

Dishforth Airfield Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121332
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	313950
Inspection date	17 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Rodger

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	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Helen Suckling
Headteacher	Mrs Rebecca Bainbridge
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Short Road Dishforth Airfield Thirsk North Yorkshire YO7 3DL
Telephone number	01423 322556
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small school situated on a rural military base five miles from Boroughbridge. All pupils come from service families. The rate of mobility is very high: 26 pupils started the school between September 2006 and July 2007 and 35 pupils left in the same period. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. No pupils have a free school meal. All pupils are of White British heritage. The school is organised to provide three mixed-age classes. There is a full-time pre-school on site that is not managed by the school. The school has achieved the Basic Skills award and the Inclusion Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Dishforth Airfield is a good school with some outstanding features in the way in which the school calmly and effectively inducts pupils joining the school at times other than the usual start of year. This results in confident and articulate learners who use their broad understanding of the wider world to good effect to enrich their learning and to form amicable relationships with their peers and staff alike. Pupils' enjoyment of school is palpable as they describe the residential visits they make, the participation in clubs and how they are kept safe and well cared for. Parents are highly pleased with the school. This view is reflected well in the overwhelmingly positive comments they make. For example, 'We will be very disappointed to leave behind a school that makes every parent feel that their children's education is paramount.'

Standards are above average in the national tests. Pupils achieve well. The school's targets were exceeded in 2007. Current work confirms the above average standards by the end of Key Stage 2. This rapid improvement is down to the considerable impact of improvements to assessment, particularly the involvement of pupils in assessing their progress in lessons and the detailed tracking information that is used on a termly basis to identify pupils making less than expected progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well and benefit from well-targeted support that enables them to work comfortably and successfully alongside their classmates.

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent. Pupils' behaviour in classes and around school is exemplary. A system of rewards is used to excellent effect to praise behaviour and attitudes to work. The school works hard to maintain average attendance levels, but due to the nature of parents' work accept there are times when pupils need to be absent. Parents appreciate the understanding shown by the school with regard to the frequent absences of one or other parent.

