

Dean Bank Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114086
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	338293
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Clive Petts

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Scurr
Headteacher	Mr P Speck
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Over half the inspection time was focused on pupils' learning. Inspectors visited 11 lessons and observed all 10 class teachers. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of pupils. They analysed 29 questionnaire responses from parents and carers and looked at questionnaires from staff and pupils. The team also looked at: the pupils' progress data; documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils; and school policies and procedures. They scrutinised pupils' current and past work and spoke to the School Improvement Partner to discuss his reports.

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

- the current achievement, progress and attainment of all groups of pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those new to learning English as an additional language and those more able and talented
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in demonstrating the capacity to secure and sustain improvements in the quality of learning in order to eradicate underachievement and underperformance.

Information about the school

Dean Bank is an average-sized primary school serving a former mining community to the south of the city of Durham. Nearly all pupils are from a White British background with a small number for whom English is an additional language. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. A similar proportion have special educational needs and/or disabilities, although the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is low. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Nursery with 26 places and a Reception class. The number of pupils who join and leave school at other than the usual time is much higher than average. The headteacher has been in post since January 2010 and subject leadership is now settled after recent changes.

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

Dean Bank is a satisfactory school which looks after its pupils well and is showing signs of improvement. Since his appointment, the headteacher has quickly established a clear vision and ambition for the school in order to get the best out of all its pupils. The majority of parents and carers who responded to the parental questionnaire really appreciate the high level of enjoyment their children get from school life and the fact that their children are kept safe.

The starting points of many children are low, frequently with weaknesses in speech, language and readiness to cope with classroom routines. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and leave Reception working towards the goals expected for their age. Although pupils from Year 1 upwards make good progress in terms of their personal development, the overall progress in their learning is satisfactory; in mathematics, it is good. A small minority of the more able pupils do not progress as well as they should, especially in their writing. The progress made by Year 6 pupils improved in 2009. By the end of Year 6, overall attainment is broadly average. Standards in mathematics have improved to the national average. Standards in English have been low in recent years, but were closer to average in 2009.

Most aspects of the pupils' personal development are good because staff give them much positive encouragement and personal support. Classroom atmosphere is characterised by good relationships with any inappropriate or challenging behaviour effectively managed. Improved attendance reflects the strenuous efforts the school makes to promote the advantages that regular attendance brings. Pupils understand the benefits of keeping fit and eating healthily. Good opportunities are provided for them to find out about the diversity in different communities. Some teaching is of a good quality but in too many lessons the level of challenge and teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Assessment information is not sufficiently well used to check for any slips in progress, take account of different learning needs, or to extend thinking and add to pupils' interest and enjoyment. Regular marking gives pupils positive feedback but does not always clearly identify the next steps for improvement.

The headteacher has accurately identified clear priorities to tackle underachievement. Staffing is more settled and increasingly more confident as its members work to eradicate shortcomings and inconsistencies within provision. Good use of partnerships, especially with support agencies and with parents and carers, adds to the drive for improvement. Governors are hard working, supportive and determined to tackle underperformance. The school demonstrates a satisfactory and strengthening capacity to secure and sustain improvements.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment in Years 1 to 6 in English by:
 - raising the expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the more able and talented
 - making certain all activities are challenging and interesting
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing across the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning, intervention and support by:
 - ensuring all teaching has a strong focus on achievement
 - sharpening the use of assessment information to inform lesson planning systematically and provide a clear focus on how different children learn
 - ensuring marking informs pupils of the next steps in their learning.
- 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' achievement is satisfactory and their attainment is average, although variable across subjects. Despite some improvement in mathematics, standards in English have not improved at the same rate. Standards of writing are lower than they should be. Achievement in Year 6 improved in 2009 in all subjects although there were some variations between different groups of pupils. This is largely because teachers are not consistently effective in their use of assessment to tailor tasks to pupils' different abilities and talents. Positive action to address writing weaknesses has met with some, albeit limited, success. When teaching provides more first-hand learning experiences, pupils apply their skills well and think for themselves, ensuring a faster rate of progress. Pupils' confidence grows and this leads to all groups of pupils progressing equally well, for example, those pupils new to the school or to learning English as an additional language.

Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development provides a secure basis for the pupils' good personal development. They feel safe and report that inappropriate and sometimes disruptive behaviour is effectively handled. A distinctive feature of their good behaviour is their polite, sensible and responsible attitudes. Playtimes are active and purposeful with good use made of outdoor facilities, for example, the multi-use games area. Although pupils do have a good grasp of right and wrong, individuals do not always reflect enough on the consequences of their actions. Pupils normally listen well to each other's views and ideas. They enjoy the opportunities they have to take responsibility, for example, acting as buddies during playtime, and value their part in school improvement planning. Aspirations and confidence are boosted with the regular celebration of achievement in assembly.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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?

Some of the school's teaching really captures pupils' interest and challenges their thinking. In those lessons where learning is more active and demanding, tasks are more closely matched to individual needs and talents. New technology adds to pupils' interest and enjoyment. This encourages pupils to work independently and think for themselves but does not consistently enhance the quality of their work, for example, in English. When progress is slower, tasks are often mundane and learning passive. Pupils are not encouraged to aim for high enough standards, for example, in their presentation and content of their writing. Assessment information does not consistently inform lesson planning. Despite the positive encouragement, pupils are not always aware of how they can improve their work. The quality of intervention and support is variable. Good use is made of specialist support and the learning mentor to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils or those from challenging circumstances. However, support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is not always sufficiently structured.

