

Denton Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114433
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311599
Inspection dates	29–30 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Jacque Buttriss

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Manson
Headteacher	Audrey Jarvis
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	Acacia Road Denton Newhaven BN9 0QJ
Telephone number	01273 513377
Fax number	01273 512259

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school set within an established housing estate. There is a separate, independent nursery unit adjoining the school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. There are very few pupils of minority ethnic groups or whose first language is not English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Although underachievement has been a concern in recent years, especially in terms of younger pupils' writing and older pupils' mathematics and science, learners are now making good progress in many of their lessons. As a result, achievement is improving across the school and is now satisfactory, even though standards are still below average. Pupils in the Reception class make good progress, as do pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities throughout the school.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are sound. 'Children feel safe at school', as a parent said, and this is echoed by pupils of all ages. The school has gained a Healthy School silver award and pupils show their good awareness of the need for healthy lifestyles, for example, by making healthy food choices at lunchtime. Pupils demonstrate good enjoyment of lessons and other activities: 'My son and his friends are all really enthusiastic about all aspects of school' is a comment typical of many parents' responses. Although some parents express concerns about behaviour, it has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now satisfactory, both in lessons and around the school. The school council meets regularly and takes an active role in improving the school environment. Pupils also have limited participation in community events. They develop good co-operation skills and their basic skills such as literacy and numeracy are beginning to improve so that they are satisfactorily prepared for their future lives.

Although there have been a number of staff changes recently, the quality of teaching has improved and is now satisfactory overall. However, it is not yet consistently good enough to make up lost ground in pupils' progress. Most lessons are well planned and provide sound coverage of the curriculum. In some lessons able pupils are not sufficiently challenged and teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do. Pupils enjoy the various clubs and activities. Academic guidance is satisfactory. However, teachers' marking of work in pupils' books is inconsistent and does not always help them know how to improve. The school looks after its pupils well, and takes care to provide additional support where it is needed.

Leadership and management are satisfactory, with good teamwork amongst leaders and staff at all levels. Leaders set clear direction for driving forward improvements, as shown in the successful rise in attendance rates and in all aspects of behaviour, as well as improved progress, especially in writing across Key Stage 2. Self-evaluation processes are suitably rigorous and governors do good work in supporting the school and fulfilling their monitoring roles. There is good leadership in the Foundation Stage and also for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Many parents say that the headteacher and staff are 'very approachable and willing to listen'. Parents provide good support for the school and the majority agree with one parent's comment that 'the school keeps parents informed and involved with what is going on'. Many positive comments recognise that the school is working hard and 'bringing education to life', as another parent put it.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The excited squeals of children as they make new learning discoveries reflect the good standard of education provided in the Reception class. Very good liaison with the adjoining nursery unit helps children to settle in easily when they start school and Reception staff provide well for

their personal development and well-being. Children are well supervised, but there is insufficient classroom support to provide all learners with ongoing individual attention. The lively and stimulating classroom and outdoor learning area motivate children well and they quickly gain confidence in all that they do. Good teaching enables children to make good progress and to develop good independent learning skills. The curriculum is varied and stimulating, giving all Reception children a strong foundation for their learning. As one parent put it, 'I couldn't wish for any better start for my boys'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good, by increasing the challenge and pace of lessons.
- Develop greater consistency in teachers' marking of pupils' work to ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

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

Children's attainment when they come into the school is below national expectations in all areas of learning, but they make good progress in the Reception class to reach average standards overall by the time they are ready to go into Year 1. In the 2007 national tests, standards were well below average in writing at the end of Year 2, and in mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. However, the school has worked hard in the past few months to raise attainment. This has resulted in the good progress seen in several classrooms during the inspection, raising standards in these key areas to below average. Achievement is now satisfactory overall. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported by the school and they now make good progress in English and mathematics, so that they achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are friendly, welcoming and happy to talk to visitors. They show positive attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school. As one parent put it, 'My daughter can't wait to get there each day'. The school has worked hard to ensure pupils' attendance has improved and it is now in line with that in most primary schools. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils care for each other and most play well together. They say they feel safe in school and they know how to get help when needed. Pupils enjoy participating in a range of physical activities. Older pupils happily take on responsibilities around the school. Although a very small minority of pupils display challenging behaviour, this is successfully managed by staff. Pupils say they do not feel intimidated and they comment on how well bullying has been reduced and is swiftly dealt with if it should occur.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