The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding features in the excellent use of information and communications technology (ICT) to make explicit what pupils are expected to learn. There are high expectations that pupils will use their good ICT skills to complete written work. Lessons are well planned and generally take good account of the mixed ages in each class. Expectations are well adapted to meet the wide range of pupils' needs. The quality of the curriculum is good. A major reorganisation of the curriculum to provide individual teachers with an opportunity to disseminate their subject leadership skills has taken place. The introduction of themed weeks for science, mathematics and history for example, mean that periods are studied in depth and good links are made to basic skills. For instance, the line and block graphs to measure the temperature of the penguins showed pupils mathematical skills very well. The care, guidance and support for pupils are exemplary, including the arrangements to safeguard pupils and the rigorous assessment system.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is well supported by a talented senior teacher. The senior staff have worked with dedication and vision to move the school forward in the past three years. Self-evaluation is modest in some respects but has generally targeted those areas most in need of improvement. Plans to do this are detailed and strategically placed for the next few years.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The very small numbers of children in the Foundation Stage make good progress from levels of attainment that are broadly as expected. They reach and often exceed the recommended levels for their age in all areas of learning by the time they start Year 1, although very few continue their education in school because of the postings of their parents. Children work closely with Year 1 pupils. Planning takes account of the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum, giving plenty of scope for outdoor learning in a creatively and innovatively resourced outdoor area. Informative profiles are kept for each child to record their progress in each area of learning. Parents say their children settle quickly and confidently into school and enjoy learning. Children often work alongside Year 1 pupils in the whole class introductory sessions. This is sometimes inappropriate because the sessions are sometimes quite long and children begin to lose interest. The management of the Foundation Stage is generally good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Reduce the amount of time the youngest children sit in a whole class groups with older pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The small number of pupils in each year group means that the interpretation of national assessment data needs to be made with some caution. Standards fluctuate considerably year-by-year because of the high level of pupil mobility. When children start school in Reception, their standards are broadly in line with national expectations in all areas of learning. Those that spend all their time in school make good progress. For many others, it is difficult to judge their starting points if, for example, they have come from other countries. However, the effective assessments and well-structured induction to the school at any time throughout the year means the school quickly establishes a starting point. This enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well however short their time may be in school. Standards are generally above average in the national tests by the end of Key Stage 2. All pupils achieve equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are excellent. Pupils enjoy school and feel very safe and secure. The small classes, caring relationships and strong family atmosphere help this to happen. As pupils said, 'We are comforted in school when we feel unhappy because our dads go to Iraq for a long time'. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They really appreciate the rewards and said with pride that the chart for recording bad behaviour was rarely used. Preparation for the next stage of their education is effectively fostered because they are well prepared to take responsibility for learning and to work cooperatively. Standards in basic skills are above average. A group of older pupils very clearly described how they make use of targets to improve their work and also find the checklists to improve their work indispensable. Groups of pupils enjoy singing in the local army base at Christmas time and there are good links with a feeder secondary school to help lessen the anxiety around the transfer. Pupils understand the need to eat healthily and to keep fit when playing games with pupils from other schools. Attendance is slightly below average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Effective teamwork has established whole school formats for planning that are working well and ensure there is sufficient challenge for more able pupils and built in support for less able pupils. The use of laptops and encouragement provided to pupils to self assess are strong features of good teaching. Learning intentions are displayed boldly and shared with pupils to check their understanding. A high priority is given to encouraging speaking and listening, especially with the youngest pupils. Small numbers in each class mean that pupils have plenty of individual attention. This may be from the class teacher or effective teaching assistants. Pupils are keen to learn, behave exceptionally well and are effectively encouraged to take good responsibility for learning. Classroom displays are vibrant and provide a comprehensive record of past work and prompts to help pupils to check their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum was reviewed recently to provide pupils with more opportunities to use their basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills when studying science, history or literacy topics. Blocked time is used very productively: for example, a science investigation that lasted for a week enabled pupils to apply their skills in graph making and data analysis accurately and enjoyably as they found out 'Why penguins huddle?' There are high quality art and design displays. After-school clubs and a residential visit all help to develop pupils' knowledge and personal and social skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are excellent. The school has a stable, caring learning environment. Pupils' well-being is given a high priority. The systems to welcome pupils' joining the school on an almost weekly basis throughout the year ensure they settle quickly and enjoy meeting new friends. Health and safety arrangements are effective and child protection arrangements are thorough. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and fully included in lessons. Their parents are very appreciative of the high level of care and support their children receive. The involvement of pupils in checking their own learning is outstanding. Pupils are only absent in exceptional circumstances or with illness because they enjoy all that school has to offer.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior teacher are an effective partnership and provide clear direction to the school's development. This is very evident in the comprehensive school improvement plan. The priority to improve teaching and learning by the rigorous and detailed lesson observations and feedback to staff are having a good impact. Good actions to distribute leadership responsibilities more widely than at the time of the previous

inspection are in place. This is very evident in the high profile given to some of the foundation subjects. The school's evaluation of its performance is largely accurate. The detailed assessment data provides a good basis for effective and largely accurate target setting, despite the large turnaround of pupils. Governance is good. A recently appointed chair of governors has a good grasp of the strengths of the school and works closely with the headteacher to move the school forward. Based on the good improvements since the last inspection, the school has a good 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?	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	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	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Thank you all for helping to make my day in school so enjoyable. I learned so much from talking to you and sharing your lunchtime. I wish there had been more time for me to see all the interesting things you do. You attend a good school. Please thank your parents for the comments they sent me about your school.

You all work hard and behave exceptionally well in lessons and around school. You are confident and knowledgeable about so many things because many of you have travelled all over the country. You are sensible and make great efforts to welcome new pupils to school. Your school council makes a difference to the school's improvement. The care, guidance and support you receive are excellent. You show concern for others and say that your school is the best you have attended. I know some of you have attended many schools.

Your teachers and teaching assistants work hard to give you all the best possible education. One area they will be working to improve is to provide the youngest children with plenty of time to play and learn in their small group.

I send you my best wishes for the future. I will think about you all when driving past the airfield and when I see penguins huddled together.