

Mallard Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134235
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	316248
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Pattinson

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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	376
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 Dorothy Chamberlain
Headteacher	Mrs Theresa Siverns
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Cedar Road Balby Doncaster South Yorkshire DN4 9HU
Telephone number	1302 859116
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a well above average sized primary school situated on the south-western outskirts of Doncaster. It mainly draws pupils from areas of relatively high social and economic disadvantage. Most pupils are White British. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and learning English as an additional language are lower than found nationally. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is just below the national average. Children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in the term following their third birthday. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2008. The school has moved to one site since its last inspection. The school achieved a Healthy School Award in June 2007 and an Eco School Award Bronze Level in 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. The able and determined headteacher has accurately analysed how the school needs to improve and has established a clearly communicated plan of action. Senior teachers are learning new skills in school self-evaluation so that they can be included fully in moving the school forward. This emphasis on increased accountability is providing the impetus for change. However, over past months this push to secure school improvement has been adversely affected by staff absence and the need to reallocate some key responsibility posts.

Despite these setbacks, school systems, procedures and approaches are being established to help raise achievement, although most are in their early stages of development. Some are already beginning to make an impact on pupils' learning. For example, an effective system of setting targets has been introduced in English and pupils are writing more widely, which is helping to drive up standards. Checking on all aspects of the school's work, tracking pupils' progress and analysing data have begun in earnest, but are at an early stage. For example, senior and subject leaders, some of whom are new to their roles, are not yet involved enough in monitoring rigorously and regularly the work of the school, although they are developing their skills in these respects.

Children's skills, knowledge and understanding when they start school are below those typical for their age. By the time they leave, pupils reach standards that are

close to national standards in science but below them in English and mathematics. Achievement overall is satisfactory, but uneven because teaching and learning is too varied. In the best lessons, the pace is brisk, teachers are enthusiastic and pupils are challenged and enjoy learning. However, this is not always the case. Weaknesses include over long introductions and a lack of challenge, especially for the more able, resulting in pupils making erratic progress as they move through the school.

Effective pastoral care and satisfactory, but improving, academic guidance

ensure that pupils' personal development is good. As a result, pupils are welcoming to visitors, behave well and try hard to succeed. They understand how to keep safe and healthy. The school works hard to ensure that pupils attend regularly. Almost all enjoy coming to school and like their teachers. Links with the local community are strong and contribute to pupils' learning. The curriculum is satisfactory, but uninspiring. Developments are now underway to link subjects together. The school has sound plans to introduce more practical experiences and to increase opportunities for information and communication technology (ICT), for example, to help make learning more meaningful. However, it is too soon to see the results of these plans. Parents rightly believe that the school takes good care of their children. They support the headteacher and staff because, as is typically claimed, 'We are encouraged to take such an active role.'

The governing body is keen to provide the best possible support. However, its important role in monitoring quality and standards is at an early stage. Given the satisfactory progress pupils currently make, the need for the further development of key roles and responsibilities and the unevenness within teaching and learning, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve and provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children are given a satisfactory start to their school life in the EYFS. Their skills when they begin are below the level typical for their age. Overall, they make satisfactory progress during their time in Nursery and Reception. By the end of the EYFS some children reach expected levels. However, many still demonstrate levels below those expected, especially in communication, language and literacy, mathematical and creative development. Relationships between adults and children are good. Children settle quickly, feel safe and respond well to the routines. They make better progress in personal and social development than in other areas because regard for their welfare is good. Activities, indoors and outdoors, enable children to extend their learning using a range of resources, including large apparatus. Some activities, such as helping to build a sleigh for Santa, encourage children to consider problems and draw conclusions. However, some activities do not challenge the differing abilities of children. Initiatives introduced by the new leader in the EYFS have yet to make a substantial impact. For example, there are now records of achievement but they are not yet detailed enough to give a succinct assessment of what children know and understand. Whilst staff check on the progress of children, observations made are not frequent or detailed enough to help teachers plan accurately for the next steps in learning. However, the new leader is aware of how successful the initiatives have been and knows what to do next to raise standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils are always challenged in English and mathematics, especially the more able.
- Improve the consistency of teaching to that of the best.
- Enliven and enrich the curriculum to add excitement and enjoyment, increase interest and accelerate progress.
- Monitor rigorously and regularly all aspects of the school's work, making better use of tracking information to help drive up standards.

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

Pupils enter Year 1 with below average standards. Achievement is broadly satisfactory for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, it is uneven as pupils move through the school because of teaching that is too varied in its quality. Over the past four years, standards at the end of Year 2 have varied. However, provisional results in 2008 show improvement in reading and writing, although numbers reaching the higher level were lower than expected.

