

Arksey Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106676
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	336721
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Eaton

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Shaw
Headteacher	Mrs Shelley Fisher
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited five lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of policies, records and plans. The inspectors analysed the 36 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- how well teaching meets the needs of all groups of pupils at each key stage
- the quality of outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the effectiveness of steps to raise attainment and improve progress in writing
- the way in which temporary leadership is moving the school forward.

Information about the school

This is a small school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are White British. About 8% of pupils are from Traveller families. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average but there are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Currently, there are 15 children in the Reception Year. These children are taught in a class with Year 1 children. At the time of this inspection, the school was led by the deputy headteacher in the role of acting headteacher, together with an acting deputy headteacher. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award. Nursery provision is managed privately and is inspected separately.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

After making a rapid start during the Reception Year, pupils make satisfactory progress as they move up through the school. Their attainment and achievement are weakest in writing. The good-quality curriculum includes a wealth of topics and activities, which means that pupils have plenty of experiences to draw on and write about. They are not short of ideas but their writing skills, especially spelling and handwriting, hold them back. A comprehensive programme for monitoring and evaluating the school's work has enabled senior leaders to pinpoint these weaknesses and gives the school a largely accurate view of its own performance. However, governors and some of the staff with leadership responsibilities are not yet involved closely enough in the task of self-evaluation and written plans for moving the school forward are not always sufficiently precise. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that, in all aspects of the school's work, the trend is one of improvement. The acting headteacher is keeping the school firmly on track and contributes well to its capacity to continue to improve.

The curriculum and the effective way in which the school cares for and supports all pupils help to secure some good outcomes. For example, pupils feel safe, are keen to help others and are well informed about healthy lifestyles. Teaching contributes greatly to pupils' enjoyment because, as one pupil explained, 'My teacher tries hard to make learning fun.' Lessons do not promote pupils' academic progress consistently as well. In particular, tasks are not always matched closely enough to what pupils need to learn next. Marking is not uniformly helpful.

This is an outward-looking school, with strengths in its partnerships with parents and carers, other schools and a wide variety of agencies and professionals. It reaches out to its local community and beyond, making pupils much more aware and appreciative of other cultures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment and progress, especially in writing, by focusing particularly on developing pupils' spelling and handwriting skills
- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently match work closely to pupils' needs
 - informing pupils clearly about what they need to do in order to improve.
- Ensure that governors and all staff with leadership responsibilities play a full part in monitoring the school's work and contribute to sharply focused plans for improvement.

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- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils arrive at lessons ready to learn and are usually prepared to follow instructions and work steadily at their tasks. They try hard to solve problems for themselves but occasionally get dispirited when work is too difficult. Pupils are frequently eager to answer teachers' questions. They readily contribute to discussions with a partner or with the whole class, helping them to clarify their ideas and support each other. Pupils particularly enjoy practical activities and say with pride, 'We're very creative.' They tackle written tasks with enthusiasm but do not always take enough care over presentation and will sometimes make a vague stab at spelling and punctuation rather than checking and paying attention to detail.

Pupils typically start Key Stage 1 working within the levels expected for their age, although because year groups are often small, this does vary from year to year. When their individual starting points are considered, all groups of pupils, including boys and girls with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are from Traveller families, make satisfactory progress overall, as they move up through the school. Progress is good in the Key Stage 1 class, in line with the quality of teaching. By the end of Year 6 attainment in English is lower than that in mathematics and science. This is because pupils score less well in writing than reading and their spelling and handwriting skills tend to be weak.

The school council makes a real impact. It includes representatives from all the main groups in the school and is currently raising money to buy the equipment pupils have chosen for use during wet playtimes. The council has worked with the local police to increase road markings near the school to help slow down traffic. Trained playground leaders organise games and keep an eye on younger pupils. Pupils behave well, overall, even though a small number need extra help in order to control their behaviour, particularly in less-structured situations, such as when playing outside. Pupils are confident that bullying is not a problem because the school deals firmly with any reported incidents. Attendance has improved steadily over recent years and there are now few persistent absentees. Working together in their kitchen garden and enjoying eating the vegetables they grow contributes to pupils' good awareness of healthy lifestyles. Pupils understand how they can contribute to their own safety, for example when using roads. All groups of pupils report that they like their school and are happy to be part of it.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers frequently plan activities that motivate pupils and help them to make connections between different subjects. Learning about the features of review writing, Year 6 pupils applied their knowledge of the Second World War to the task of analysing an appraisal of Saving Private Ryan. Lessons often involve well-timed changes of activity, so pupils remain alert and focused. Teachers assess pupils' learning and progress regularly so that they know the levels at which each one is working. However, they do not use this information consistently well to match work to the needs of all pupils. Tasks are sometimes too easy for the most-able pupils while in other lessons some groups are unable to work independently because their tasks are too difficult. Teaching assistants often provide good support, for example by working with younger or less-able pupils. Marking is usually encouraging but does not always inform pupils exactly how they can improve their work.

