

Deeping St Nicholas Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120407
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	327274
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Roger Fry

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Peter Garland
Headteacher	Mrs Anita Bandey
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2006
School address	Main Road Deeping St Nicholas Spalding Lincolnshire PE11 3DG
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried by one additional inspector. The inspector visited eight lessons, and held meetings with the chair of governors, the headteacher, staff, a group of pupils and the local authority. He observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation document, evidence of pupils' progress, the school improvement plan and 17 parental questionnaires.

The inspection reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' standards and progress in mathematics
- the way teachers track pupils' progress and set them targets, and whether pupils feel they are getting on well
- patterns of attendance.

Information about the school

Deeping St Nicholas Primary School is much smaller than most primary schools. It educates pupils from the village and surrounding area. Virtually all pupils are from White British backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. Within this group pupils have a range of difficulties, such as with reading and writing or using numbers. A broadly average proportion of pupils are known to qualify for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who leave or join the school at other than the usual times is greater than in schools nationally. Three quarters of the pupils in Year 6 did not start school in Reception. There have been considerable staff changes since the last inspection. Many children's knowledge and skills on entry to school are below those typical of children nationally. The school has the Activemark.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Deeping St Nicholas Primary School is an improving school with some good features. Pupils behave well and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They make a good contribution to the school's work by making suggestions through the school council, such as to improve what is offered at playtimes and influencing school rules. The school is a happy place to be, as one parent, typical of many said, 'The whole school gives off a warm, family atmosphere and the children are consequently friendly, polite individuals.'

Pupils make satisfactory progress, but this is improving. Pupils' progress was typically good in lessons observed and different groups of pupils achieve equally well. After a period of change, the teaching is now settled. The concerted effort to improve writing has been effective in raising standards. However, gaps in pupils' knowledge and in understanding about how to respond to questions have limited their progress in mathematics.

The effectiveness of leadership and management and the school's capacity for sustaining improvement are satisfactory. Governors have a growing understanding of the school's needs. The main drive for improvement comes from all staff, under the good leadership of the headteacher. The school's improvement plan has the right priorities and there have been successes. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen consistently to broadly average. The headteacher has taught each morning to ensure that pupils in Years 5 and 6 make the progress they should.

Although teaching is satisfactory and much good teaching was observed during the inspection, pupils have too few opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, or to help assess other pupils' work. There is no system to focus pupils' attention on the improvements that they need to make. Attendance is significantly lower than average, mainly because a minority of families take holidays during school terms.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics by:
 - developing pupils' understanding of what mathematical questions and problems mean in different situations
 - identifying gaps in pupils' knowledge and organising the curriculum to bridge these gaps.
- Develop pupils' responsibility for their learning by:
 - involving them more in assessing their own work and that of others in class
 - drawing together the key targets that teachers have written on pupils' work to focus their attention more on key points for improvement.
- Improve pupils' attendance by:
 - rewarding good attendance more frequently
 - continuing to work with parents to raise attendance over three years to the national average.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

There has been improvement in pupils' achievement this year. Pupils' progress was good in nearly all lessons observed. Pupils enjoyed their learning across the curriculum, including in mathematics. Their behaviour and concentration were good. Pupils from minority ethnic groups made similar progress to their peers. Pupils who find learning difficult worked with teaching assistants and made sound progress towards their targets.

Assessment information indicates that pupils' progress from their starting points has been consistently satisfactory over the last three years. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen steadily for the last five years in reading, writing and mathematics, and are now similar to the national averages. Standards attained at the end of Key Stage 2 remain low. In mathematics, there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and in their understanding about how to respond to questions. This has limited their progress in mathematics and standards have declined in this area.

In discussion with pupils of all ages, they show that they care greatly for their school and are tolerant and polite. They have a good understanding of moral and social issues and know why everyone should get along well. They benefit from enrichment activities, such as sports week and African drumming. Pupils enjoy thinking about new ideas and doing practical tasks, such as learning about germination in science. Pupils commented that they feel safe and that they are getting on well at school.

Pupils' cultural understanding is satisfactory, they know about a range of cultures and of religious ways of life. Pupils eagerly take on responsibilities and contribute to the school and local community well, such as through charitable fund raising. The school council includes every pupil and is active. Pupils are proud of what they have achieved, such as how they have improved the range of playground activities. Well-

attended additional activities, clubs and visits add interest and help to promote pupils' enjoyment of learning. They leave adequately prepared for their next schools overall and well prepared socially for the challenges ahead.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	3
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

How effective is the provision?

Key characteristics of the most successful teaching observed are:

- the good match of work to pupils' abilities
- teachers' good management of pupils' behaviour
- pupils' positive attitudes to their work
- teachers' good subject knowledge, such as in mathematics in Years 3 and 4, where the teacher showed pupils how to use Venn diagrams to record preferences
- the effective use of interactive whiteboards and laptop computers to reinforce learning.

