

St Denys Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116102
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	338724
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2009
Reporting inspector	George Rayner

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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Penny Campone
Headteacher	Mrs Carolyn Fayle
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, some pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents, including the school improvement plans, assessment records, information from the monitoring of teaching, safeguarding records and related policies, governor meeting minutes, teachers' plans and records of curriculum activities. The inspectors analysed 59 questionnaires that were completed by parents, 18 from the staff and 57 from pupils in Years 5 and 6.

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

- How successfully has the school raised pupils' attainment since the previous inspection and ensured that no pupil groups learn less well than their classmates?
- How effective is provision in stimulating pupils' enjoyment and engagement with their learning?
- How effectively have leaders shared ambition and drive for improvement throughout the staff and governor teams?

Information about the school

St Denys is smaller than most primary schools. An above average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. About a third come from minority ethnic groups, which is higher than in most schools. They represent a diverse range of cultures and no single non-White British group outnumbers the others. Although the percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, a greater proportion are learning English as an additional language than in most schools. Many of these pupils arrive after the normal times for doing so, often with very little English. The school has a number of awards, including enhanced Healthy Schools Status and Activemark, Basic Skills Quality Mark and ECO Schools 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. All staff who filled in the questionnaire said that they are proud to work at St Denys. Parents, carers and pupils have similarly high opinions. The school continues to sustain strengths that were noted by the previous inspection. The headteacher, supported by her staff, is dedicated to giving pupils security, happiness and growing confidence and self-esteem. This dedication is shown in the commendable efforts to make the elderly building and somewhat restricted outdoor areas bright, attractive, stimulating environments. Effectiveness is demonstrated by the good care, guidance and support that pupils receive and by their considerable well-being and enjoyment of their learning.

The previous inspection noted that the school's improvement planning did not place sufficient emphasis on raising pupils' attainment. Since then, leaders have done much to put this right. The Early Years Foundation Stage is a continually improving part of the school. Recent enhancements to the start that children make there are gradually having an impact as the pupils move up the school. The impact of training for teachers on how to effectively teach writing and mathematical calculation is seen in improved standards at the end of each key stage. Well considered strategies have tackled variations that previously existed between different groups of pupils. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language, previously weak, is now a strength. This is because leaders have provided training for all teachers to equip them to provide effectively for these pupils, appointed specialist support staff and upgraded resources. Previous assessment records indicated that girls did not make as much progress as boys. Teachers now ensure that activities engage them fully, so that their learning matches that of boys. The most able pupils have benefited from the generally improved teaching and learning along with other pupils. Their progress generally matches that of their classmates. Occasionally day to day assessment is not used well enough to ensure the best possible challenge for these pupils, so that their progress sometimes slows. Leaders are ambitious to raise standards to above average levels. They are aware that the current obstacle to this is that, while teaching quality is now good overall, it is not consistent. Consequently, progress is more rapid in some years than others. Strategies aimed at ensuring that all lessons are at least good are beginning to have an impact.

The improvements have been secured because the leaders have developed rigorous and accurate self-evaluation that has helped them to know their school well. Since the last inspection, leaders have improved their skills in analysing evidence showing how well pupils have learned. This is telling them where there is room for further improvement and they are continuing to introduce well considered strategies to achieve this. The track record and continuing focus demonstrate a good capacity for continued

