

Devonshire Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103943
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	336200
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janice Hobday
Headteacher	Sharron Philpot
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 28 lessons and observed 11 different teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils, governors, staff and the school improvement officer. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to the attainment and assessment of pupils' progress, the school's self-evaluation, school policies, minutes of governors' meetings and the provision for safeguarding. They also looked at samples of pupils' work and the school development plan. They analysed 86 parental questionnaires and other written responses from staff and pupils.

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

children's skills on entry to the nursery, and the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- the progress made by pupils in learning English, and its effect on improving pupils' writing
- the effectiveness of the curriculum in promoting learning for all groups of pupils
- the effectiveness and sustainability of the school's strategies for improving attendance.

Information about the school

Devonshire is larger than most infant schools. It has a nursery that provides part-time education for children. A large majority of pupils come from minority ethnic groups, the largest being those from Indian heritage. A very high proportion of pupils are in the early stages of learning English; about 10% of children enter the nursery speaking no English, and over 50% at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly below average, with a majority having moderate learning difficulties. The school has access to a privately run breakfast club and after-school club on site. The school has a community room where it provides parents and carers with opportunities to learn English and meet socially. The school has a number of awards including platinum Healthy Schools status and the National Teaching Award in sustainability, where it is one of three finalists for the Midlands area.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. There is a constant buzz of learning, energy and enjoyment throughout the school every day. The school is a complex and inclusive society, with a community of many faiths and cultures. Its warm and harmonious ethos is further enhanced by the encouragement it gives to parents, carers and other members of the community to join with the pupils in their education and personal development. As a parent commented, 'This school is not just about teachers and children, it is a community where parents are encouraged to take part.' The school has an overwhelming desire to do its absolute best in education and care for all its pupils, and ensures that all have equal opportunities in their development. The strongly shared view of the whole staff, constantly promoted by the visionary and passionate headteacher, is that 'we are here for the children'. This enables pupils to achieve well and make good and sometimes excellent progress in all aspects of their education. There are many strengths in the school, but most particularly it provides highly effective and personalised support for every learner, including the large number of pupils whose first language is not English, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has shown over time that it has outstanding capability for sustained improvement at every level because the leadership never allows it to stand still.

When children enter the nursery they have many barriers to learning, especially in language development. These children make good progress which continues throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children are provided with excellent resources, exciting activities and continual support, especially in their language development. The school recognises that there is inconsistency in teaching in the Reception classes and is seeking ways in which this can be improved. Progress accelerates in Years 1 and 2 so that by the time pupils leave they are reaching the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. An increasing number of pupils are reaching above average levels, because the school ensures that there is sufficient challenge for pupils of all abilities. Teaching is good, and teachers work very well in teams with highly competent and dedicated support staff. Assessment and its use in planning are exceptional and have been designed by the headteacher specifically for the needs of the pupils.

Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning which are reflected in their behaviour. They enjoy school immensely and are always smiling and happy. They all feel very safe, enjoy a highly healthy lifestyle and have very good relationships with the staff. They are an integral part of the school and local community, and have strong links with many parts of the world through their own multicultural society and contacts with other schools. The

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curriculum is innovative and has an ideal mix of focused and investigative learning, which emphasises basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). This contributes strongly to the outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

The school is well supported by the governing body, whose members make a good contribution to the leadership and management of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers consistently guide children in their activities, so that they fully understand their learning
 - sharing the good and sometimes outstanding practice observed, so that all teachers can understand how to develop their skills successfully.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The response of pupils in their learning is always positive and they are often bursting with enthusiasm to make contributions in lessons. Their behaviour is excellent, and pupils are lively and never passive in their learning. They show considerable focus in their learning and cope very well with complex arrangements such as the weekly literacy 'carousels', when they are involved in a variety of activities for a whole morning. During the inspection this was seen to work very effectively in Year 2 on the theme of nocturnal animals when pupils were writing, devising plans and research questions, and role-playing in darkened dens. As a result progress for all groups of pupils is excellent, especially in the development of their speaking and listening and writing skills. This is ensuring that the older pupils are able to reach at least the levels expected for their age. Attainment is similar in many areas of the curriculum, and challenging targets ensure that increasing numbers of pupils are reaching above average levels in writing, mathematics and ICT.

