

Docking Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121207
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	313919
Inspection dates	10–11 January 2008
Reporting inspector	John Brennan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stephen Flynn
Headteacher	Mrs Rachael Williams
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2002
School address	Chequers Street Docking King's Lynn Norfolk PE31 8LH
Telephone number	01485518344
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school serving the village of Docking and the surrounding area. It is an economically mixed area that is reflected in the school's intake. Pupil skills and abilities on entry to school are wide-ranging but are typically below those usually found nationally. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Almost all pupils are from a White British background. The school has undergone considerable staff change since the last inspection including a recent change in headship.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that is well led. The relatively new headteacher has built upon existing strengths and brought a fresh vision and energy to the school. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher who has provided continuity through a period of change and together they form an effective team. Governors play their part well. Parental confidence in the school is high. As one parent said, and many others endorsed, the school is full of, 'happy, friendly staff and children'. People and their individual needs matter in this school, which fully lives up to its motto: 'We work together, we learn together, we grow together.' As a result, the school has improved well since the last inspection and, in the main, has successfully tackled some substantial areas for improvement. In particular, standards at the end of Year 6 have risen. Pupils are achieving well and standards are above average. Accurate self-evaluation has led to the right priorities for improvement being identified. This, and a record of accomplishment, give the school good capacity to improve further. However, action plans mix routine tasks with more important priorities and do not always identify measurable success criteria.

Pupils' good personal development contributes well to their achievement. Their enjoyment of school can be seen in how well they work and play alongside each other and how hard they try in lessons. Pupils show an outstanding understanding of the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. They are knowledgeable about local customs and history but their knowledge of other cultures, especially of life in multi-cultural Britain is not as well developed. Pupils are well prepared, both academically and personally, for the next stage of their education.

The gently encouraging manner of the staff helps pupils give of their best and ensures that classrooms are calm and purposeful places. This characterises the good quality of teaching and learning and the good care, support and guidance of pupils. However, the teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is not as strong as that found elsewhere. Pupil talk is not given enough emphasis, although in several classes, especially in Years 1 and 2, it is used effectively as a tool to help deepen thinking. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, with strengths in fostering pupils' personal development and enrichment activities, but there are shortcomings in the curricular provision for the Foundation Stage.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Overall provision is satisfactory, although there are high and lows. In general, the older children in the Foundation Stage do better than the younger ones because teaching is stronger. Achievement is satisfactory with an acceleration in progress by older children in the mixed Reception, Year 1 and 2 class, which helps to make up for some early lost ground. Despite this, children's skills and abilities on exit from Reception are still below expected levels, especially in aspects of language. The teaching of older children is skilled in using activities to draw out and use spoken language as a spur to learning. This is not as evident in the teaching and learning of younger children where questioning during group work does not draw all children into learning. In addition, children are left to their own devices too much when working on activities. These often occupy, rather than engage, them in purposeful learning. The spread out and disjointed accommodation makes it difficult for the Foundation Stage to operate in a uniform way and so provision lacks cohesion. In particular, the curriculum is somewhat fragmented and weighted too much in favour of learning indoors to the detriment of working outside.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage, especially for younger children, and improve the leadership of the Foundation Stage as a whole.
- Extend pupils' knowledge of the lives and customs of people in other cultures, especially those in multi-cultural Britain.
- Slim down action plans and ensure that success criteria focus on pupil outcomes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils are achieving well. Following a satisfactory start to school, pupils' progress really accelerates in Years 1 and 2 where teaching is expert. Momentum is maintained through Key Stage 2, with pupils progressing well. Results in the national tests have improved in Years 2 and 6 in each of the past three years: standards are typically average at the end of Year 2 and they rose markedly in Year 6 last year to be above average. School data shows that although standards are not quite as high this year, pupils nevertheless have made good progress from their starting points. The school is meeting with success the increasingly challenging targets it sets itself. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well in learning to read, write and count. A concentration on the teaching of reading is paying dividends. By the end of Year 6 last year, three quarters of pupils attained beyond the national average. It is only recently that pupils' prowess in reading and the wider curriculum have been harnessed as a way of developing writing. As a result, although progress has picked up of late, standards in writing are not quite as high as other key subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils talk enthusiastically about their school and how much they enjoy being there. Attendance rates are above the national average. Pupils willingly take responsibility for looking after each other. An active school council ensures they have an influential say in school life and, because of efforts such as growing their own vegetables, they demonstrate good responsibility for the environment. School meals are of a high quality, whilst lunchboxes abound with healthy yogurts and non-fizzy drinks. Mealtimes form a dining experience, with elderly people from the village eating at this 'restaurant' once a week. This makes for a close community with one pupil saying that through such mealtimes she, 'had met a new neighbour'. Playtimes are active, social occasions but limited play equipment and the absence of guidelines about who plays what and where can lead to a lack of direction in some play. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good, with the exception of pupils' lack of knowledge of other cultures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