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improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Use assessment consistently well to plan what is expected of the most able pupils, so that they are always fully challenged to make the best possible progress.
- Raise attainment levels by ensuring that the quality of teaching and rate of pupils' progress are consistent throughout the school, to match the years where they are currently strongest.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils make good progress from their below average starting points. They reach broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Examination of pupils' work over time shows that they make good progress in overcoming the considerable communication difficulties with which they enter the school. In class, pupils respond to invitations to discuss their work in pairs in animated fashion. They demonstrate their growing confidence by their readiness to contribute their ideas in whole-class discussions. By Year 6, pupils are becoming proficient in writing in a range of styles to suit the needs of different tasks. This was shown for example in work where they analysed the main characters in 'Goodnight Mr Tom', enhanced with varied and interesting annotated drawings. Pupils develop the expected range of mathematical skills and, while not always able to use these well to independently solve calculation problems, are becoming increasingly able to do so. No group of pupils makes markedly less progress than others. This includes the most able pupils, who respond particularly well to opportunities to work independently. Their progress sometimes slows, however, when, as occasionally happens, they are not presented with sufficient challenge. The pupils who are at an early stage of learning English make particularly good progress. This was shown in the work of pupils from countries such as Portugal and Poland, who in some cases, had only been in the school for about a year. Their writing was correct and lucid ' in one case, expressing emotions particularly well. The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are carefully identified and effectively supported. As a result, they make as much progress as their classmates.

Pupils say that they enjoy school. They show this by their willingness to work hard and their enthusiasm in joining in with all that the school has to offer. In a Year 5 lesson for example, pupils gleefully heard that they were to carry out 'Mathletics' tasks on a computer and then did so with high enthusiasm and concentration. Pupils feel safe, behave well, are considerate to one another and are welcoming to visitors. Increasing numbers are arriving at the school with behavioural issues and, although they have occasional problems, they respond well to the support that they receive. Pupils' responses contribute well to making the school a harmonious place. They enthusiastically carry out roles such as school councillors and are very committed to helping others less fortunate than themselves in charity fund-raising activities. These,

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together with their good progress, contribute well to their preparation for their futures. Most pupils attend school regularly and punctually. A few are absent too often, although the level of persistent absence is falling.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Generally, teachers plan lessons well, providing interesting activities that ensure learning moves forward coherently and at a brisk pace. Teachers question effectively, combining sensitivity and challenge, so that pupils' confidence improves as they respond to skilful prompts to improve their answers. The good relationships generated encourage pupils to be willing workers. Support staff work effectively to ensure that pupils finding the work especially difficult receive the extra help that they need to keep up. Marking contributes well to pupils' progress. All teachers use a common system to show pupils what they have done well and use highlighting pens to suggest improvements in a way that pupils find easy to understand. The quality of teaching is not consistent. In some years, it is particularly strong. In others, while never less than satisfactory, it is less effective in, for example, always providing just the right level of challenge for each

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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pupil, or in maintaining a brisk pace of learning throughout the lesson.

The curriculum succeeds well in providing varied activities that encourage pupils to be enthusiastic learners, including those to whom this does not come naturally. Recently, the school has begun a curriculum overhaul, introducing approaches that provide opportunities for pupils to combine their knowledge and skills from different subjects in 'real' tasks, often using computers in highly motivating ways. Where these have been introduced, they are further enhancing pupils' enjoyment and giving them really effective opportunities for learning in an exploratory way. The new activities are being progressively introduced, so they are not yet having their full impact across the curriculum. Pupils particularly enjoy the specialist-taught music and physical education lessons and the varied and popular range of clubs and visits.

Parents say that staff really know and understand their children. Their children settle in quickly and happily, are secure and grow in confidence. One parent summed up the impact with the comment: 'My daughter used to lack confidence, but now we have to race to school to be first in line.' There is a high commitment to the security and happiness of all pupils. Systems are well organised, with clear identification of staff with key responsibilities. The school works effectively with partners to ensure pupils' well-being. Effective links with nursery schools and the local secondary school help pupils to settle in quickly when they arrive and to be well prepared when they move on. Liaison with specialist agencies, for example in behaviour management and links between the home and school, enhances the quality of the school's work for vulnerable pupils or those with particular difficulties. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language is well organised. Most documentation to compile records or guide staff on the best possible practice is of good quality. A little is not stored in the most accessible form for those who need to use it.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy, has a very clear vision for the school. This is effectively focused upon raising pupils' attainment, while maintaining the strengths that make the school a happy and secure place for pupils. There is considerable unity of purpose in pursuing these ambitions, shared by staff working at all levels. Most subject leaders, particularly of English, mathematics and science, are well

