

Drove Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131566
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	328615
Inspection dates	14–15 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Gavin Jones

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)	444
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	Nikki Dickinson
Headteacher	Nicholas Capstick
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Drove Road Swindon SN1 3AH
Telephone number	01793 529009
Fax number	01793 610256

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	14–15 July 2009
Inspection number	328615

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Drove is a much larger than average primary school in which pupils from minority ethnic groups form over three quarters of the school population. The proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language is high, and in some year groups is as high as 90%. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. There is a high mobility of pupils in and out of the school, with many pupils in Year 6 not being in the school in Year 2. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage into the Nursery.

The school is also responsible for a Children's Centre accommodated on the school's site, which caters for a wide range of needs for children and families. This provision includes a childminder network, family support, health visitors and many other agencies. The school also manages a 24-place 'Sure Start' funded nursery, 'Jelly Tots'. This provision works alongside the school's own facilities and sessions operate between 9.00 and 11.30 in the morning and 1.00 and 3.30 in the afternoon. Children attending this facility usually go on to enter the school's Reception class. The school has obtained a wide range of awards, including Basic Skills, Investors in People and a very recent Community Cohesion award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Drove is a good school with extremely strong relationships among all members of its community. It continues to improve and already has a number of outstanding features, particularly in its stimulating curriculum and the high quality of its care. The impact of these strengths is reflected in pupils' many excellent personal qualities. The school works hard to ensure that all its pupils do well, including those new to the school and those for whom English is not their home language. Its success is evident in pupils' overall good achievement, enabling them to reach standards in line with national averages at Year 6. Pupils do particularly well in mathematics, where standards are above average. In some cases, pupils make outstanding progress, but inconsistencies remain, particularly in relation to boys' achievement and the quality of writing in Years 1 and 2. As a result, standards in writing by Year 2 are lower than those for reading and mathematics. Good work in both the 'Sure Start' nursery provision and the school's own Early Years Foundation Stage means that children get a strong start to their education, although their relatively lower attainment in language and literacy skills persists into Years 1 and 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their classmates.

It is clear that pupils thoroughly enjoy school. Good teaching, linked to an excellent, vibrant curriculum, helps pupils achieve well. Exciting activities capture the interest of all, so that pupils are highly motivated to do well. In many lessons, tasks are matched closely to pupils' needs, but sometimes assessment information is not used as sharply as it should be to plan the next steps in learning and ensure that boys in particular are fully challenged by their work. Marking is often helpful, but does not always give pupils in Years 3 and 4 enough guidance about grammar, punctuation and handwriting. There are also missed opportunities for these pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects.

The headteacher and senior leaders have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. This knowledge comes from careful and close monitoring. A truly collegiate approach amongst the staff has resulted in a wide range of improvements being made since the last inspection. This is especially evident in the school's work to enhance community cohesion, creating extremely strong partnerships with other schools and agencies. The outstanding care, guidance and support from adults ensure all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. Governors are now playing a much stronger strategic role, so that they provide good levels of challenge and support. All these positive factors illustrate that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with skills below those expected for their age, largely because many do not speak English fluently. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, entering Year 1 with skills close to national averages in most areas of learning. Their skills in reading and writing, however, remain below average, although children still make good progress in these areas. The delightful environment provides a wealth of opportunities to encourage exploration both inside and outside. These include a garden, where children excitedly discovered wild strawberries, and a table at which nursery children enjoyed making and labelling sandwiches for a picnic. Teachers assess children's needs well so that they give effective support when children are learning to recognise words and numbers, for instance. They realise, however, that there are sometimes missed opportunities to encourage children to talk about their activities.

