

Dodleston CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111272
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	337655
Inspection dates	27–28 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	69
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Nuala Floyd
Headteacher	Mrs H Bushnell
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed eight lessons and parts of lessons taught by six teachers and support staff. They held meetings with staff, members of the governing body and with a group of pupils, and spoke informally with pupils, parents and carers. The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documentation relating to pupils' attainment and progress and school management. They also took into account the views expressed in the inspection questionnaires completed by 35 pupils, 3 staff members and 40 parents and carers.

- the attainment levels and progress made by pupils at both key stages with a specific focus on writing and higher attaining pupils
- the organisation of the classes to determine whether the different age groups are catered for equally well
- the success with which leaders at all levels use assessment data to drive forward improvements in outcomes for pupils
- the effectiveness of the school's promotion of community cohesion.

Information about the school

The school, which is much smaller than average, serves a village community to the south of Chester. The great majority of pupils are White British. Far smaller than average proportions of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, belong to minority ethnic groups, speak English as an additional language or are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. Since the previous inspection, the numbers on roll have increased by more than a third; half the teaching and support staff are new to the school and the accommodation has been extended and refurbished. In 2009, the school achieved the Healthy Schools Award, its Active Mark was renewed and it attained the Financial Management Standard in Schools.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This school, which plays an important role at the heart of village life, provides its pupils with good quality education. Due to the headteacher's passionate and skilful leadership, the school has improved greatly since its previous inspection. Pupils now make at least good progress in their academic work. Their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is demonstrated by their excellent relationships and impeccable behaviour. All who work in the school, both adult and child, put its motto – We Care – into consistent, daily practice.

Most children's skills on entry to the Reception year are broadly as expected for their age. In recent years, attainment overall at the end of Year 6 had been broadly average but this fluctuated because of small numbers in year groups. Now, staffing is stable, morale is high, the quality of teaching is good, the use of assessment information has greatly improved and the curriculum is increasingly bringing learning to life for pupils. As a result they enjoy their time at school, attendance is above average and pupils of all abilities and ages achieve well. There is a rising trend of attainment, particularly in science which was an area of concern at the previous inspection. However, in writing, fewer pupils than expected reach the higher levels for their age and boys achieve less well than girls in this subject. Through its rigorous monitoring procedures and self-evaluation, which provide it with good capacity to improve further, the school has recognised this and is taking actions to tackle the issues, but these have yet to bear fruit fully for all pupils. Leaders have reviewed and updated policies and procedures relating to statutory requirements and are in the process of reviewing others that guide daily practice, for example, marking and assessment.

One of the school's greatest strengths lies in the high quality care, guidance and support that staff provide for each pupil. This ensures that they feel extremely safe and valued as individuals and, therefore, are keen to make a strong contribution to their community. From the Early Years Foundation Stage upwards, children have great fun at Dodleston and develop the skills to stand them in good stead in the future. Overall parents and carers are delighted with the quality of provision. 'A lovely, lovely school. I couldn't have asked for a better start in life for all my three children,' is typical of their supportive comments.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing, especially for boys and those who are quicker learners by, in addition to its current actions:
- - increasing the grammatical accuracy of pupils' writing

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- - having higher expectations of the presentation of pupils' work
- - improving the quality of advice given in marking, and ensuring that pupils act upon the guidance provided
- - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects.
- Speed up the process of policy review, placing particular emphasis on those related to assessment, marking and presentation.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Every pupil who responded to the inspection questionnaire considers that they learn a lot in lessons: they are correct. Pupils listen well to adults and each other, sustain their concentration for extended periods and are keen to contribute their own thoughts. Those of all ages and abilities collaborate very well and fruitfully discuss their ideas with partners so that classrooms hum with purposeful activity. Pupils are confident and articulate when talking about their findings and many skilfully use their expertise in information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance their work. With such positive attitudes to learning it is unsurprising that, for example, every pupil in Year 6 who has been part of the school since Year 2 has made better than expected progress. Around half are working at above average levels for their age and all the others are working at the average levels. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make similarly good progress to their peers, with a few achieving outstandingly well. Attainment in writing is less strong than in other subjects largely because the current levels of grammar and presentation of some boys and higher attaining pupils do not do full justice to the creative content of their work.

The school's family atmosphere means that pupils take excellent care of each other. The buddy system ensures nobody is left out at playtime. Older pupils provide much support and encouragement to younger ones; for example, helping them to complete the annual five mile 'Dodleston dawdle' around the village. Before this event, pupils confirm their outstanding awareness of safety issues by considering the hazards posed by, for example, farm machinery. Pupils understand the difference between falling out and bullying, and are fully confident that staff will quickly respond to any unhappiness. The school council has recently organised playtime boxes for each class and pupils take turns to lead the daily 'Fitness for All' sessions. They eagerly take part in village activities and also in sports competitions and events such as 'Sing Up' days at Chester cathedral which bring them into contact with a more diverse community than their own. Pupils' values of inclusion, friendship and enthusiasm help to create an orderly, optimistic and happy community and provide them with strong foundations to support their future well-being.

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	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	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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan lessons with care to cater for the different ages and abilities of those in their class and they make sure that they capture pupils' interest from the outset, often through good use of video clips or artefacts relevant to the topic. The activities really motivate pupils. For example, Year 1 pupils giggled with glee as they thought about measuring in litres 'a potion to kill a dragon', whilst Year 6 pupils deliberated hard to ensure their story would be enjoyed by the Reception Year pupil who they buddy. Teachers usually clarify the expectations for different groups and provide different activities so that feedback at the end of lessons provides opportunities for all to learn from each other. Lessons move at a good pace, with excellent organisation and pupil management. Teaching assistants provide good quality support to individuals and small groups and teachers offer pupils good guidance in lessons to help them improve their work. Good subject knowledge and questioning help pupils to confirm their understanding and to expand on their answers. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to think for themselves, or insufficient time is allowed for them to put pencil to paper. Regular marking provides encouragement to pupils but seldom identifies the next steps they should take to improve their work.

