

# Damers First School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113665
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	325856
<b>Inspection date</b>	28 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Burghart

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	400
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Julian Slade
<b>Headteacher</b>	Phillip Minns
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 February 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Damers Road Dorchester DT1 2LB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01305 264924
<b>Fax number</b>	01305 257213

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<b>Age group</b>	5–9
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and, in doing so, investigated the following issues.

- The school's success in raising standards and improving progress, with particular reference to higher attaining pupils in mathematics.
- The quality of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision.
- The consistency of the school's use of assessment and its impact on pupils' progress.

Discussions took place with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils in addition to a range of observations throughout the school day. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own views, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a large first school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Virtually all pupils have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. A speech and language unit with places for 18 pupils with statements detailing their particular needs forms an integral part of the school. Children begin school in September in the year in which they are five, initially part time. They start in one of the three parallel Reception classes which constitute part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). All children have attended some kind of pre-school setting. The school holds a number of awards, including Healthy School, Activemark and Rights Respecting Schools.

A private provider manages day care and an after-school club on the school premises.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Pupils and staff are happy, confident and enthusiastic. 'A fantastic school!', 'Wonderful support!' and 'We couldn't want more for our children!' are typical parents' comments. Support for the school's success in encouraging pupils' personal as well as academic development is overwhelming.

Excellent provision results in pupils making outstanding progress and achieving particularly well. Children start school with skill levels that are below those normally expected of 4-year-olds. Pupils make excellent progress and as a result and attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 4. Considerable improvements in the past two years to the EYFS provision have built on the satisfactory profile noted in the last report. Consequently, children are now making excellent progress in Reception. This has yet to have a full impact on attainment in Years 1 and 2 but, nevertheless, standards at the end of Year 2 are average and rising, with pupils achieving well. Standards throughout the school have been improved year on year since the last inspection. Predictions for 2009 for Year 2 show that they are likely to be above average, with Year 4 well above, and this reflects outstanding achievement overall.

A central reason for the much improved outcomes is the school's success in ensuring that potentially higher attaining pupils reach the levels of which they are capable. Rigorous self-evaluation and analysis helped identify the reasons for pockets of relative underachievement which have now been eradicated. Outstanding use of assessment information is the basis for the challenging targets that are set for individual pupils and for the school as a whole. A consistent approach to this process of 'assessment for learning' in all classes shows pupils how they can improve their work and what they can aspire to. The impact of academic guidance is outstanding. There is very effective continuous professional development of teachers. This is based on highly successful monitoring by senior leaders and governors and underpins the staff's understanding of how to help pupils of all abilities fulfil their potential. Provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent and leads to outstanding achievement. Teaching assistants make a very strong contribution to the learning process. Pupils supported as part of the speech and language base do extremely well. They are fully included in, and make a strong contribution to, all aspects of school life. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language are given very effective support. The school lives up to its policy that all pupils should be treated equally.

High quality teaching is driving up standards. Work is very effectively planned to ensure that it not only covers all that is required but that it is presented in ways that make learning interesting. Themed weeks for the arts, geography and science are excellent examples of how the outstanding curriculum is brought to life. There is an almost tangible buzz of anticipation at the start of the day throughout the school. With such enthusiasm, it is no surprise that the outstanding range and number of clubs and activities are so well attended. Pupils are very keen to say how much they enjoy school. The mum who wrote of her daughter, 'She wants to come even when she is ill,' seems to sum up parents' and pupils' appreciation and shows why attendance is above average.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding because staff know pupils well and relationships are excellent. Behaviour, although not perfect, is outstanding and is one of the reasons pupils say they feel safe in school. Excellent pastoral and physical care is deeply rooted in the school's

commitment to support the 'whole child'. Staff are prepared to listen to pupils' views. Pupils are keen to show independence and take on the variety of responsibilities on offer. Junior governors, school councillors and peer mediators are particularly good examples of pupils seeking to contribute to the school as a community. Pupils are being helped to grow up as healthy, considerate young people, well prepared for future study and life in general. Pupils respond very well to the school's commitment to developing community cohesion. Links with the local community are strong and there are many opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of lifestyles in other countries. Planning to forge links with schools and communities in contrasting UK areas is at an early stage but this does not detract from overall effective provision.