Inspection evidence about standards in Year 6 in 2008 shows that they were below average in English and mathematics and close to what is typical nationally in science. Standards in English have fallen, particularly in writing. Fewer pupils than average reach the higher level in English and mathematics. Nevertheless, pupils in Year 6 are currently moving quickly towards challenging targets, faster than pupils in other year groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school. They, like their teachers, say they feel safe and think bullying is not an issue. The work of the inclusion mentor has done much to create a place of sanctuary for pupils who need time to reflect upon their feelings and actions. As a result, pupils behave well. This has a positive impact on the whole ethos of the school and on the learning that takes place. Pupils fully understand why it is important to live a healthy lifestyle, and demonstrate a developing understanding of how the way they live can affect the world they live in. They take full advantage of the opportunities provided in and after school to become physically fit through a range of sports activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They consider the thoughts and needs of others and are developing good moral and social standards. However, there are too few opportunities to interact with people of other cultures. Attendance is satisfactory and the school is seeking constantly to reduce absences. Pupils support a range of charities and raise funds to help others locally, nationally and internationally. They enjoy taking on a wide range of responsibilities from being playground buddies to reading helpers. Members of the school council are proud of their role and have good ideas about ways to improve the school. However, their role as instigators of change is not yet fully developed. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their future lives and have developed an understanding of how to act responsibly.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Trusting and respectful relationships and the regular use of praise and encouragement are positive features of the satisfactory teaching and learning. Most lessons have a clear focus and pupils generally understand what is expected of them. Pupils are becoming more confident at identifying what they have learnt,, which helps teachers build on what pupils know next time. However, the quality of teaching and learning is too varied. In the best lessons, planning is good, time is used well, marking helps pupils to build on their learning and teachers have high expectations. In these lessons all pupils, whatever their ability, have just the right amount of challenge to enable them to make good progress. However, in other lessons, the pace is too slow, teachers talk for too long, planning lacks focus and pupils complete work that is not at the right level. Where these weaknesses occur, pupils lose attention and progress slows. Assessment is satisfactory. However, teachers' marking often misses opportunities to help pupils reach the next steps in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's curriculum is satisfactory, but lacks excitement. Science, art and singing are good features. The school has begun to break down barriers between subjects, reduce the amount of worksheets and introduce more practical and first-hand experiences to help bring learning alive for pupils and promote wider understanding. For example, a recently held 'Creative Week', incorporating many practical aspects, proved popular with pupils. Opportunities are now more widespread for pupils to investigate and solve problems to help develop thinking skills and increase levels of enjoyment. Pupils now write more than they used to do in other subjects to help drive up standards. However, speaking, listening and ICT skills are not promoted well

enough. Personal and social development is given strong emphasis and lies at the heart of the school's work. A small number of visits, such as to the Kirklees Light Railway Station, and visitors, such as the school nurse, extend pupils' learning and broaden their horizons. The adequate range of activities outside the school day, including gardening, choir and cooking, adds to pupils' enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Much of the care, guidance and support is good but shortcomings in academic guidance make this aspect satisfactory overall. Safeguarding procedures are in place and health and safety requirements are fully met. Strong links with a range of outside agencies ensure that the social and emotional needs of pupils are fully addressed and that the welfare of vulnerable pupils is always paramount. Teaching assistants ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number who speak English as an additional language are well supported. There are sound arrangements to ensure a smooth transition when pupils transfer schools. The school is working very hard to forge constructive and positive links with parents, who are largely supportive of the school. However, recently introduced systems for monitoring pupils' progress and tracking their academic achievement are not yet used to best effect to help drive up standards. Pupils have targets in English based on an accurate assessment of their needs to help improve their writing. Nevertheless, targets are not yet used consistently in other subject areas to help pupils understand how they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has begun to develop shared responsibility and accountability at all levels. Her clear vision and strong leadership style motivate colleagues. She is supported well by her deputy headteacher, who shares her vision and purpose. Both have a realistic view of the school and the quality of education it currently provides. Both are increasingly focused on what they must do to raise achievement. As a result, priorities for development are the right ones to help move the school forward. However, some subject leaders are still in the early stages of developing their leadership skills and some key staff are new to their roles. As a result, the monitoring of many aspects of the school's work, such as the tracking of pupils' progress, is too new to have yet made an impact on school improvement. However, some initiatives, such as a greater focus on writing to help improve its quality, are starting to bear fruit. Strong links with the local community and good partnerships with a range of external organisations help contribute to the development of satisfactory community cohesion. The governing body is strongly supportive of the school. Governors are becoming clearer about what needs to be done to drive up quality and standards to help them hold the school more effectively to account for what it achieves.

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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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/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	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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 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

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?	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	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**

Thank you for being so friendly and talking to the inspectors when we inspected your school recently to find out how well you are learning. I very much enjoyed being in your school, visiting your lessons and listening to what you had to say. I was sorry to miss your carol concert and the Christmas performances, which took place during our visit. I thought that your school is satisfactory and that you would like to hear what we found out.

- We especially like the friendly atmosphere and the way in which staff take good care of you so that you are happy in school.
- We saw that almost all of you work hard and behave well.
- You know about the importance of staying healthy and keeping safe.
- It is good that you are writing more in other subjects apart from English, to help improve your writing.
- We like the fact that you have targets in English to help you learn and that many of you know what they are!
- Your headteacher is working very hard to improve your school and to provide you with a good education.

I have found four important things that your headteacher and teachers could do to make your school better. These will help you all make good progress rather than the satisfactory progress you make now. These are the things I have asked them to do.

- Make sure the work that they give you in English and mathematics, especially for those who learn quickly, is always just at the right level.
- Ensure that lessons are consistently challenging so you all make good progress.
- Make sure that there are regular checks on how you are doing and that the information is used to set targets so that you make the best possible progress.
- Make sure that all lessons are really interesting and exciting to help you to make better progress and to enjoy school even more than you do now!

However, to take part in the joy of learning you must always come to school and arrive on time!