Pupils in discussion and on their questionnaires unanimously agreed that they feel safe in and out of school. They are very confident in the adults who care for them and help resolve their disputes. They do their best at a very young age to lead a healthy lifestyle. Several claimed that they instructed their parents and carers on what food should be in their lunch boxes, and talked enthusiastically about their walks and their sports. The school is the centre of the local community. Pupils enjoy contributing proactively to the school council, describing a number of ways in which they have improved the school environment. They enjoy working with parents and carers when they are invited to join them in learning activities. They play a big part in eco-sustainability activities and act as playground buddies. All these activities, including the presentations they give at local authority events, are oversubscribed. After a lengthy period of low attendance, rigorous procedures adopted by the school have resulted in considerable improvement, and attendance is now average. A strong feature is the determination of the school to stay

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open for its pupils in all weathers even if attendance is consequently low. Pupils are confident with adults in public and when speaking, are self-reliant, and learn how to be good team members and understand the value of money. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education remains outstanding, because pupils learn how to value and respect each other in a vibrant and sensitive multicultural society.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good most of the time, and occasionally outstanding. Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils, have good expectations of what pupils can achieve and encourage pupils to think and develop confidence in their speaking skills. A common feature of teaching is the complex and well-organised planning for personalised learning, especially for the development of literacy skills. This was observed a number of times, for example in phonics sessions and the reading rockets programme. This always involves the use of detailed assessments of pupils' progress, designed by the headteacher, which can be accessed at any time. This gives teachers a very clear understanding of the day-to-day progress of every pupil. Teachers work particularly well

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

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with well-informed and proactive support assistants. Sometimes the emphasis on tightly structured learning causes teachers to have overlong sessions on the carpet, which leads to missed opportunities to widen the scope of the learning activity.

The school provides an original, exciting and imaginative curriculum, which is particularly successful in developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in every subject. Pupils develop their skills continuously in the ICT suite, which is also made available for families who do not have access to computers. Individual programmes for each pupil are also made available for home access, and many families take advantage of this provision. Many lessons feature a range of activities such as art, drama and cultural learning which harness the interest and enthusiasm of pupils. The implementation of the 'Building Learning Power' programme is having a very positive impact upon the curriculum. Pupils are provided with a good range of extra-curricular activities, and many visitors and specialist teachers come to the school. Pupils value the sporting activities they have and their very vigorous playground activities and games.

The school provides an extremely welcoming and caring environment for all its pupils. Intervention and support from the many support assistants and learning mentors are well planned and meet the needs of all pupils, but particularly those who speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff know and care very much for their pupils and have rigorous child protection practices and procedures in place to ensure their welfare. There are very good arrangements for the transition of pupils to the adjacent junior school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The innovative, highly skilled and very determined headteacher is the driving force in the school's ambition for continuous improvement, especially in providing a fully inclusive and racially harmonious school at the centre of the community. The headteacher has created a strong and highly motivated senior management team, which leads an equally ambitious staff, notable for its high standards of morale and mutual support. Leaders are meticulous in their excellent management of teaching and learning. Monitoring of teaching and other aspects of learning is regular and well understood by staff. This is instrumental in steering improvement rapidly whenever weaknesses are identified in provision, such as the inconsistencies in practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The governors are supportive but appropriately challenging, and have

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ensured a good standard of safeguarding and other statutory procedures.