The increasing links being made between subjects are helping pupils to see the relevance of their learning. For example, in a lesson combining science with geography, including elements of ethics and interdependency, pupils worked with great enthusiasm as they researched information about the impact on an environment of the introduction of a new species and the effects of logging in the rainforest. However, opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills across a range of subjects are not as frequent as

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they could be. Good partnerships with other schools enhance the curriculum, particularly in sport and the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Committed parental support allows for specialist teaching in subjects such as music and art, the impact of which is very evident in pupils' high quality artwork and singing. The recently introduced 'Learning Platform' is proving an effective tool for a range of purposes from recording French dialogue to supporting homework.

All adults know pupils exceptionally well as individuals and provide them with top quality care and support. They rigorously follow up any concerns about pupils and are sensitive in the way that they deal with any vulnerability. Greetings for individuals at the start of each day, weekly discussions about those causing concern, regular monitoring of progress and adaptation of provision to meet pupils' specific needs all combine to create a highly effective network that enables pupils to feel comfortable in school and, therefore, able to concentrate on their learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Good quality, well trained leadership at all levels, guided by the dynamic and realistic headteacher, is driving forward improvement at a good pace and creating a shared sense of responsibility and purpose. Subject leadership has moved forward greatly, with high ambitions for each pupil and clear action plans to help bring these about. Determination to ensure that any future staff turnover does not impact on pupil progress has led to, for example, the development of a very useful curriculum and subject leadership handbook to guide actions. This ensures suitable coverage and consistent planning of subjects in the mixed-age classes but does not yet provide full guidance about, for example, marking since the policies are under review. Rigorous, termly assessment and the tracking and analysis of individuals' progress lie behind all the school's decision-making. They have led to, for example, actions to raise standards in writing and also ensure equality of opportunity. Skilful financial management has led to the creation of very flexible, good quality accommodation that meets pupils' needs well. The governing body is fully involved in evaluating the school's effectiveness and making decisions about future actions. Good procedures and practice, including staff recruitment and attention to health and safety, ensure children are safeguarded from harm. The school promotes community cohesion extremely effectively within its immediate and local vicinity and has sustainable plans in place to extend its partnerships

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more widely.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

A stimulating, well organised environment and good quality teaching ensure that children make good progress in all areas of learning during their Reception Year. With a new teaching and leadership team this year, plus continuous access to a dedicated outdoor area, the school is building on the previous year's success to consolidate good practice. Sharing a classroom with pupils in Year 1 has benefits for both year groups through individuals' ready access to activities suitable for their different stages of development. Children demonstrate skills above those expected for their age, particularly in their use of language and their creativity. Adults are adept at helping children to enhance their skills through playing alongside their self-chosen activities and asking open questions that trigger further thought. For example, two boys were encouraged to write down the instructions for completing an adventure program on the computer. Elsewhere, looking at a feather under a microscope attached to the electronic whiteboard elicited wonder at the shapes they saw, which the children described as being 'like tree branches' and being 'fuzzy, fluffy' down at the base. Careful observation and assessment of individuals' skills development underpin the planning, which is drawn up jointly by the two teachers. This process highlights with pinpoint precision the areas of specific focus for each half term. Close links with the village pre-school and with parents and carers make for seamless provision and happy children who, feeling valued and secure, relish learning new things and sharing with others.

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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

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers hold very positive views about the school praising, in particular, the high quality attention paid to individuals' learning, emotional and medical needs.

- 'Staff are highly committed to the children's welfare, education and overall well-being'
- 'Our children excel within the school environment with its community feel'
- 'A wonderful environment for learning and fun'

These statements typify parental comments. A small number expressed concerns about the possible impact of having mixed-age classes. Inspectors agree with the positive views and found no evidence that pupils' progress suffers through sharing the provision with others in different age groups.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dodleston CofE 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 inspection team received 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 69 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	68	11	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	83	7	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	55	18	45	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	60	12	30	4	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	70	12	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	53	16	40	2	5	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	58	14	35	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)	18	45	17	43	2	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	58	13	33	2	5	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	70	11	28	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	55	16	40	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	70	11	28	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	78	8	20	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

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.



1 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dodleston CofE Primary School, Chester, CH4 9NG

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave the other inspector and me when we visited your school recently. We both enjoyed our time with you and would particularly like to thank those of you who spoke with us, helping us to understand what it is like to be a pupil at Dodleston. You told us that yours is a friendly, caring and cooperative school where everyone looks after each other and has lots of interesting things to do. We agree with you and judge it to be a good school.

Those of you in the Reception Year get off to a good start because the staff make learning fun and help you to want to keep finding out new things. Pupils of all ages make good progress because you develop good learning skills, such as listening well, collaborating with each other and independently researching new information. Your writing is imaginative but your grammar and presentation skills are not at a similar level so we have asked the school to help you to improve these. Your teachers are good at making sure that the activities they plan are suitable for the different age groups and abilities in each class. They make lessons lively and interesting and both they and the other adults in the classroom give you good support. The marking celebrates your successes but does not always give you enough information about how to improve, so we have asked your teachers to do this more frequently.

With strong leadership from the headteacher, all the adults in school work together very well to make sure they keep on improving things for you. Their good management has recently helped to improve the accommodation – we were very impressed by the mezzanine – and is helping you to make better progress in your work. We have asked them to make sure that some policies are reviewed, for example, those for assessing and marking your work. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sarah Drake

Lead Inspector

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