The school's curriculum is rooted firmly in the needs and interests of its pupils. Pupils are involved in deciding which topics they study and the direction their learning takes. For example, a visit to an exhibition about dinosaurs sparked the enthusiasm of Key Stage 1 pupils. The teacher responded to this by planning a unit of work that enabled pupils to pursue their interest and develop knowledge, skills and understanding from a variety of subjects. At the start of their Second World War topics, Key Stage 2 pupils expressed a desire to 'visit a museum and dress up in costumes', and this was arranged. It led to exciting and creative activities including a wartime-themed Christmas performance. Teachers match the work covered to the requirements of the National Curriculum but occasionally miss opportunities for pupils to apply their information and

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communication technology skills. There are suitable adaptations made for groups of pupils, such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Varied clubs and visits, all very popular with pupils, enrich learning well. An annual series of residential visits, including one to France, extends pupils' experiences and enhances cultural and social development.

The school's support for its pupils starts early in the day as up to one third of them enjoy the warm and healthy welcome offered by the breakfast club. By working closely with their families, the school successfully encourages increasingly regular attendance and pupils' involvement in all aspects of school life. Pupils with additional needs are supported particularly well, utilising the school's strong links with a wide range of agencies. Pupils are each known very well to the staff and their personal development is tracked carefully. A small team of teaching assistants provides a programme to develop the social skills of pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties, with individual support plans when necessary. There are well organised arrangements to help prepare pupils for the move to secondary education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders' determination to move the school forward is shared by other members of staff and results in the sense of purpose exhibited by all. Information derived from monitoring activities is used to identify where improvements are needed and actions that will be helpful. For example, an audit by the acting headteacher, in his role as literacy coordinator, revealed gaps in some teachers' knowledge of particular genres of writing. A series of training events has proved effective, as seen in improvements in pupils' ability to adapt their writing to different circumstances. There has not been sufficient time for the outcomes of this work to be reflected in pupils' attainment. Changes in staffing and governors have meant that not all those with leadership responsibilities are playing a full role in monitoring and evaluation. Written plans for improvement are not uniformly helpful. For example, timescales are sometimes too great to enable any slippage to be identified quickly. Leaders work conscientiously to ensure that all groups of pupils are included as far as possible in every aspect of school life and the curriculum raises pupils' own awareness of discrimination and stereotyping. Partnerships with parents and carers and other agencies are very positive and contribute to the school's effective promotion of community cohesion. For instance, frequent

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events such as car boot sales bring the local community into school and links with other schools enable pupils to engage with children from a wider range of cultures. Safeguarding requirements are met satisfactorily with priority given to the pupils with the most need.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

When they join the Reception Year, children's skills vary widely but are often below the levels expected for their age. They make good progress, particularly in the areas of communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development. In addition to the good provision made by the staff, children benefit from the examples set by the Year 1 pupils in their class. For example, the younger children hear the older ones talking about their learning and join them as they use resources such as construction kits. All this encourages children to try different activities and develop new skills. Adults use questions very well to stimulate children to recall, think hard and express themselves clearly. Children's ideas are valued and, in turn, the children mirror the teacher's enthusiasm: 'Good idea!' exclaimed one child. In the classroom, activities are interesting and encourage children to be independent learners. The outdoor area is being developed but does not currently provide the same high-quality learning opportunities. There are good arrangements for helping children to settle in quickly and parents and carers are encouraged to record their observations of children's learning in a special home–school book. This information contributes to the comprehensive records of each child's progress. The teacher ensures that the provision keeps developing but

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has not yet completed a written action plan.

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 mostly happy with the school. Those responding to the questionnaire are unanimous that their children enjoy school and are encouraged to be healthy, and that parents and carers are kept well informed. The inspection supports these particular views but judges that pupils' progress is satisfactory rather than good. A few parents and carers feel that the school does not deal effectively with any unacceptable behaviour. A small number of pupils need extra help in order to behave well. The inspection considers that the school's arrangements are effective.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Arksey Primary 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 inspectors received 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 118 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	58	16	44	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	53	16	44	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	44	20	56	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	44	16	44	1	3	2	6
The teaching is good at this school	16	44	17	47	2	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	50	16	44	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	44	19	53	0	0	0	0
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)	14	39	18	50	2	6	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	47	19	53	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	28	16	44	5	14	3	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	39	18	50	3	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	47	15	42	3	8	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	53	14	39	3	8	0	0

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



14 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Arksey Primary School, Doncaster, DN5 0TE

Thank you for being so polite and friendly when I visited your school. Special thanks go to those of you who had meetings with me and explained what you think about the school. You were all very helpful and I was impressed by how sensible and thoughtful you were. The inspection found that yours is a satisfactory school. There are a number of good things about it and these include:

- the curriculum and the way you are involved in deciding what you learn
- the care and support the school provides, so you feel safe
- your behaviour and the contribution you make to the school and the community
- your knowledge of how to stay safe and be healthy
- the good links the school has with your families, groups of people who help with its work, and the local community
- the start children get in the Reception Year.

You make satisfactory progress in your learning but it could be faster, especially in writing. In order for this to happen, I have asked the school to:

- help you improve your spelling and handwriting
- make sure your work is just hard enough and that teachers' comments in your books help you to improve.

You can help by always trying hard with your written work and presentation and telling your teachers if lessons are too hard or too easy. The acting headteacher and all the staff are working hard to help the school to improve. I send them and each one of you my best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Rosemary Eaton

Lead inspector

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