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involved in monitoring the quality of their areas and leading colleagues on improving further. This is not so consistent across the other subjects, in some cases because leaders have been recently appointed. Plans are in hand to provide the necessary training to tackle this. Governors see themselves very much as part of the team. They are aware that they have not always challenged the school when necessary in the past and have undertaken training that has helped them to become better at this. Governors and senior staff work together effectively to ensure that all safeguarding procedures are properly carried out, for example when conducting joint inspections of the school premises. Leaders have successfully ensured that all pupils, whatever their ethnic or cultural background, feel valued and free from discrimination. The effective focus on equality of opportunity is demonstrated by the efficient action to ensure good progress for those pupils who arrived with little English and in ensuring that girls achieve as well as boys. These successes have helped to make the school a cohesive community. Leaders have evaluated how well they help pupils to understand cultural, ethnic and religious diversity beyond the school gates. Plans to improve where necessary are being put in place, but are still at an early stage of implementation.

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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall, children arrive in the Reception class with skills and knowledge that are below those expected for their age, particularly in their communication and social skills. They make good progress and by the time they move into Year 1, most are becoming secure in all of their learning areas. The adults are skilled at helping children to settle in quickly

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and happily. This is evident only a few weeks into the school year, with children from diverse backgrounds playing happily together. Staff have provided a stimulating and varied environment, both inside and outdoors. In doing so, they have taken great care to ensure that this is equally appealing for all children, no matter what their cultural background. Staff have high aspirations for the children in their care. In pursuing these, they have concentrated on helping children to overcome their communication and social challenges by effectively focusing on their key skills. They realise that the very supportive way that they have done this has sometimes reduced children's opportunities to develop their independence and are now planning to tackle this. The Early Years Foundation Stage is very well led and teamwork between the capable staff is strong.

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 great majority of parents and carers have very positive opinions about all areas of the school's work. Those aspects most strongly praised were how well their children enjoy school, the extent to which the school keeps their children safe, and the help given to pupils to follow a healthy lifestyle. There were few negative additional comments written on the questionnaires.

A very small number of parents verbally raised a concern that some bullying incidents had not been well dealt with by the school, although no parent raised this in the written comments. The lead inspector followed this up in a discussion with the headteacher. It was not possible to find evidence about the specific incidents mentioned, although the school's incident log is well maintained. In discussions, pupils said that bullying is not a serious concern for them and that they trust the adults to deal with any incidents that might occur. When observed by inspectors, pupils were always very considerate towards one another.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Denys 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 208 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	54	27	46	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	61	22	37	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	48	28	48	2	3	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	52	24	41	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	54	25	42	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	48	26	44	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	51	29	50	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)	30	51	26	44	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	50	26	44	2	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	37	29	49	4	2	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	41	30	51	2	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	35	60	21	36	1	2	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	54	24	41	1	2	1	2

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.



27 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Denys Primary School, Southampton, SO17 2ND

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors to your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and are grateful to you for sharing your work with us.

We could see that yours is a good school. Your parents and carers told us that this is what they think too and lots of you said the same thing to us. You learn well and by the time you get to the end of Year 6 your skills and knowledge are similar to those we see in most schools. This is because the adults teach you well. They give you interesting things to do and are always planning extra things, such as clubs, to help you to enjoy school even more. Lots of you told us that you enjoy school. You feel safe and know that the adults care for you well. You help them a lot, by being cheerful, behaving well and working hard. A few of you are absent too often. You can help the teachers even more by only being off school when you really have to.

The headteacher and other staff know how to make your school even better. We have asked them to do two things especially:

- always give the most able pupils work that is difficult enough to really make you think
- make sure that all lessons are as good as the very best ones that already take place in your school.

Very best wishes for your futures

Yours faithfully

George Rayner

Lead inspector

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