

Dunston Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112777
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325683
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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)	273
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	Mr Glyn Speed
Headteacher	Mrs Sharon Davison
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Dunston Lane Newbold Chesterfield Derbyshire S41 8EY
Telephone number	01246 450601
Fax number	01246 450611

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 larger than average school situated on the outskirts of Chesterfield in an area of unfavourable social and economic circumstances. Children's skills and knowledge on entry vary from year to year but many start at well below national expectations for children of their age in communication, language and literacy, and in numeracy. An above average percentage of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The percentage with a statement of special educational needs is below average. A lower than average proportion of pupils is from minority ethnic backgrounds or speaks English as an additional language. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) caters for children from the term following their third birthday. A privately run breakfast club and after school club are held on the site five days a week. A club also runs during school holidays.

The school achieved Healthy School status in 2006. It has been awarded Activemark, the Silver Eco award, the Green Flag award and the ABC Anti-bullying award. The school attained the Financial Management in Schools Award in 2007. The headteacher took up post in January 2007.

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. Pupils and parents express their delight with the education that it provides. One parent spoke for many in saying, 'This friendly, nurturing school has gone from strength to strength.' Inspectors agree that the school has made good improvement since the last inspection. Children are benefiting in many ways, especially in their personal development, which is good. The 'Proud' initiative on which pupils' behaviour is judged, is the cornerstone of their social and moral development. From the start of the EYFS, pupils show their happiness in school through their positive attitudes and their good behaviour. The many opportunities for them to develop as responsible young citizens, to participate and to be leaders, confirm the school's high expectations and help prepare pupils soundly for the next stage in their education. Pupils increasingly use the knowledge they have about being healthy and keeping safe. They are well cared for and supported by staff. The school's procedures and practices ensure that they feel safe, secure and able to settle to learning.

The significant improvements made to the indoor and outdoor learning areas have given EYFS children full access to all aspects of learning. Improved provision across the school has strengthened the curriculum, which is good. It provides pupils of all abilities with varied and enjoyable learning activities, both in and out of lesson time, which lead to their good progress. Pupils enjoy learning through topics and themes, which enable them to learn across subjects very well and to transfer a wide variety of skills, both academic and personal.

The headteacher's actions to improve the quality of education, in particular to raise standards, have been effective. Progress is currently not as quick through Key Stage 2 as it is through Key Stage 1, mainly because of the effect of gaps in pupils' knowledge. Indications are that pupils' standards were below average at the end of Key Stage 2, and lowest in writing, in 2008. However, achievement is good from children's starting points when they enter the EYFS and standards are rising through Key Stage 2 due to consistently good teaching. Teachers' good subject knowledge and interesting topics are consistent features of lessons. Activities are generally chosen to match pupils' abilities, although those pupils capable of reaching higher standards are not always challenged as much as they could be. Withdrawal lessons to address pupils' previous underachievement are one aspect of the good academic guidance, which involves pupils using their good knowledge of their targets to positive effect. As a result, standards are rising through Key Stage 2 this year.

The starting points for all the developments are down to the good leadership of the headteacher, who continually evaluates and adapts practices to match the school's needs. Leadership and management at all levels are good. Senior leaders' effective inputs and the rapidly developing role of subject leaders in monitoring standards contribute to the school's good capacity to improve. Improvements are on going, so that whilst improved systems are in place to track and record pupils' academic progress, they are not developed enough to identify and address potential underperformance quickly. A professional and committed staff embrace new strategies for improvement with infectious team spirit and to good effect. Governors are enthusiastically building up their competences to strengthen their satisfactory impact on the school's development.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the EYFS are happy and enjoy the lively learning environment. They enter the EYFS with skills well below those typical for their age. Although many pupils do not reach the expected goals by the end of the stage, they make good progress. This is due to good teaching and detailed individual assessments to inform planning. There is an effective focus on developing basic reading, writing and numeracy skills through good teaching of letters, sounds and number. Overall, children's skills improve quickly through the EYFS, with collaborative planning by staff being a key factor. Good leadership and management enables effective teamwork and staff show a strong sense of purpose in meeting the individual needs of children.

The curriculum is good and there is an effective balance between activities directed by adults and activities chosen by children. Personal development is good. For example, children have developed their understanding of other cultures through learning about how the Chinese celebrate New Year. Children respond well to the newly developed outdoor area, which provides a full range of activities to support the different areas of learning. Parents appreciate the care and support given to their children, which starts at induction. Carried out jointly with parents, it enables a good start to children's learning with initial assessments of children's individual needs taking place. The provision for the welfare of the children is good and there are effective health and safety procedures.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards across Key Stage 2, especially in writing and for more able pupils, by ensuring that pupils' work always challenges them.
- Sharpen the systems to track and record pupils' progress to help ensure that any underperformance is promptly identified and addressed.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils demonstrate good progress through the school from their starting points, to reach below average standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils' progress has accelerated through Key Stage 1, with standards rising for three consecutive years in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in 2008 were broadly average. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 1 because of good quality teaching. Indications are that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2008 were below average, and were slightly lower than in 2007, mainly due to a dip in writing standards and the smaller percentage of pupils achieving higher levels in the national tests. Inspection evidence shows that the legacy of underachievement at Key Stage 2 is being resolved effectively. This is being achieved through individual support for pupils including, recently, those capable of reaching higher than average standards. Year 6 pupils are on track to reach their challenging targets this year. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' performances through the school. Those pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with specific learning difficulties make good progress because they are well supported by staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils feel safe in school and have the confidence to approach staff with any problems, knowing that their concerns are addressed.