All lessons are planned thoroughly to the school's agreed format, which provides a good framework to ensure pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Some teaching is outstanding, but some lessons lack excitement and there are too few opportunities for investigative learning. Good assessment processes enable teachers to gauge pupils' understanding and track their progress diligently. Teachers' good use of questioning helps pupils develop good speaking and listening skills. Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved in the past year. One Year 5 boy said, 'Work never used to be this hard!' However, some lessons lack pace and challenge, especially for more able pupils, and some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do. Although pupils co-operate well on group projects, some of the older pupils have insufficient opportunities for independent learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that is regularly reviewed to ensure it meets the needs of all learners. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively in many lessons. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of visits, visitors, themed weeks, clubs and activities. However, the academic curriculum has only recently begun to contribute to raising standards, and does not yet contribute enough to further raising standards in younger pupils' writing and older pupils' mathematics and science work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school ensures that its procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and safety are adequate. Individual targets are set to show pupils how to improve their work, but they are not always sufficiently challenging. Some teachers mark pupils' work very constructively, but this is inconsistent across the school. In some classes they do not always let pupils know how well they are doing and what they should do to improve their work. The school supports families and works well with external agencies to provide appropriate help, for instance, for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The good induction and transfer arrangements mean that pupils feel valued and are confident about their ability to cope with new situations. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified at an early stage and good support is put in place, enabling them to achieve well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and senior leaders work together as a keen and energetic team to provide clear direction for school improvement. They undertake careful tracking and analysis of pupils' progress, although this analysis is not always accurate. The school's self-evaluation processes

are rigorous and the school improvement plan correctly identifies priorities for action. This is closely linked to the local authority's comprehensive support plan, by which additional support is being provided for the school throughout the coming year to help leaders raise standards and increase pupils' achievement. However, the attainment targets set by the school, although adequate, are not always challenging enough to accelerate pupils' progress rates so that they can attain the standards of which they are capable. There is good inclusion and equality of opportunity across year groups as well as in mixed-age classes. The dedicated governors provide good levels of support and fulfil their roles and responsibilities well. Good partnerships enable good transition arrangements between different phases of education.

The school leaders' hard work has successfully raised attendance levels, improved behaviour and strengthened assessment procedures since the last inspection, and has more recently raised older pupils' standards in English. Improvement in the quality of teaching and learning has led to the current increase in progress in lessons across the school. Subject leaders now have greater involvement in the monitoring of provision. All these recent successes demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity to improve.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	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?	3

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?	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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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	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

31 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Denton Community Primary School, Newhaven, East Sussex BN9 0QJ

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we came to inspect your school. You made us feel welcome and we enjoyed talking with you. Yours is a satisfactory school that helps you to make satisfactory progress and cares for you appropriately.

These are the things we especially like about your school:

- The pupils in the Reception class have a good start to their school lives.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.
- You learn together and play together well.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and fit. Well done!
- You enjoy school and have positive attitudes to your learning.
- The governors support your school well.
- Your headteacher and all the staff are working hard to improve your school.
- Many of your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

These are the things we think your school could do even better:

- Improve the quality of teaching by setting you more challenging work and moving your learning on throughout the lesson.
- Make sure that all the teachers mark your work with helpful comments that tell you how well you are doing and suggest how you could make your work better.

You can help by behaving well at all times, and continuing to try really hard in lessons. I would like to wish you lots of success in your future education.

With very best wishes

Jacquie Buttriss Lead inspector

31 January 2008

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Lead inspector