

Derwent Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109457
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	337291
Inspection dates	30 November –1 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Angela Kirk

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cathy Bailey
Headteacher	Caroline Howell
Date of previous school inspection	2 June 2007
School address	Hitchin Road Henlow Bedfordshire
Telephone number	01462 812047
Fax number	01462 817364
Email address	derwentlower@schools.bedfordshire.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at an analysis of pupils' progress, governors' meeting records, development planning and monitoring, local authority reports, a range of policies and procedures and samples of pupils' work. They also analysed 38 questionnaires returned from parents and carers as well as responses from pupils and staff.

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

- pupils' attainment and whether achievement is uniform throughout the school
- the impact of the school's strategies to improve standards in writing
- the involvement of pupils' in assessing their own work and its impact on their progress
- the quality of school's self-evaluation, including the role of the governors and the impact of monitoring on the success of the school's actions to tackle its priorities
- the quality of teaching and the progress made by children in Early Years Foundation Stage across the full range of areas of learning.

Information about the school

Derwent is a smaller than average first school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, with most pupils' needs relating to speech and language difficulties. Almost all the pupils are White British and only a small minority speak English as an additional language. The school serves a local Royal Air Force base, so pupil mobility is high. The school has gained the Active Mark award.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is, therefore, given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to its safeguarding procedures and weaknesses in self-evaluation.

Safeguarding policies are not being followed and requirements such as educational visit risk assessments and bullying and racist incident logs are not all in place. The school's self-evaluation for aspects of teaching, learning, attainment and progress, mainly in the core subjects, is generally good but little monitoring and evaluation in other key areas, for example the Early Years Foundation Stage, is carried out by the staff or the governing body. Involvement of middle managers in self-evaluation is insufficient. As a result, the school's self-evaluation is weak in these areas. In addition, the poor organisation of key documentation and records is hampering monitoring.

In most other respects the school is satisfactory and has some good features. The drive by the headteacher and staff to improve teaching and learning has been strong and, as a result, pupils' progress is good and the standards by Year 4 are above average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers because of the good support they receive. Activities in lessons successfully motivate most pupils and the school's curriculum is strengthened with varied educational trips and skill days. Teaching is good. Staff match work to pupils' needs and abilities well and homework is used effectively to support learning. Targets are used to focus progression in writing and mathematics, but marking does not provide useful feedback to pupils on how to improve their work. Attendance is high and there are no pupils with persistent absence. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall and good in lessons. However, incidents of possible bullying and unacceptable behaviour are not always sufficiently well handled by the school, resulting in concerns from some parents and pupils.

The governing body has not undertaken any effective monitoring of progress of the main areas for improvement identified in the school's development plan. This means that, apart from teaching, learning, pupils' attainment and progress, it has no understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has included failing to ensure that legal safeguarding requirements are met. The governing body has recently been strengthened with new members, who have begun to challenge the school on its effectiveness. In teaching and learning, the school has monitored effectively and has tackled the right priorities such as writing, to make improvements. Consequently the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen procedures for safeguarding pupils by the end of January 2010, particularly with regard to:
 - completing all legal requirements including risk assessments and bullying and racist incident logs
 - following safeguarding, bullying and behaviour policies rigorously and regularly reviewing and updating these to improve their effectiveness
 - organising all safeguarding information so that the school can easily monitor and evaluate its performance.
 - Improve management, leadership and governance of the school by the end of July 2010 by:
 - reorganising the roles and responsibilities of staff to focus on whole-school improvement
 - undertaking a full self-evaluation of the school
 - ensuring that governors monitor progress in the key areas for school improvement
 - organising all documentation effectively.
- Introduce by the end of July 2010 a clear new marking policy across all subjects to improve the consistency and quality of marking and to ensure that all pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

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

From starting points that are broadly expected for their age, pupils achieve well and their attainment is above that expected by the time they leave at the end of Year 4. Progress is best in Years 1 and 2 and, by the end of Key Stage 1, standards are usually significantly above average for all subjects. A recent focus on improving writing has improved the progress for current Year 4 pupils. Pupils eagerly participate in the wide range of opportunities offered to make their learning interesting. Pupils in a Year 4 class, for example, followed instructions to produce a colourful working lava lamp as part of their homework. Pupils enjoy using email and the educational activities on the school's learning platform, but ensure they follow the rules for e-safety. Pupils in Year 4 have the opportunity to visit France each year to extend their knowledge of the world. There are no significant differences in the achievement of any groups of pupils.

Pupil and parent questionnaires indicate that most pupils feel safe and behave well, but a number of written concerns on parental questionnaires and observations and discussions with adults and pupils during the inspection indicate that there are behaviour and possible bullying issues in the school, which have neither been recorded nor effectively dealt with. Behaviour in class and around the school building is good. Pupils are friendly and cooperate well with each other. However, at playtimes and

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

lunchtimes, staff do not always ensure that pupils' problems and concerns are addressed. Pupils believe that improvements in school dinners and the two hours of physical education that they take part in each week help them to stay healthy. The school council has also been involved in trying to provide some healthy choices in its tuck shop.

Pupils make a good contribution to the school. For example, the Year 4 Mouse Musketeers play an important role in ensuring everyone has friends to play with in the playground and organising games and toys with pupils. Pupils run stalls at fairs and the curriculum supports some skills to make pupils ready for the workplace, for example by designing posters to attract local people to attend school events. Pupils learn about other cultures and religions in their studies and have good social skills, such as the ability to work well in groups and to present information confidently to their peers in the classroom. Pupils say they enjoy school and attendance is high.