The development of children's personal skills is outstanding, supported by high quality pastoral care. Children work very well together, to build and wash a climbing frame, for instance. Such is their confidence and independence that one child took the initiative to sweep the rain from their playground. Leadership is good and strives continually to improve provision. For example, work is now better planned to match children's needs, resulting in more success in linking sounds and letters. Exceptional support for children's welfare includes very smooth transition to Year 1. Links with the 'Sure Start' nursery are beneficial to the school in many ways, not least in preparing children well in all areas of learning before they join Reception, but also in sharing good practice.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing in Years 1 and 2, by focusing more consistently on handwriting, grammar and spelling, and giving pupils more opportunities to practise their skills within other subjects.
- Improve the progress made by boys by making better use of assessment data in order to ensure that the next steps in learning always challenge them to the full.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' good achievement is reflected in broadly average standards overall at Year 6. This success is gained despite the high proportions of pupils leaving and joining the school in all year groups, and illustrates the effective support for those learning to speak English as an additional language. Pupils who remain in the school from Year 2 to Year 6 make at least good progress and, for some, progress is outstanding. The most significant gains are made in Years 5 and 6, by which time many pupils have caught up in their use of English. The proportion of pupils reaching above average standards at Year 6 has increased this year, as a result of the school's focused efforts with its more able pupils. Improvement is most marked in mathematics, where standards are above average. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar rates of progress to other pupils. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are good and pupils use their skills well in a range of activities.

However, the school is well aware that there is still more to do to raise standards in writing in Years 1 and 2 and to lift further the performance of boys. After their strong beginning in Nursery and Reception, pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Consequently, there have been improvements to results in reading, writing and mathematics at Year 2, lifting standards as a whole to just below average. Standards in writing, however, remain below average. Shortcomings relate particularly to handwriting, spelling and grammar, which are not always as strongly promoted as they should be at this stage. In addition, throughout the school, girls tend to do better than boys, largely because activities in lessons are not always matched as sharply as they should be to the needs of boys.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school is outstandingly successful in creating well-balanced, confident pupils, who welcome challenge and work with concentration and enthusiasm. All pupils talk enthusiastically about their school. This highly positive approach is exemplified in the comment of one pupil, who said, 'We're here to work hard and get a good career.' Attitudes and behaviour are exemplary. Older pupils are caring towards younger ones and all are knowledgeable about how to keep

safe and lead a healthy life. Many take advantage of the excellent school meals and participate in a wide range of after-school sporting activities. Importantly, in a school where there is such a mixed ethnic population, pupils treat each other with respect and affection. There have been no recorded racial incidents for the last eight years. 'It doesn't matter how someone looks or what shoes they wear, we all get on with each other,' said one pupil. Pupils gain an exceptional understanding of different cultures, but above all they learn to see themselves as citizens of Drove and of the wider world. Attendance is good, being above average for most pupils.

Pupils very much appreciate the opportunities to take part in activities in lessons and the out-of-school clubs. The good progress pupils make in their work, and the many opportunities they have for teamwork, prepare them extremely well for life as adults. School council members are excellent ambassadors for their school. They have spent almost a year raising funds to build a low-level climbing wall for their schoolmates.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching is at the heart of pupils' good achievement. Teaching is rarely less than good and is sometimes outstanding, especially in Years 2, 5 and 6. There is a strong emphasis on teaching basic skills through interesting and well-planned activities that capture pupils' imagination. Teachers are very well supported by assistants, several of whom are bilingual. Questioning skills of teachers are good and help pupils to develop further their language skills. In a writing lesson in Year 2, good pace ensured the lesson got underway quickly; pupils maintained their motivation and so enjoyed the lesson that they were disappointed when it finished! Relationships are strong and behaviour is excellent. In most cases, teaching ensures that pupils are very focused on clear learning objectives which relate well to their levels of understanding. Sometimes, however, objectives and tasks are not matched as closely to pupils' needs. Where they occur, these shortcomings are most marked in relation to boys and produce satisfactory, rather than good or better, progress. Marking often helps pupils to understand the quality of their work and how they can improve, although not enough attention is always paid to grammar, punctuation and handwriting in Years 3 and 4.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school has gained many awards in recognition of its excellent curriculum. It regularly engages the interests of pupils and stimulates them into enquiry and discovery. This feature is why pupils behave so well and thoroughly enjoy their lessons. The range of work is broad, balanced and very relevant to pupils. These qualities are exemplified in a recent opportunity to work with local people and the school's artist in residence to design bollards to calm traffic and create safe play areas.

