

Denver VC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121069
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	313864
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Marina Gough

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	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Davidson
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Allison
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2002
School address	19 Ryston Road Denver Downham Market Norfolk PE38 0DP
Telephone number	01366383272
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school is situated in the village of Denver and caters for local pupils. The school has an average number of pupils who have learning difficulties, but a higher than average number of pupils who have statements of special educational need. The pupils' home circumstances are mixed, and their attainment when they join school in the reception class is broadly average. Levels of mobility are average. The school has recently received a Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This effective school provides a good quality of education. There is a strong and shared commitment to raising standards, and the capacity for improvement is good. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, but not as fast as the school had hoped because historical staffing difficulties delayed the start of some initiatives. The school gives good value for money.

Standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly in line with the national expectation. However, the most able Year 2 pupils are not always challenged sufficiently and so do not always achieve the standards of which they are capable. Key Stage 1 pupils make satisfactory progress overall. In Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress, and in the upper part of the key stage the progress is outstanding so that, by the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. The school has focused well and successfully on raising standards in writing and in problem-solving in mathematics.

The pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. Pupils of all ages are tremendously enthusiastic and are very keen to contribute to all activities. They love coming to school and enjoy taking part in the many clubs and visits provided. Staff are effective in encouraging pupils to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and place good emphasis on keeping them safe. Pupils are highly independent and are very confident about making choices and decisions.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 1 the quality of teaching is very mixed. Pupils are taught by a combination of teachers and higher-level teaching assistants. The approaches of individual staff vary considerably. Some of the teaching seen during the inspection was of a very high standard, while other teaching was just satisfactory. In the upper part of Key Stage 2, where teaching is outstanding, activities are highly stimulating and challenging and pupils have a real thirst for learning.

The curriculum for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils is satisfactory. However, a good deal of time is given to English and mathematics, reducing the time available for other subjects. The school has already started to address this issue. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities and visits to enliven pupils' learning. Provision for pupils who have statements of special educational need is excellent, and these pupils benefit from the outstanding support of their designated support staff. The deployment of teaching assistants in other areas of the school is less effective, and there are times when there are too many adults in a class group.

The school is well led and managed. The new headteacher has made an excellent start in identifying the next stages of development for the school, and has set a clear agenda that will bring about further improvement. The governing body achieves a good balance between supporting the school and fulfilling its role of 'critical friend'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The provision for the foundation stage children in the Reception/Year1 class is satisfactory. The children are very sociable and show high levels of enthusiasm for their learning. Their attainment when they start school is broadly average, and they make satisfactory progress during their first year in school. The quality of teaching for the reception children is mixed, yet satisfactory overall. It is good with some outstanding features when the class is taught by the

teacher, but less effective when activities are directed by a teaching assistant. Although the curriculum for the reception children is satisfactory, there are not enough opportunities for the children to learn through structured and free-choice play activities. The new class teacher has clear plans, soon to be implemented, for improving provision for the reception children

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that reception children have more opportunity to learn through play.
- Improve standards at the end of Year 2 by ensuring that the highest attainers are fully challenged.
- Ensure that support staff who are not allocated to individual pupils are deployed more effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

By the end of the reception year, most children attain the early learning goals across each of the areas of learning. They make satisfactory progress overall, and good progress in their personal development and language. Standards at the end of Year 2 are average in reading, writing and mathematics and could be higher. The most able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and so do not always attain their potential. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress in the early part of the key stage and excellent progress in Year 5 and Year 6 where levels of challenge and expectation are exceptionally high. Pupils with learning difficulties make similar progress to their classmates. Those pupils who have statements of special educational need make excellent progress towards their individual targets because of the outstanding support they receive from their designated 'one to one' support staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Throughout the school the pupils' behaviour and attitudes are outstanding. The pupils are a delight to talk to because they are so enthusiastic about their learning. Pupils are very caring of one another, and very kind. Members of the school council and other monitors take their responsibilities very seriously. Pupils know the benefits of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and talk knowledgeably about the food they should eat and the impact on their bodies of regular exercise. The school is a safe and secure learning environment, and pupils are well informed about dangers such as drug misuse. The school places excellent emphasis on the pupils developing skills of independent learning, with the result that they are extremely confident about making choices and decisions, and well prepared for the challenges of 'life after school'. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils of all ages really love coming to school and speak very positively of its many strengths. Attendance is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The picture of teaching is good. It is broadly satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and the foundation stage, and good and often excellent in Key Stage 2. Classes and year groups are taught by

higher-level teaching assistants and by teachers. In the foundation stage, teaching is good, with excellent features when the children are taught by the class teacher. However, at times, the reception children are taught by support staff, and at these times the teaching is less effective because activities lack focus and too much emphasis is placed on inappropriate recording tasks.