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	2
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	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is typically good, with teachers displaying good subject knowledge and

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

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

effective questioning techniques. Challenging activities are matched well to pupils' abilities. For example, pupils in a Year 2 mathematics lesson were set different levels of challenges based on relationships when adding combinations of odd and even numbers together. Homework is used well to support learning through pupils' recently introduced 'Learning Logs'. All pupils have appropriate individual targets for writing and mathematics. However, they are not yet linked to marking and marking does not provide effective feedback to pupils on the quality of their work. Few opportunities are given to enable pupils to assess their work using their targets or other criteria. Teaching assistants usually provide good support when working individually or with a group, but some do not support pupils well during the teacher's main teaching session.

The curriculum is broad and is enriched through trips and a variety of initiatives such as history day. There is good take up of extra-curricular provision. Planning is generally satisfactory, but is often not in sufficient depth to raise standards in teaching or to ensure pupils make maximum progress through the skills they acquire.

Staff know pupils well. The relationship between class staff and pupils is particularly effective in ensuring that they are well cared for. Staff are particularly aware of the impact on pupils of parents serving in war zones and choose activities, such as making small iced Christmas cakes to send to serving parents, which act to encourage pupils to share their concerns and feelings but in a positive way. There is targeted support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and its impact is good. Liaison with the middle school is good and projects between the two schools have already ensured Year 4 pupils are confident about the move to their next school. Because of inadequacies in the systems and procedures for safeguarding, care guidance and support is inadequate overall.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	4

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides satisfactory leadership and management of teaching and learning and the school has a clear sense of direction in these areas. Pupils' progress in the core subjects is carefully analysed, well prioritised actions are planned and ambitious but realistic targets are set. However, effective self-evaluation of many other important aspects of the school, for example personal development and well-being, the Early Years Foundation Stage and engagement with parents and carers, is not in place. As a result, work in these areas is not well directed. In addition, organisation of key information,

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

such as policies and health and safety records in the school is not systematically organised to enable efficient monitoring and evaluation.

The governing body has struggled to recruit new members and has not been providing a satisfactory level of challenge for the school. This is largely because the school does not have effective enough self-evaluation processes in place to provide governors with the information and insights that they need. Their oversight of safeguarding procedures is inadequate and the effectiveness of legally required policies has not been evaluated.

The school provides equal opportunities for learning for all pupils and tackles discrimination satisfactorily. However, it does not always manage concerns and complaints effectively, for example, complaints made by parents and carers about possible bullying. There are some effective partnerships with the Royal Air Force (RAF) base. For example, some personnel serve on the governing body and others have helped in the school's projects to improve the outdoor areas. The school is a cohesive community; pupils from the local area and from the RAF base get on well together. However, the school provides pupils with limited opportunities to mix with pupils who have different backgrounds to their own.

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	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
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 start in Reception with skills and understanding that are expected for their age, but with weaker skills in writing. Systems are in place for assessment on entry and exit, but assessment information collected during the year is not used effectively to plan the next steps for children's learning. The intake of pupils varies considerably each year but

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

children make satisfactory progress to enter Year 1 with average standards. Staff provide a secure, safe and supportive environment for learning. Relationships with parents and carers are satisfactory. Schemes of work are in place, linked to the areas of learning with a good balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities. There are opportunities for children to move freely between outdoor and indoor environments, but activities are not planned in sufficient detail to ensure the right level of challenge for all pupils. Satisfactory teaching is developing the children's interests, curiosity, independence and social skills.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are happy with the school's work; a typical comment was, 'All of my children have loved learning at this school as it offers so many varied ways of teaching, e.g. theatre companies, activity days, trips, learning logs, etc'. However, about a third of parents who returned questionnaires expressed a range of concerns, indicated either by disagreeing with the statements in the questionnaire or in their written comments. These included safety, bullying and poor communication issues. Inspectors followed up these issues and share parents' concerns about several aspects of the school's provision. Those relating to safety and bullying are dealt with earlier in the report. Inspectors agree that when there are complaints, communication between the school and parents and carers is not good enough.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Derwent Lower 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 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 117 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	50	19	50	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	42	21	55	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	29	20	53	6	16	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	37	19	50	5	13	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	13	34	21	55	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	29	23	61	3	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	32	24	63	1	3	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)	9	24	20	53	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	42	17	45	2	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	29	19	50	3	8	2	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	21	20	53	5	13	2	5
The school is led and managed effectively	12	32	17	45	3	8	2	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	53	14	37	1	3	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.



2 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Derwent Lower School, Henlow, SG16 6BA

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed the discussions we had with you and learnt a lot about the work and activities that you do at school. Your school has worked hard to make learning interesting for you and you told us that you really enjoy your lessons. You are clearly enthusiastic learners and told us you like the visits that you take part in and the after-school clubs.

The youngest children in your school settle in well and learn through a wide variety of interesting activities. You are kind and considerate and usually behave well, although we have asked the school to make sure that worries that you and your parents and carers have are sorted out really well. You told us all about how you keep healthy and about various responsibilities that you have in school, such as the Mouse Musketeers. You make good progress and reach standards above those expected for your age by the time you leave at the end of Year 4.

Although we think the school has many satisfactory and some good parts, we judged it inadequate overall. This is because governors need to improve their policies and systems for safeguarding everyone so that these meet important government requirements. We also asked the leaders and governors of your school to make sure they have a really clear picture of how good your school is, so that they know where to make improvements in the future. We also asked the teachers to make their marking more useful, so that you have a clear idea of how to improve your work.

Remember, you can help to make your school even better by continuing to work hard and by always behaving well, especially in the playground.

Yours sincerely

Angela Kirk

Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.