The curriculum is satisfactory and suitably focused on the acquisition of basic skills. Recently, more imaginative approaches to the curriculum have been employed to link

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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subjects and skills together, partly to help teachers maximise opportunities to teach literacy skills across the curriculum. The school recognises that the curriculum is not fine-tuned enough to provide more than a satisfactory match to pupils' interests, needs and talents. Good use is made of after-school and partnership activities to enrich the experiences pupils receive, such as in the very popular dance provision. Visits and visitors add to their life experiences, such as a visit to the Czech Republic with pupils from Slovakia and a nearby school.

Pastoral care is good and parents appreciate the time staff spend helping their children. Good support is provided for newly arrived pupils including those new to learning English as an additional language. Staff are also effective at supporting the more vulnerable pupils with their emotional and physical needs. Good transition arrangements prepare children well for arrival in Nursery and transfer to the next stage of their learning.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders share a determination to tackle underachievement and secure lasting improvement. Recent unsettled staffing that has hindered the pace of improvement is being sensitively managed. A hard-working team of staff share a commitment to raising pupils' attainment and achievement. Staff confidence is growing as their skills are nurtured in the drive to get the very best out of all pupils. Governors are very supportive and recognise the benefits of holding the school to account. Subject leaders are aware of the importance of making certain that the impact of all their actions is carefully evaluated. Robust systems to check pupils' progress frequently are not yet fully embedded. Consequently, analysis is not yet as systematic or incisive as it could be to ensure that assessment pinpoints all gaps in learning. The school works hard to keep parents and carers informed of their children's progress although it recognises that feedback about this is not as frequent as it could be. The happy, friendly school atmosphere illustrates the school's hard work in promoting inclusion and senior leaders are very aware that pupils could achieve more. Good procedures are in place to safeguard pupils. These adopt recommended good practice and are especially strong in relation to child protection. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion with good links with the local and wider communities. Close links with Europe gives pupils an insight into diversity in the global community.

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

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	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

On entry into Nursery, children's skills are well below those expected for their age. A minority arrive with delayed speech development which slows their language progress. Teaching is lively and learning is fun, which ensures that children really enjoy their learning. All are well cared for and looked after, which makes certain that they settle quickly and confidently into routines. Early independence is well developed. Despite some access constraints, outside resources are well organised and activities allow free flow between indoors and outdoors. Children are given interesting opportunities to instigate their own learning so that they can explore and apply their thinking skills. The sensitive support and skilled questioning from staff provoke curiosity and extend thinking. Children listen well and respond positively to staff guidance. Consequently, their behaviour is good. Children understand the importance of good hygiene habits, 'washing the germs from between their fingers' before meals. A firm focus on seeing, listening and speaking, with Percy the parrot helping out, supports children's early introduction to reading and writing. Assessment is detailed and accurate with developing quality in the 'learning journey' of every child. Very good relationships with parents and carers help them contribute to and support their children's learning. Children make good progress and all achieve equally well. By the time they leave Reception most are working towards the levels expected for their age. The talented and effective manager has established a clear vision and a drive for continuous improvement.

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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

In a low response to the questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents were extremely positive about the school. All parents expressed high praise for the enjoyment provided by the school and that it keeps their children safe. Parents and carers might find it helpful to know that in relation to the very small number of concerns received, inspectors found that these issues are being effectively addressed and managed by the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dean Bank Primary and Nursery 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 29 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 225 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	48	15	52	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	48	13	45	2	7	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	31	19	66	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	45	14	48	2	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	48	14	48	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	45	15	52	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	55	11	38	2	7	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)	12	41	15	52	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	38	17	59	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	41	13	45	3	10	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	34	16	55	1	3	2	7
The school is led and managed effectively	12	41	14	48	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	45	12	41	2	7	1	3

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.



1 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dean Bank Primary and Nursery School, Ferryhill, DL17 8PP

Thank you for being so friendly, polite and helpful when the other inspectors and I visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our time at Dean Bank, particularly the discussions we had with you.

We would like to tell you about some of the good things about your school.

¿ The school staff look after you and care for you well.

¿ Your behaviour and enjoyment of school life are good and this is reflected in your improving attendance.

¿ You know how to stay safe and healthy.

¿ The school enjoys good relationships with your parents and carers and there are good links with help agencies and local community groups.

Your new headteacher has settled very quickly and you have some hardworking and committed staff. Your school provides a satisfactory education. By the time you leave school, although the standards you reach in mathematics are broadly average, your standards in English are not as good. A small number of you do not reach the higher levels that you should and not all pupils progress at the same rate. To help your school make sure you achieve higher standards in all subjects, we have asked for some improvements to be made. These will make sure that:

- your work is at the right level for you, challenging but not too easy or too hard
- all of you improve the quality of English, especially your writing, and that the more able reach even higher standards
- more opportunities are provided to practise your writing in every lesson
- all staff have high expectations for your work and use your progress information to plan even more interesting activities for you.

You can play your part by continuing to work as hard as you can. Thank you for helping with this inspection. I hope the school will continue to improve and build on its strengths.

Best of luck to you all

Yours sincerely

Clive Petts

Lead inspector

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