The school's engagement with parents and carers is excellent. Many parents and carers who were previously reticent to be involved with school have been encouraged to join parent clubs and, most importantly, to share in their children's education in a variety of ways. They show considerable appreciation of these initiatives. Partnerships to promote learning and especially the well-being of pupils are outstanding, and school leaders leave no stone unturned in finding the best support for all of them. A further strength of the school is its provision for community cohesion. The school is hugely involved locally but has also established links with other schools both in this country and throughout the world. The school utilises the backgrounds of its pupils from many nationalities throughout Europe and the Far East to enhance its provision. The school makes excellent use of its resources, in particular the deployment of staff, so that it gives outstanding value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The majority of children enter the nursery with very low-level skills for their age, especially language and social skills. Many have very little or no knowledge of English. Children make good progress in their learning and personal development, although by the time they reach Year 1, their skills are still below those expected for their age, particularly in reading and writing. The outstanding learning environment is divided into specific bases for each of the six areas of learning. All of them are very well resourced. This helps to provide an excellent curriculum, especially for creative learning and

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imaginative play, such as the exciting pirate room filled with sand. There are also well focused sessions for learning in literacy, phonics, writing and numeracy on the middle three days of the week, whilst on the other two days children are able to make their own choices from a wealth of stimulating activities. Through this provision, children are rapidly developing independence, and know how to move safely around a large building. Children learning English and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported by a caring support staff and teachers, and make good progress. Although teaching is good overall, it varies from occasionally outstanding to satisfactory. The differences are mainly in the degree to which teachers are actively involved in children's learning, and sometimes children do not receive sufficient guidance from their teacher in order to improve their learning. The school has devised its own assessment strategies, which are very detailed and effectively used in planning. Children clearly enjoy their learning, showing great enthusiasm and curiosity, and occasionally amazement at what they discover.

Children's welfare is given great importance, and staff ensure that all necessary safeguarding is in place. Good leadership and management have led to effective reorganisation of the increasingly innovative curriculum. Staff have excellent relationships with parents. As children in the Nursery and Reception classes continually work together, transition on entry and between the two is seamless, and it is also excellent into Year 1.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are almost unanimous in their very positive views of the school. All believe their children are kept safe, and almost all feel that their children make good progress, the school helps them to support their children, and teaching and leadership and management are good. Typically a parent commented, 'My child is happy at school and as a parent I find that his happiness encourages fantastic learning and he is doing extremely well.' Very few parents expressed any concerns about the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Devonshire Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 86 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 350 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	62	32	37	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	45	52	41	48	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	45	43	50	3	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	44	45	52	1	1	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	37	43	47	55	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	36	51	59	2	2	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	41	49	57	1	1	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	29	34	47	55	4	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	37	48	56	0	0	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	40	46	53	4	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	34	47	55	7	8	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	41	48	39	45	3	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	50	41	48	0	0	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Devonshire Infant School, Smethwick, B67 7AT

Your school provides you with an outstanding education. This means we agree with those of you who told me it is 'brilliant' and 'super'. Well done for helping to make it such a special place.

Thank you so much for making us welcome. It was great to see how much you enjoy your learning and how well you get on with each other. I have never seen so many children in a playground game before! Your behaviour is excellent, you are kept very safe and you certainly enjoy your learning. We are pleased that you are very well cared for and that so many of you have learned to speak English well and so quickly. We think that even though you are very lively you are also polite, and respect your teachers and all the other adults who help you in school. We were particularly pleased that your parents and carers like the school and enjoy helping you with your work, especially when using computers. They also think that your teachers and headteacher are doing a really good job in school and we agree with them. We think you play an excellent part in making suggestions to the school, and you try very hard to be healthy. We liked the way you learn about different countries. Your singing of those songs from Poland was really good. You have done very well in the sustainability competition. We hope you win it. You are very lucky to have such lovely school grounds to learn about eco problems and nocturnal animals, and we loved your greenhouse made of plastic bottles.

We have suggested to your school leaders how we think the school can be improved even more. We think that your teachers in the Nursery and Reception can do even more to make sure you are all helped to understand what you are doing at all times, and that they can share some of the good ideas they have with each other to help you to improve your work. We are sure that you will continue to enjoy your education and do your best, and hope that you will always find your learning such fun.

Yours sincerely

Rod Braithwaite

Lead inspector

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