The school tracks pupils' progress well and uses assessment information effectively to identify which pupils are learning quickly and those that need extra help. Teachers mark pupils' work diligently, but there is not a systematic approach to provide pupils with clear guidance about how to improve their work. Consequently, they do not make as much progress as they could.

Pupils respond well to the curriculum in all subjects. Good use is made of computers and a range of practical activities to enable pupils to work independently. There is appropriate provision for French and music.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

There are effective arrangements for ensuring good behaviour. In spite of much effort on the school's part, including working with families, attendance is significantly lower than average. The school has a comprehensive policy for improving attendance, but this is not supported by teachers rewarding pupils often for their good attendance. The staff work well with outside agencies, families and carers. Displays that celebrate pupils' achievements and provide valuable information for them to use during lessons contribute to a good environment in which to learn. Parents comment that their children are safe and well cared for.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and staff work effectively together. All teachers participate fully in decision making and share leadership and management duties. Consequently, there is a shared understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and suitable plans for development are in place. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, but has been slowed by changes of teaching staff and governors. The headteacher has taken on an increased teaching commitment over the last year to ensure that pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve what they should. This decision has proved successful and outcomes are improving. The headteacher has led the school well through this period, but at some cost to her leadership role. For example, this has reduced the time she has available to observe and support colleagues to improve their skills.

The headteacher and staff have nevertheless brought about some improvements, such as the raising of standards for pupils in Key Stage 1. The collaborative approach by all staff recently has led to improvements in pupils' writing standards. The school has the confidence of parents. Pupils have equal opportunities and all pupils asked said they feel that they are an important part of the school. Suitable arrangements are made to ensure that all pupils make the progress they should. The school regularly surveys parents' views and adjusts the way the school works as a result.

Safeguarding of pupils is good and meets requirements. The school has a full range of policies that help to keep pupils safe.

Although the governing body fulfils its statutory duties, its impact on school improvement is limited. The governing body acknowledges this weakness and is working with a consultant to improve the quality of its work. This is already proving beneficial as the governing body has developed an improved understanding of the school's main strengths and weaknesses and is beginning to challenge the school more effectively.

The school's understanding of its community is reflected in the wide range of links with nearby schools, fund raising for good causes and its work in the village. Following an evaluation by staff and governors, the school plans to develop pupils' understanding of the wider and international communities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a sound start to their education in the mixed-age class. When they move into Year 1, children have made satisfactory progress. Their standards of work typically, though varying considerably from year to year, are slightly below expectations. The good focus on children's personal and spoken language skills enables them to work and play together harmoniously. Recent major improvements to the outdoor area have boosted the range of activities children can do in all weathers. Children's confidence grows quickly and they are encouraged to follow their interests at times, such as to find out more about the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. Children are enthusiastic about their learning and find tasks interesting. Children's health is promoted well through eating healthy snacks and lessons about what is good for them. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Staff plan a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities that meet children's needs increasingly well. The staff have correctly identified that not enough time is given to recording observations of children's progress and to developing their writing skills systematically.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents support the school strongly. Virtually all who returned a questionnaire praised the school and have great confidence in the staff, the headteacher and in their children's learning. The inspection questionnaire was returned by nearly half of parents and shows that their children enjoy school very much. Parents commented, for example, that their children learn good manners, how to behave well and gain confidence and a desire to do well. The inspector agrees with these positive comments.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Deeping St Nicholas Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions for each of their children.

The inspector received 17 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 37 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	3	0	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



7 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Deeping St Nicholas Primary School, Deeping St Nicholas,
PE11 3DG

It was good to meet you, see you at work and to listen to your views. Special thanks go to the group I met after lunch for discussions, the two of you who showed me around the school and to those of you I joined in the dining room. Here are some of the best features of your school.

- You make a steady start in Reception and you enjoy working in the well-equipped 'outdoor classroom'.
- You make sound progress with your work in Years 1 to 6. Your standards of work have been improving steadily in Key Stage 1.
- Your headteacher and all the staff organise the school so that everyone has an equal chance to do well and take part in everything.
- You enjoy school because teachers make lessons interesting, such as by using the interactive whiteboards to show you lots of new ideas.
- Your personal development is good and you are growing up into responsible young citizens.
- You know a lot about keeping safe and follow school rules well.
- You work hard in lessons and behave well.

I agree with your teachers that the school needs to:

- help you to do better in mathematics, such as by helping you to work out what to do when questions are difficult
- give you more opportunities to assess your own work and ensure you do the things your teacher has commented on when your work is marked
- improve attendance because it is lower than in many schools.

You can help, as so many of you do, by continuing to behave well, by working hard and by coming to school regularly.

I wish you all the very best in the future.

Roger Fry
Lead inspector

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