

Dorchester Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117902
Local Authority	Kingston-upon-Hull
Inspection number	326712
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Ruth McFarlane

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)	310
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 Donna Nahar
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Liddle
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Dorchester Road Bransholme Hull HU7 6AH
Telephone number	01482 825207
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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 school is above average in size and serves an urban area near Hull. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has won awards for its provision including Healthy Schools and Basic Skills Quality Mark. A newly opened children's centre, run by the governing body, is located in part of the school building. This centre includes a setting for children aged from 0 to 3 which is run by private providers and is not part of this inspection. The Early Years Foundation Stage accommodates a total of 60 children in an integrated Nursery and Reception class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Dorchester Primary is a good school. The headteacher encourages an especially nurturing ethos in which pupils thrive. Parents value the education the school provides. 'My child has come on so much at Dorchester Primary' is typical of the comments they make.

Pupils achieve well overall. Children get off to a satisfactory start in the Early Years Foundation Stage from starting points that are well below those typical for their age. They enter Year 1 with standards that are well below average. In Years 1 to 6, pupils make good progress so that by the time they leave Year 6 their standards have improved, though they are still slightly below the national average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils do well in Years 1 to 6 because they are reaping the benefits of improved academic guidance and nurturing care that meet their individual needs.

The caring approach means that pupils quickly become articulate and confident. Their smiles and enthusiasm are testament to their enjoyment of school. They say they feel happy, and very safe at school, and there is very little bullying. They appreciate the warm relationships they have with the adults, and say that when problems occur they feel confident about approaching staff for help. Pupils are knowledgeable about staying healthy and enjoy the many opportunities to take exercise at school. They are keen to take on responsibility, work cooperatively and, as a result, their independence grows quickly. Pupils' behaviour is good. Attendance is average. The good progress pupils make in English and mathematics, and in their use of information and communication technology (ICT), prepares them well for their futures. They leave the school well equipped for secondary school.

The lively and flexible curriculum places a successful emphasis on developing pupils' understanding of the world. Pupils were full of enthusiasm about a recent visit of a 'rapper' connected with their ongoing links with Sierra Leone. A creative curriculum is in place which includes cross-curricular and skills-based work. However, the programme does not as yet explore every avenue to boost pupils' progress in the key skills of reading, writing and applying mathematical knowledge. Excellent links with parents, grandparents, outside agencies and other partners, mean that pupils feel supported and well cared for, especially vulnerable pupils and those with learning needs. This has a positive impact on their academic and personal development. The effective systems for measuring progress and checking learning underpin all lessons. This is central to the consistently good teaching. Lessons are well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers prepare some exciting tasks that capture pupils' imagination. However, most teachers do not include enough opportunities for pupils to develop thinking skills. This means that opportunities are missed to spark their curiosity and help them learn for themselves.

Leadership is shared out effectively and it is this distribution which is the catalyst for the improvement in the school. Phase leaders and subject coordinators work well together and enthusiastically share their skills. They monitor progress well. They are fully focused on raising standards under the caring leadership of the headteacher who is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher. Governors are supportive and involved. Strong teamwork is evident and there is clear evidence that strategies for improvement are making a positive difference to children's learning. The school therefore has good capacity to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress overall in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They enter the school with skills and abilities that are well below expectations for their age, and are exceptionally below in speech and language. Standards at the end of Reception are well below average and this represents satisfactory achievement for these children. Induction procedures are good so that children make a confident start. The enjoyment children show testifies to the fact that learning is supportive and helps to develop satisfactory personal skills. Behaviour is generally good, though many children find it difficult to sustain concentration during class-based activities. The outside area is in frequent use. Children have limited opportunities to choose activities for themselves, inside and outside, because too much of their work, particularly in the Reception class, is directed by adults. The activities that are available cover a limited range of learning. These factors reduce the scope to develop independent thinking and creativity. The newly developed records of achievement include assessments and photographs and give some indication of the progress that children are making. However, assessment is not fully effective because the assessments staff make are not often based on children's independent learning and activities. As a result, they are not an accurate reflection of what the child can do. Because of this, activities are not always well matched to the full range of children's needs. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. The school pays appropriate attention to children's welfare and all statutory requirements are met. The staff help children understand how to keep safe and develop healthy habits. As a result, children enjoy their happy and secure environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the accuracy of assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure that learning opportunities are matched to children's needs.
- Increase the range and quality of learning activities that children can choose independently, outside and inside, in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Build into all lessons opportunities for developing pupils' thinking skills.
- Ensure that basic skills are taught at every opportunity across other curriculum subjects to accelerate learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From their satisfactory start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils' progress accelerates in Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2 their standards have risen from well below to below average. This represents good progress for these pupils. In recent years, progress in Years 3 to 6 has been satisfactory and so standards in 2008 remained below average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make particularly good progress because they are supported skilfully in their personal development and learning. The school has put in place a considerable number of strategies to deal with identified weaknesses, such as adapting and strengthening its curriculum and improving its assessment processes in Years 1 to 6. Inspection evidence shows that these initiatives are having a positive impact. Because of this, there is now no significant difference in the relative attainment of any group, and standards are rising.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school's emphasis on nurture and individual care enhances pupils' well-being successfully. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and a good knowledge of healthy living. Pupils enjoy the many activities provided to help them stay fit, and they enjoy school. Their good progress in English and mathematics, as well as ICT prepares them well for their futures. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is amply illustrated by pupils talking knowledgeably about the spectacular multi-national displays around the school, such as 'One World'. They learn to appreciate and enjoy the wonders of life around them. Year 6 pupils' written comments on the quality of their work in their books, and what they need to improve, show a mature self-awareness. Behaviour is good. Pupils have an extremely well-developed understanding of right and wrong. Those with responsibilities, such as the school council members, work hard for the school. They take their roles seriously and this helps develop their keen involvement in the community and their understanding of community issues and how society functions. Pupils do not respond as positively to the school's efforts to improve their attendance which is average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

