

Dolphinholme Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119526
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339462
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Julie Price Grimshaw

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Judith Hayhurst
Headteacher	Mr Brendan Hassett
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited five lessons taught by four teachers, spent around 60% of time evaluating pupils' learning, and held meetings with the Chair of Governing Body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' work, improvement planning, a range of policy documents, including those relating to safeguarding, national published assessment data and the school's own data. Questionnaires completed by staff and pupils were scrutinised, as well as 33 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

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

- how effectively staff meet the needs of all pupils within the mixed-age classes
- the extent to which the school has improved the use of assessment information since the previous inspection
- the effectiveness of the school's systems for tracking pupils' achievement in a range of subjects.

Information about the school

This school is much smaller than average and serves a rural community to the east of Lancaster. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is well below the national average. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are taught in two mixed-age classes. The school has received a number of awards, including Healthy Schools, Activemark and Eco Schools silver.

There is privately run pre-school provision on the school site, which is subject to a separate inspection.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This outstanding school provides a happy and caring environment where pupils thrive. 'Welcome to the best school ever!' was the greeting voiced by pupils at the start of the inspection. Their enthusiasm for every aspect of school life is obvious to all. 'We are so lucky to come here – everyone looks after us and the teachers work really hard to make learning fun!' was a comment made by one pupil and many others agreed. The great majority of parents and carers agree with these views, as reflected in comments such as 'My children adore coming to school, they feel safe and secure in a warm and welcoming environment.'

Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning are a key factor in their outstanding progress. Although small numbers of pupils mean that data should be viewed with caution, the school's own data and other inspection evidence show that pupils' attainment is high. Children get off to an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage making outstanding progress from their broadly average starting points. Since the last inspection, pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science has improved. This is due to consistently good quality teaching, an outstanding curriculum and exemplary care, guidance and support. Pupils' behaviour is exceptional. In this school, mutual respect, care and sensitivity, modelled by all adults, are the norm amongst pupils. They have a very thorough awareness of how to stay safe and healthy and take great pride in their outstanding contribution to the school and local communities. High levels of basic skills and involvement in business and enterprise activities mean that they are extremely well prepared for the future. There are significant strengths in pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, but their awareness of religious and cultural diversity in Britain is more limited.

Teachers and support staff are skilled in meeting the needs of all pupils within the mixed-age classes. Staff know their pupils very well and use the school's good tracking systems to ensure that pupils' strengths and weaknesses in a range of subjects are quickly identified so that provision can be tailored accordingly. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is highly effective and as a result, these pupils make the same outstanding progress as their peers.

The headteacher has successfully created a very positive culture amongst the staff. Teachers and support staff are proud to be associated with the school; they work extremely well together and are happy to take on responsibilities. Although self-evaluation involves staff and governors, some aspects of this process are not grounded in sufficiently accurate analysis. As a result, areas for further development are not always identified with clarity and precision. Nevertheless, the school's track record since the last inspection means that capacity for improvement is good.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop pupils' awareness and understanding of religious and cultural diversity in Britain.
- Ensure that all aspects of self-evaluation are grounded in rigorous and accurate analysis, leading to sharply focused identification of areas for further development.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils are extremely proud to be part of this vibrant learning community. Within the mixed-age classes, pupils support each other extremely well. They are highly motivated, able to work independently and apply themselves with concentration and focus to the tasks set. Pupils have excellent manners and listen carefully to each other as well as to staff. All pupils make at least good progress and many, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make outstanding progress. Attainment is high in English and mathematics, and particularly impressive in science. Work in other subject areas, including information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology is also of a very high standard. Pupils were absolutely delighted to demonstrate their 'wacky washing machines' and explained in detail how they had used electronics in their designs.

Pupils feel very safe and secure and say that there is always someone to talk to. They say that school is 'like a family', and although friends sometimes disagree 'no-one here is unkind or hurtful on purpose.' Pupils have an extensive knowledge of the importance of diet and exercise, able to discuss the importance of vitamins and minerals and which foods contain these. The school encourages healthy eating by giving out reward points for healthy lunchboxes, and pupils respond well to this.

Pupils relish the opportunity to take on responsibilities in school, for example, older pupils act as buddies to Reception children. They know that their views are considered, although several said that 'there's nothing about the school that really needs improving!' Pupils' attendance is above average. They enjoy developing skills for the future, for example, pupils work with business and enterprise students from Lancaster University. Pupils' social skills are very well-developed, and they have a very strong sense of moral and spiritual awareness. Their knowledge of cultures in other parts of the world is good, but awareness of diverse faith communities in Britain is a relative weakness.

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have excellent relationships with their pupils. Classrooms are typically hives of activity, with a suitable level of challenge being provided for all. Teachers and support staff alike have high expectations of their pupils. Lessons are carefully planned, making good use of assessment information on individuals. Teachers use a range of strategies and ensure that lessons include a variety of activities, but they do not always use ICT effectively to maintain a rapid pace of learning. The use of assessment information has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers give good quality written feedback to pupils, although occasionally opportunities are missed to engage in extended dialogue with pupils about the quality of their work.