Pupils' behaviour is good because of the effective reward and sanction system. This has also improved pupils' attitudes to learning and promoted their greater enjoyment of school. Their academic progress prepares them soundly for their future education. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. They have a good awareness and understanding of other cultures, which encourages them to respect the feelings, views and beliefs of others. Attendance is satisfactory and rising due to the school's good efforts to encourage and reward those who attend regularly. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and the importance of exercise and healthy eating. They participate eagerly in the school council, which makes a strong contribution to the school community. Pupils willingly support those less fortunate than themselves, such as by taking part in an appeal for disadvantaged children at Christmas. They readily take on responsibilities around the school, including fund-raising for playground equipment and organising the school bank. This effectively promotes pupils' sense of belonging to the broader school community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Much teaching is good and along with effective academic guidance, leads to pupils making good progress. Classrooms are happy places, and the positive relationships between pupils and teachers, which regularly include snatches of humour, strengthen learning. Teachers make the purpose of learning clear and use a variety of teaching styles, including careful questioning, to keep pupils' interested and to move them forward. Increasingly, pupils are learning for themselves, adding to their enjoyment and sense of achievement. Activities mostly offer an accurate level of challenge for pupils, although the work given to more able pupils is not always a close enough match to their abilities to maximise their progress. Marking usually states pupils' achievements and sometimes how they can make further progress. Excellent marking guided pupils' exceptionally well in both Year 4 and Year 5 literacy lessons. Teaching assistants provide helpful support in lessons, although they are not involved in the introduction of them, as a way of promoting pupils' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The well-balanced curriculum is planned effectively to meet the interests and aspirations of pupils. Its major strength is the strong cross-curricular links, taught through themes and incorporating information and communication technology (ICT). This is beginning to have a positive impact on the motivation of pupils, in particular boys and their attitudes to learning. Pupils enjoy a variety of curriculum enrichment activities during lunch times and after school, including a variety of sports clubs, which are broadened by visits from specialist coaches. Visits for each year group are linked to the themes, consolidating and broadening learning. Pupils in Years 2 to 6 are enjoying learning German. One pupil said, 'I like this language. It really makes me think.' The curriculum is successful in promoting pupils' understanding of lifestyle issues through an informative personal, social and health education programme. Provision for ICT has improved significantly since the last inspection and is being increasingly used to promote pupils' independent learning skills. The provision for pupils who find learning difficult is good. Provision for the most able pupils is an area for continuing development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Very effective procedures that meet statutory requirements are in place for safeguarding pupils. The pastoral work and encouraging attitudes of staff demonstrate the high priority that they give to caring and supporting pupils. There are good links with outside agencies that enable the school to have access to a wide range of additional help to meet the needs of pupils. The good support given to pupils who find learning hard enables them to make good progress. Extra activities have recently been set up to match the needs of the most able pupils more closely. All pupils know their academic targets and how to make further progress. More importantly, they are using their targets in lessons and are raising the levels at which they are working.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership. She analyses the school's performance rigorously with effective support from senior staff. Her prompt actions following her appointment in 2007 have resulted in the school moving forward quickly in many aspects. Significantly, the initiatives have led to pupils making good progress through the school. However, the improved systems for tracking and recording information about pupils' standards and progress are not sharp enough to reveal any underachievement quickly.

Subject leaders have broadened their quality assurance roles, adding to the effectiveness of their departments in raising standards and enjoyment of learning. The governing body, led caringly by the newly appointed Chair of governors, is supporting the school's work satisfactorily and is developing its knowledge in order to help the school move further forward. Their role includes the promotion of community cohesion, which the school is embracing whole-heartedly through wide links with local businesses and schools, schools in Germany and Sweden, visits from those from other cultures and the provision in school for a number of community groups.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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	2
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?	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?	2

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

28 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dunston Primary School, Chesterfield, S41 8EY

We were delighted to visit you recently and we enjoyed listening to your thoughts about school. Thank you for making us welcome and for sharing with us the delicious flapjacks that some of you baked at an after school club. You are happy at school and pleased with the many activities, events and opportunities that the school offers you. So are your parents! The school council is right to be proud of the differences that it is making. It is one of the ways in which you are developing important skills that you will need when you are older. We were also impressed by the care and kindness of two Year 5 girls towards younger pupils during their lunchtime duties. This letter will tell you our judgements about your school.

You told us that you really like learning through topics, partly because you learn for yourselves. You are enjoying learning German and the good range of after school clubs. You feel safe in school because the staff care for you well and are there when you need help. You know what to do to live healthy lifestyles and more and more of you are keeping fit and eating healthily, helped by good quality school lunches.

Your headteacher leads the school well and she is making important improvements. The 'Proud' system, for example, has resulted in much better behaviour. You make good progress overall through the school, because of good teaching. However, standards in English, especially in writing, are lower than in other subjects. Some of you who are capable of reaching higher levels in English, mathematics and science are not doing as well as you could. The headteacher and the staff are very keen to put these matters right and are going to make sure that the work you are all given matches your levels very closely all of the time. They are also going to tighten up the ways in which they track and record the progress that you are making. This is to help them know more quickly if you are not doing as well as you should in your work.

On behalf of the inspection team I send you our best wishes for the future and hope that you will continue to make the most of all that the school offers you.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Blakelock

Lead inspector