This is a school that is extremely good at turning vision into practice, continually monitoring how well it is doing and then making modifications where necessary. Its success sits squarely on outstanding leadership and management, orchestrated by the headteacher, who is particularly well supported by senior leaders and subject coordinators. Governance is first class. Governors are well informed and especially well organised. Their evaluation and analysis of the impact of decisions taken, in terms of pupils' learning and progress, are incisive. They truly hold the school to account as well as offering substantial support. Because self-evaluation is extremely effective, the school is very clear about its strengths and relative weaknesses. For example, despite the already proven success of initiatives in information and communication technology (ICT), the school has identified further developing its use across the curriculum as a priority. Inspectors see this more as a strength of determined leadership than a weakness in provision, but acknowledge that it is an aspect that would make the school even more effective. The school's track record of improvements, for example in introducing new phonics and reading schemes, improving EYFS provision and raising standards in mathematics, is impressive. It is an excellent indication that the school has an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Children are exceptionally well cared for and nurtured in this inclusive and safe setting as the result of high quality leadership and management. They make a flying start because induction procedures are excellent. The school forms strong links with parents even before formal schooling begins. In a fine example of how to encourage young children to enjoy reading activities, this year the school provided new intake children with the storybook, *The Gruffalo* to share with parents at home in preparation for activities at the start of term. Parents are very enthusiastic about how well the school cares for their children. They are fully informed about progress and very successfully included in recording children's achievements. Staff and parents share 'WOW' slips that celebrate what children do at home as well as at school.

Following major changes in EYFS provision last year, children are making outstanding progress. Standards are currently average, but are set to be better than this at the end of the school year. Progress in communication, language and literacy skills is rapid, with most children showing emerging reading and writing skills before starting Year 1. Personal, social and emotional development is a particularly strong feature. Children settle into school routines quickly, learning to share, to be considerate and to take turns. They grow in confidence in working and playing together, and show independence in making choices, organising their own snack time and tidying away. Children are happy and their behaviour is excellent. High quality learning is underpinned by outstanding teaching and an innovative and exciting curriculum, with many opportunities to learn through play. There is a very good balance of teacher- and child-led

purposeful and stimulating activities. Careful observations by adults form the basis of planning to meet the needs of each child. The outdoor learning area, criticised in the last report, is now providing good opportunities for children to develop knowledge and understanding of the world, be creative and extend themselves physically.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop the use of information and communication technology, building on work already in hand to support subjects across the curriculum.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

### Achievement and standards

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

<sup>1</sup>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.



## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which 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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

■ 29 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Damers First School, Dorchester DT1 2LB

It was a treat to visit your school. Thank you for your helpful comments and for your warm welcome. We were very impressed by your positive attitudes and excellent behaviour. You can be especially proud of the junior governors who talked to me over lunch. Like many of you, they are a credit to Damers.

You are very lucky to go to an outstanding school. (This means it is really, really good!)

Here are some of the highlights.

- Those of you in Reception get off to a flying start because staff do their jobs especially well.
- By the end of Year 4, standards in English, mathematics and science are better than in most other first schools.
- You make excellent progress because you are so well taught. Everyone, including those of you who find learning difficult, is treated fairly and given outstanding support.
- The curriculum is excellent with lots of clubs, visits and activities which help to make learning fun.
- The school takes excellent care of you. Staff are very good at helping you to grow up as sensible, considerate young people.

Your school is especially well run. The headteacher, staff and governors know what is going well and what could still be improved. We all think that, although ICT is already a success story, more use could be made of computers to help with your learning in different subjects.

Keep up the good work! Best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mike Burghart

Lead inspector