some good features in the standards of care and guidance it gives pupils. The school's Christian character pervades its work. Staff work together to promote the school's aims, providing pupils with a rounded education and growing awareness of the wider world. Consequently, pupils' personal development is good; they grow in confidence, enjoy their education and contribute much to their community.

Pupils' academic achievements are satisfactory overall. Standards in 2008 in both Year 2 and Year 6 were about average, although fewer pupils than expected attained the higher levels in their tests and assessments. Standards in Year 6 have recovered from the previous year when they dipped significantly because too many pupils, particularly some who were higher attaining when in Year 2, did not progress well enough. The school rightly diagnosed uneven progress across Years 3 to 6, particularly in writing, as a factor. Staff realised that school systems for checking the progress pupils make were not sharp enough to anticipate such a dip. Since then, such systems have been tightened considerably; expectations have also risen with the introduction of more challenging targets for all pupils. Consequently, the improvements in standards seen in the 2008 test results in English, mathematics and science are being sustained. Standards currently are a little better in reading and mathematics than in writing or science. Pupils' progress is continuing to improve, although it remains uneven. In lessons, pupils are often organised into groups according to their needs and abilities and teaching assistants play an important and influential part in supporting pupils' learning, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Even so, in some lessons in Years 3 to 6, too little attention is given to how learning for different ability groups can be appropriately challenging and where this occurs, it is most often the higher attaining pupils who could do better. The school is aware of this weakness; it is focussing attention on raising teaching quality to make it consistently good and to reflect its best practice.

The school does much to add relevance and interest to the satisfactory curriculum through visits, visitors and its links with institutions in other countries, reflecting its International School award. Pupils acquire a good understanding of some global issues that affect their lives; their action on environmental issues is a good example. Pupils readily take responsibility and acquire a good understanding of how to live healthy and safe lives. Behaviour and rates of attendance are good. Most of the many parents and carers who returned questionnaires expressed confidence in the school's work but a significant minority were concerned about behaviour. The school has dealt with some incidents of challenging behaviour over the past year, but such incidents are now rare and arrangements for promoting good behaviour are good. Leadership and management, including governance, are sound overall and the school has a secure understanding of its current effectiveness. In order to accelerate the pace of improvement, the influence of curriculum leaders needs extending further, particularly to make full use of the improved assessment data now available and to help monitor and develop teaching quality across the school. While school priorities and strategies for improvement are set out clearly, criteria for their success are not sharp enough to enable governors to challenge how well it is progressing in them.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle in well and make good progress in most areas of learning. The provision is led well by a relatively new and knowledgeable coordinator, who has made good progress in improving provision since her appointment. Regular focussed observations from all adults guide the detailed curriculum planning to ensure that all children build on their learning. There are high standards of care within a safe and secure environment. Children typically are engaged in a good balance of child and adult initiated activities that cover all the areas of learning. For example, children practised their letters and sounds while making word and picture lists of animals they would like to have, linked to their story. Adults take every opportunity to weave in several aspects of learning into play, as when children count their skipping or how far their beanbag frogs have jumped. Progress is better in personal, social and emotional development, numeracy and problem-solving and linking letters and sounds. While parents are strongly encouraged to be involved in their children's learning, the coordinator realises that better links should be established with the many Early Years settings from which children come.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement further by providing higher attaining pupils with sufficient challenge, particularly in writing and science.
- Build on the best practice to improve teaching quality so that it is consistently good or better across the school.
- Extend the role of curriculum leaders and governors in monitoring the school's performance, particularly standards and teaching quality, in order to accelerate the pace of improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards by Year 2 in 2008 were about average in reading and mathematics and slightly better in writing. The school's work to improve writing, for example, through its programme of phonics for younger pupils is proving effective. Standards currently in Year 2 are higher and progress continues to be good because of good teaching in this key stage. Standards in Year 6 are also broadly average overall, although better in mathematics and a little weaker in science. The school has reversed a decline in Year 6 standards since 2007 when pupils' progress between Years 3 to 6 was too low. Throughout the school, most pupils now make the expected progress and some do better because of much improved checks on their progress. Rates of progress are not yet consistent because teaching quality varies. Some higher attaining pupils in particular have not been achieving the standards expected of them; too few attained the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science in 2008 and the school missed its targets for such pupils. Targets for 2009 are higher, including those for Level 5, reflecting the school's ambitions for the impact of its improvement work in this targeted area.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

All aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural are developed well as pupils grow and mature. Pupils relate very well to each other and to adults. A well-established link with an orphanage in Kenya through the local church is one example of many initiatives that are contributing to pupils' good awareness of the global community, other cultural traditions and economic issues such as fair trade and sustainability. Pupils are immersed in the Christian faith but also gain a good insight into a range of other faiths, for example, through visits to varied places of worship. The school council is influential, for example, in shaping the school's new behaviour policy. The council raises its own funds through a range of activities to help pupils at the school and to give generously to charitable causes of their choosing. Pupils gain a good understanding of how to live safe lives, for example, through road safety guidance and alertness to strangers. Most choose to have the healthy school lunches provided and the involvement of many in the range of sporting and competitive activities reflects pupils' good understanding of the importance of living healthily. Pupils' learn to work independently, take responsibility and acquire sound basic skills for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Most lessons are interesting and planned to engage pupils in learning through first hand experience. Pupils respond well and little time is lost in managing pupils' behaviour or attention. Class discussions are productive and most questioning encourages pupils to explain their answers. Speaking and listening features prominently in lessons and pupils are keen to contribute. Teaching and learning are typically good in Years 1 and 2 but teaching quality is not consistent enough across Years 3 to 6 to promote good learning among all pupils. A key reason is that tasks and activities sometimes do not ensure that higher attaining pupils in particular get enough challenge. Teaching quality also varies between subjects, for example, scientific enquiry has received too little emphasis to enable pupils to be confident in such skills. Marking is regular and provides correction and encouragement. A recent innovation has been the introduction of next-step targets in learning in English and mathematics, which pupils are beginning to use for themselves.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is soundly planned and broad in scope, with some strengths in personal, social, moral and health education. It is enriched well through visitors, visits and themed weeks, such as book week and European week, where pupils experience other cultural traditions. In Years 1 and 2, themed links between subjects add relevance and creativity but this approach does not yet extend so effectively in later years. The school is working to coordinate the teaching of basic skills more fully across years and subjects. Provision and use of information and communication technology is a strength, but work is currently underway to extend writing opportunities more fully across subjects to raise standards further. The successful introduction of French adds to the strong international dimension that is contributing much to pupils' knowledge and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff work well together to provide good standards of care and welfare. Pupils enjoy good relationships with adults in the school. They say that they feel secure from any bullying or harassment, confident that it will be dealt with promptly. There are effective systems for promoting good behaviour that have drawn on the views of staff, parents and pupils. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, such as social, emotional and behavioural, are supported and guided well. Good use is made of outside expertise to help guide the school's work in this respect. Systems for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare are robust and meet current requirements. Important improvements to the rigour with which pupils' progress to their targets is checked have contributed to the recent recovery in standards. Such targets are now more appropriately challenging and half-termly progress reviews with staff ensure that remedial action is prompt in providing additional support to those pupils who need it. Teaching assistants are skilled and play an important role in this respect. Pupils know their targets but are not yet adept at using them to review and improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides clear direction for the school's development which has engendered a strong sense of teamwork among staff. Staff, parents and pupils are consulted about changes to the school's work, regular newsletters are provided to parents and many value the home-school workbook highly. Even so, a significant minority thought that home school communication could be better and the school is looking at how it can be improved. A strength in management is the staff's commitment to promoting community cohesion through their imaginative and varied use of the local and wider community.

Self-evaluation is mainly accurate and consequently school priorities are soundly based. There are clear strategies for tackling weaknesses set out in the school's improvement plan and staff and governors have a common understanding of where improvement is required, although not how it will be measured. At present, the headteacher is mainly involved in monitoring and developing teaching quality. Other leaders review planning and pupils' work and have a sense of where the weaknesses lie. Plans are in hand to involve curriculum leaders more fully in evaluating the school's performance, particularly through monitoring teaching and in using the more robust assessments they now have to guide their work. This development in the school's management is essential to help raise the potential for improvement above its current satisfactory level.

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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?	3
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	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

14 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Denby Free CofE VA Primary School, Denby, DE5 8PH

Thank you for the warm welcome that I received when I visited your school recently. I am writing to tell you what I learned about your school. You receive a sound and well-rounded education. You clearly enjoy coming to school and your learning in lessons. Well done on your good attendance and behaviour! I was impressed by your involvement in lessons and the respect that you show to each other and to adults. The school does much to help you learn about the wider world, such as the importance of looking after the environment and understanding and appreciating other cultural traditions. You are also very aware of how to live fit, healthy and safe lives.

Children get a good start at the school in Reception and continue to do well in Years 1 and 2. You make sound progress in English, mathematics and science in later years but the staff are working hard to make your progress better, particularly your writing. I have asked your headteacher to ensure that the tasks you receive in lessons are always challenging, particularly for those of you who can do harder work. She is also going to ensure that the teaching is always at least good so that all of you achieve well by the time you leave Year 6.

All the adults in the school work very hard to take good care of you and I know that you appreciate their efforts. Please thank your parents and carers for the many questionnaire responses that I received. Most parents are pleased with many aspects of the school's work but some would like communication to be better. Your headteacher is going to see what further steps can be taken. She is also going to involve staff and governors more fully in checking and improving the school's work, so that changes happen more quickly. You can help them by using your own targets to check how well you are doing and how your work can be even better.

With all good wishes for your future at Denby Free.

Raymond Jardine

Lead inspector