In Years 1 to 6, very good relationships mean that it is rare to find voices being raised. A strengthening of assessment procedures has ensured that teachers know their pupils well. This, and the close partnerships between teaching and non-teaching staff, mean that work is well matched to pupils' needs. Teaching is particularly expert in Years 1 and 2 as perceptive and probing questioning leads to natural learning conversations which characterise the exchanges

between the teachers and pupils. Strategies for teaching reading are very effective. Here, pupils' good behaviour comes into play. It allows the teachers to set a range of group activities in the sure knowledge that whilst they work intensively with one group other groups will continue with their efforts. As a result, pupils quickly move from learning-to-read to reading-to-learn. Recent staff training on writing is beginning to pay off with teachers showing increasing confidence in using reading as a stimulus and model for writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A thorough programme for pupils' personal development helps pupils make the most of their time at school. Pupils develop a good knowledge of staying safe and how to look after themselves. Following a visit from the fire service for instance, one pupil promptly wrote an evacuation procedure for his home. The visit from the fire service typifies a curriculum that is enriched by a good range of trips and visitors. A wide range of clubs, some run by pupils, is also on offer. Various sporting partnerships and the addition of a new hall have helped raise the profile of sport. The curriculum for developing key skills is well thought-out and enables pupils to gain the skills they need for later life. Although not yet a universal feature, interest and purpose are being added by activities that link learning across subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Adults in the school treat pupils as individuals, a point that has not gone unnoticed by parents and pupils. Pupils not only feel they can turn to adults for help and advice but see this as a two-way process. As one pupil said, 'You know we teach the teachers things.' Improved tracking procedures have led to more targeted and tailored support programmes for pupils and the sharpening of academic guidance given to individuals. Although at an early stage, assessment information is used to help pupils see for themselves what they need to do to improve their work. The headteacher has strengthened some of the formal systems and guidelines for safeguarding pupils. These comply with government guidelines and are robust.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The new headteacher and the longer established deputy headteacher have quickly built a close and effective professional relationship. Aided by an accurate analysis of performance, they have worked together well to gain an accurate view of what needs to be done to improve the school and its leadership. As a result, the school development plan tackles the right priorities, although resultant action plans are not as well-written as they might be. This is a nurturing school in which the regular and sensitive monitoring of teaching and learning has helped all staff. In particular, teachers new to the school are helped to grow in confidence and expertise. Leaders new to post, such as information communication technology, have made an encouraging start so that, in the main, subject leadership is strong. With the help of the local authority, the headteacher has made a good initial diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses but much remains to be done. Nevertheless, the school has improved well through a period of considerable change. Parental and pupil confidence is high. Governors are effective. They have moved from being a supportive governing body to one which also holds the school to account and takes key decisions.

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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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well 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	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?	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	3
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

14 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Docking Primary School, Docking, PE31 8LH

Thank you very much for welcoming me to your school when I visited it recently. It felt like I was visiting one big happy family. I would like to tell you what I thought about your school.

You go to a good school in which the headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to make it better still. You too play your part well in making this a good school. Your friendly nature and good behaviour makes your school a nice place to be. You are very considerate and kind, as I discovered for myself when I had dinner with you. You do all you can to eat healthily and to be active. You know a lot about Docking, both past and present. However, I did think the school could do more to help you learn about people living elsewhere, and especially those from different backgrounds living in Britain. I have asked the school to do something about this.

The adults in the school treat you well and you respond to this by trying hard in lessons and helping each other when work becomes difficult. Good teaching helps you to make good progress in your work. For the most part, work is interesting and there are lots of clubs for you to join and thoughtful activities for you to do. I did think that some of the younger children were not making enough use of their outdoor learning area and that the activities in this part of the school needed some more thought. I have asked the school to think carefully about what it does for the children in the Foundation Stage.

As well as the things I have asked the school to do, the headteacher, staff and governors have also got some good ideas of their own. I have asked them to think about how they might put their ideas into action.

John Brennan

Lead inspector