'Teachers make learning fun!' is a typical comment made by pupils, reflecting their enjoyment of lessons and their positive learning attitudes. Consistently good lessons are very well planned with a variety of methods and tasks. This means that learning activities engage and maintain pupils' interest and, as a result, all groups of pupils make good progress. Classroom management is effective and teaching assistants are used productively to support learning. Teachers explain lesson aims and check learning, although opportunities for developing thinking skills are infrequent. One lesson where this was strong was in Year 5 mathematics. Pupils were solving exciting problems, thinking hard, extending their learning rapidly, and applying prior learning to new situations. Staff have access to comprehensive individual assessment and target data and use the tracking system very well in the classroom, sharing targets with pupils. Marking is often excellent. Teachers praise the pupils' efforts, seek pupils' own views on what they have learned, and provide good guidance on how to make further improvements.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The lively curriculum and the range of activities outside of lesson time, such as clubs, visits and visitors, support pupils' good personal development as well as their academic achievement. As a result, pupils develop confidence to learn and they achieve well overall, not only in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Pupils have opportunities to enjoy music, sport and art. The impact of the recently introduced cross-curricular themes on raising standards is not yet evident, because opportunities to promote the learning of literacy and numeracy skills through other subjects are not yet clearly identified. However, this new approach to teaching the curriculum is succeeding in making learning more relevant, and generating enthusiasm. The well-established programme for personal, social and health education and citizenship helps prepare pupils for making informed choices about their own safety and well-being. Visits and

visitors effectively enrich pupils' learning experiences and the emphasis on multicultural understanding underpins pupils' high levels of spiritual and cultural development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The warm and friendly atmosphere, with caring staff who offer valuable support, assists pupils to develop their good personal skills. Safeguarding and child protection arrangements meet government requirements. Procedures to help pupils settle in and get ready for the move to secondary school are thorough. Highly positive links with parents and families are helping to meet the social and emotional needs of children. Typical of the strong relationships between families and the school is the 'grandparents' challenge' which involved grandparents in school for an afternoon, working on activities alongside their excited grandchildren. Strategies promoting good behaviour ensure that pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Comprehensive strategies are in place to improve attendance. Academic guidance is a developing strength that has not yet had its full impact on standards. Nevertheless, pupils are aware of their targets and know what they need to do to achieve them. Support for pupils who require additional help with their work is good, supported by the very strong links the school has established with outside agencies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led by a caring headteacher, very ably supported by the deputy headteacher and a developing team of managers. All are focused successfully on improving pupils' academic as well as broader life skills. This has led to awards for Basic Skills and Healthy Schools, for instance. Good leadership and management is the reason pupils can rely on a consistent approach from their teachers. Well-planned lessons promote the good progress made. The school is supported by an effective governing body that has developed a good insight into the school through links with subjects and phases, and joining in with staff at training sessions. Progress since the last inspection has been good overall. Data analysis is used constructively to show where improvements in learning can be made. Self-evaluation is satisfactory. School targets are usually met, although there is some evidence that the school does not always recognise that some targets are unduly modest. The school's improvement plan is linked to subject development and identifies the right priorities. This, coupled with the progress made in some areas since the last inspection, demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve further. School leaders demonstrate a sustained commitment to promoting equality and community cohesion and assess its impact. An impressive range of activities occurs that strengthens links with the local and global community. This enables pupils to develop their personal skills, a key priority in the school, as well as having an excellent understanding of life, culture and religions that are different from their own.

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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?	1
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?	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?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	1
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 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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

17 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dorchester Primary School, Kingston-upon-Hull, HU7 6AH

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. You were so polite and helpful. We appreciated all your help and also the comments made by your parents in their questionnaires. Please thank them on our behalf.

You go to a good school. You learn lots because your activities are appealing and there is always something interesting to do. We loved the displays you have helped to mount. The ones about 'One World' and 'Sierra Leone' are excellent. They show how very well you understand that you are part of the whole world. It was exciting to hear about the 'rapper'! Your good behaviour helps you to concentrate in your lessons. Do keep that up because it makes the school such a pleasant place to be for everyone. Your teachers care for you well. No wonder you feel happy and safe! We enjoyed looking at your books. It showed us that by the time you leave Year 6 all of you have made good progress.

Your headteacher and those teachers who manage the school are good at their jobs, and all the staff and governors are keen to work together. Because of this, they have been successful in improving some things since the last inspection and they know what to do to make the school even better. We have asked them to make your reading, writing and problem-solving skills better. We have also asked them to plan activities into all your subjects that will help to make those skills even better.

Your lessons are fun. Your teachers check carefully how you are doing in your work. We would like them to make sure that you have opportunities to think a bit more and work things out for yourselves in lessons. We know you will rise to the challenge and that will help you progress even faster.

To help the little ones in Nursery and Reception, we have asked that there are more activities inside and outside to help them learn independently. We would also like the teachers to check what the children learn extra carefully.

Well done for all the good things you are doing in school and for helping to make it such a friendly and fun place to learn.

Yours faithfully

Ruth McFarlane

Lead inspector