The curriculum for literacy, numeracy and ICT is good. Equally successful is provision for pupils' cultural development, both in knowledge of the characteristics of the local area and of cultures further afield. Few schools can boast of lessons for Year 3 pupils taken by a star performer from the Royal Ballet! The school is at great pains to ensure that all pupils take a full and active part in all lessons, and is working hard to ensure that boys are always as fully involved as girls. It uses a planned programme of topics, each launched with a visit or exciting event. For instance, a topic on 'Space' began when pupils arrived and found a space ship had crashed in the school

hall! A local independent school provides high-quality sporting facilities for pupils identified as gifted at sport. Specialist weeks further enrich the curriculum. Those related to sport not only involve professional coaches, but also focus very successfully on looking at the data arising from the results of competitions and on designing programmes. The school is now seeking to make good use of other subjects and opportunities such as these to promote pupils' writing skills and is planning the introduction of a school handwriting scheme.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Provision for care, guidance and support is outstanding, with further exemplary provision for families through the many services offered in the Children's Centre. These facilities ensure that the school has very close links with parents. Bilingual teaching assistants provide excellent support to pupils whose first language is not English, and the progress of these pupils is monitored carefully. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified quickly and given close support. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils, including health, safety and risk assessments, are robust and regularly reviewed. The school makes excellent use of partnerships to provide further support for pupils. A 'Tranquillity Room' is set aside for pupils who need an opportunity to calm down, so that they can then re-join their friends. The progress of all pupils, including those who are vulnerable, is carefully and regularly checked. Pupils have targets for numeracy, literacy and science and their progress is tracked carefully through National Curriculum levels. They are very valuably encouraged to reflect on their own progress and think how they can do better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has made consistent progress over recent years, resulting in pupils' good overall achievement. This success is due to the very strong vision for improvement shared by the headteacher and his leadership team and is promoted, in no small part, by the school's good quality programme of monitoring and self-evaluation. Although the school is a very complex organisation, it runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis, as roles and responsibilities are clear and structured effectively, ensuring a strong collegiate approach. All staff are committed to raising standards. To this end, challenging targets are used effectively. Governors provide the school with much support. Their role has grown over time and has now been made more effective, not only by receiving reports direct from subject leaders, but through the results of their own monitoring of the school in action. The equality of opportunity afforded to all pupils is impressive. For example, the most able pupils are now making much better progress as a result of new strategies, with the school giving further consideration to the progress made by boys. The school's contribution to community cohesion is also excellent. It works with a very wide range of partners in the community, some of whom have offices on the school campus. Not only do pupils have a high level of understanding of the needs of others, but their own diversity is valued and celebrated. The school has a wide range of meaningful global links with schools in Ireland, France, Poland and Uganda. These provide pupils with lively, real opportunities to understand the lives of others.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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?	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	2
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

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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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**

16 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Drove Primary School, Swindon SN1 3AH

Thank you for making us so welcome and answering our questions when we visited you recently. You are rightly proud of your school. You go to a good school and we were pleased to hear that you and your parents think so too. In addition, it also has some outstanding features. Here are some of the things we found out.

- Children make a good start in the 'Jelly Tots' and in the school's Nursery and Reception classes.
- You all try very hard and make good progress.
- Your behaviour and relationships with others in school are excellent.
- You are taught well and lessons often have interesting activities.
- You all really enjoy a wide range of exciting activities, especially when you make contact with children in other parts of the world.
- All the staff look after you extremely well and you feel safe and happy at school.
- You have an exceptionally good understanding of how to live in a society where people come from many different cultures and backgrounds.
- All staff and governors are working hard to make sure you all receive every opportunity to do well and have a clear understanding of what needs to be done next.

There are some things that your school can do to make it even better. We have asked the staff and governors to:

- Raise standards in writing in Years 1 and 2, including spelling and handwriting.
- Ensure that work in lessons is closely matched to the needs of the boys, so that they always make good progress.

Thank you again for helping us. We hope that the school musical went well and that everyone enjoyed it.

Yours faithfully

Gavin Jones

Lead Inspector