The outstanding curriculum is a major strength of provision in the school. Curricular planning is exemplary, ensuring that a wide range of skills are developed through an exciting and stimulating theme-based approach across the whole school. This successfully fosters pupils' enthusiasm for learning. The school makes excellent use of partnerships in delivering the curriculum, for example, a language teacher from a local high school works very effectively with the class teacher to develop the pupils' skills in French. Pupils say that they love the trips and visits that extend their learning out of school. They also take advantage of the very good range of extra-curricular activities on offer.

As soon as a child becomes part of the school community he or she is made to feel valued and cared for. Staff work exceptionally well together to ensure that the needs of individual pupils are fully met, working in partnership with external agencies where appropriate.

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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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has been a driving force in establishing this school as a nurturing and caring community where pupils achieve exceptionally well. All staff work collaboratively and share a common vision for the school's future. They meet together regularly to discuss this and share their ideas for further development. Governors are knowledgeable and committed, providing a good level of challenge in meetings. They have a secure understanding of data and fulfil all statutory responsibilities, including those relating to safeguarding procedures, which are effective. Systems for child protection are applied rigorously. Monitoring of classroom practice is well-established and generally effective, but analysis of all aspects of the school's work is not always sufficiently detailed.

The school is totally committed to the promotion of equal opportunities and every child is treated as a unique individual. As a result, the school is a harmonious community where all pupils work happily and productively alongside each other. Promotion of community cohesion is good overall, with considerable strengths in terms of engagement with the local community. Pupils also have a well-developed awareness of community cohesion on a global level, but have had limited opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of different faith communities in Britain.

Engagement with parents and carers is good overall; the school is taking account of parents' and carers' views and acting on these. Work in partnership with external agencies, in terms of curriculum enhancement and also care, guidance and support, is outstanding. Highly effective partnerships have been established with a number of local primary schools and high schools as well as further and higher education institutions. Excellent work is carried out in collaboration with the local sports partnership.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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

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	
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Reception class with skills that are broadly in line with typical age-related expectations. Their outstanding progress is evident through their work in the classroom and the excellent records of learning kept by staff. These records show in great detail the development of children's skills as they move through the year. Very frequent ongoing assessment enables staff to plan accurately the next steps in children's learning. Children's social skills are excellent; they quickly learn to share and be polite and well-mannered, laying secure foundations for the exemplary behaviour found elsewhere in the school. They are kept busy and interested, for example, when learning to follow instructions when making their own paper. Children make excellent progress in all areas of learning and their writing skills are particularly impressive. They enter Year 1 with skills that are typically above average, or in some cases well above average.

Teaching is consistently at least good and sometimes outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff work hard to ensure that they give just the right level of support to children to maximise their learning, whilst allowing them the freedom to develop through play and discovery. Facilities for outdoor learning are very limited, however, and this means that activities out of the classroom need to be carefully planned. This restricts the children's ability to get the most from moving from indoors to outdoors when learning through play. However, there are firm plans to address this, with work on a new outdoor area for Reception children due to start in the near future. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage is an extremely knowledgeable and skilled practitioner who has a very clear vision for the future. Her skills in planning and assessing children's learning are a key factor in their outstanding achievement.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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Views of parents and carers

A high proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires. The great majority are very happy with the quality of education provided for their children. Importantly, all respondents felt that their child enjoyed school. A very small minority of parents and carers raised concerns regarding the security of the front entrance, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that this is an issue. A few mentioned that although they were happy with the quality of provision they would appreciate more frequent communication from school, including more opportunities to discuss their children's progress. The school is aware of this and has firm plans to address these issues.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dolphinholme Church of England 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 inspector received 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 60 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	82	6	18	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	73	7	21	2	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	33	18	55	2	6	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	52	15	45	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	52	16	48	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	45	16	48	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	58	13	39	0	0	1	3
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)	17	52	10	30	2	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	55	13	39	2	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	58	13	39	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	36	16	48	3	9	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	17	52	14	42	1	3	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	70	9	27	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.



10 March 2010

Inspection of Dolphinholme Church of England Primary School, Lancaster, LA2 9AN

Dear Pupils

As you know, I visited your school recently together with another inspector so that we could find out how well you are doing. I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for sharing your views with us. I would also like to share our main findings with you.

It was lovely to hear some of you describe your school as 'the best school ever'. We think that your school is outstanding. There are so many excellent features, but one of the best things about your school is you – the pupils! You are so well-behaved and polite, and you have excellent attitudes towards your learning. This is why you make outstanding progress and reach very high standards in all your work, especially science. I loved your work in design and technology too, and thought that your 'wacky washing machines' were brilliant. You told me that the teachers make learning fun for you and I could see that this is true. You obviously enjoy all the activities on offer, including the trips and visits outside school. You also told me that the staff care for you, and that you care for each other. I was really pleased to see this for myself. The staff are very committed to making sure that you feel very safe and secure. I was also impressed with your knowledge about how to stay healthy, and it is good that you are so active in your school and local communities.

Even the best schools want to work at being better still. You know lots about your local community and also about people from around the world, but I have asked the school to help you learn about the different faiths and cultures in Britain. I have also suggested that the staff keep a really close watch on what is working really well in the school and what could be even better. I'm so pleased you are proud of your school and wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ms Julie Price Grimshaw

Lead inspector

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