The teaching of Key Stage 1 pupils is satisfactory. In Year 2, there is not always enough challenge for the most able pupils, and some of the lessons lack pace and a real sense of purpose. In Key Stage 2, teaching is good in the lower part of the key stage and excellent in Year 5 and Year 6. Throughout Key Stage 2, questions are used with great effect to extend learning and to probe understanding. Activities are very purposeful and pupils are given many opportunities to make choices and decisions about their learning and are encouraged to be highly independent. The pupils positively 'buzz' with enthusiasm and cannot wait for their lessons to start.

The school has developed its assessment systems well since the last inspection and is now in a position to track the progress and attainment of individual pupils as well as groups of pupils. Most teachers use assessment information well to ensure that work is well matched to the needs of individual pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory across the school. In the reception class, although all areas of learning are targeted, there are not enough opportunities for the children to consolidate and extend their learning through play. In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 the school has been focusing on raising standards in English and mathematics and so has justifiably devoted a good amount of teaching time to these subjects. However, standards are improving well in these areas, and the school recognises the need to implement a more balanced curriculum.

The school offers a very good range of enrichment activities to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils can choose from a wide variety of extra-curricular clubs, and enjoy taking part in educational visits. Key Stage 2 pupils are very keen to learn Spanish or French, and the school is hoping to develop further the range of instrumental tuition it provides.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good levels of care, support and guidance. Pupils feel comfortable about approaching any adult with concerns and express confidence in the fact that staff will sort out any problems. Procedures for child protection are good, and staff know the escalation procedures. Excellent levels of additional support are provided for pupils who have significant learning difficulties or whose first language is not English. This support is given in a sensitive and understated way so that individuals do not feel disadvantaged in any way. The school makes good provision for pupils who have slipped behind in their learning, providing a range of booster and intervention groups where pupils can benefit from individual and carefully targeted support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is very well led by the new headteacher. Already she has a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and is implementing the necessary change in a measured but purposeful way. Monitoring of teaching and learning has been very effective in highlighting the variations across and between key stages, and the headteacher and senior management team are now well placed to bring about improvement to teaching where there are weaknesses. The senior management team is very effective, and the two lead co-ordinators for English and mathematics who, together with the headteacher, form the senior management team, set a very high standard for colleagues through their own highly professional approach and practice. However new initiatives have yet to have full impact on the school, particularly in ensuring consistency in the quality of the teaching and learning.

The governing body is good. It fulfils its statutory responsibilities well, and is knowledgeable, hard working and very supportive. Governors have carried out a good range of monitoring activities so that they are well informed about the life and work of the school.

The school knows itself very well and is well placed for the next stage of its development.

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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	3
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	2
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	1

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?	3
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

23 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Denver VC Primary School, Downham Market, Norfolk, PE38 0DP

I am writing to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school a short time ago. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting you all, and was exceptionally impressed by how well behaved you are and how enthusiastic you are in lessons. You are a great credit to the school, and I know you enjoy your learning and think very highly of your teachers.

By the time you leave Denver at the end of Year 6, your test results show that you are doing much better than expected in English, mathematics and science. You make good progress in Key Stage 2, especially in Year 5 and Year 6, where you are really challenged in your learning. Pupils in Year 2 make satisfactory progress, but I think that some of you could be doing even better and I have asked your teachers to make some of your work more difficult. The reception children quickly settle into school life and enjoy their work, but I think that they need to have more opportunities to play so that they can practise the new things that they learn each day. I noticed that some of the pupils in your school need a bit of extra help with their learning, and I was really pleased to see how kind the staff were who work with these pupils. You are very lucky in having so many teaching assistants to help you, but sometimes when the classes are small, there are too many adults helping out and so you then do not do enough for yourselves.

I think that your new headteacher is doing a good job. She is taking time to get to know the school before she makes any big changes, and this is a really sensible way of working. The governing body is very helpful and supportive and knows the school well because governors often visit.

Best wishes,

Marina Gough

Lead Inspector