

Donisthorpe Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119944
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	339563
Inspection dates	20–21 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Ceri Morgan HMI

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	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Gravett
Headteacher	Mandy Fieldsend (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. They observed all teachers at least once and seven of them more than once. In all, 18 lessons across a range of subjects were observed. The inspection team also met with representatives of the senior leadership team, the School Improvement Partner and the Chair of Governors. There were frequent conversations with pupils, both formally with the school council and other groups and also informally during the school day. Informal discussions were held with several parents. In addition the questionnaire responses from 26 staff and 107 pupils were taken into account and the responses from 59 parental questionnaires were analysed. Inspectors also took into account a wide range of school documentation and a sample of pupils' workbooks.

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

- pupils' achievement and standards in English, science and mathematics for specific groups of pupils, including the progress of lower-ability girls, boys in writing and more-able pupils
- the quality of teaching and its impact on attainment
- the impact of recent changes to the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress
- the quality of the curriculum
- the impact of leadership (including governance) on improving pupils' outcomes and on the school's capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Donisthorpe is an average-sized primary school. Although the original buildings are Victorian it has been extended and developed with a recent addition in 2009 for the youngest pupils. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very close to the national average. The overwhelming majority of pupils are of White British heritage, and live in the surrounding area. The mobility of pupils is much higher than usual. This is because the school, although being an all-through primary school, also takes a significant number of pupils who join in Year 3 from a neighbouring infant school. In recent years a high proportion of pupils have left for other schools although this trend has now stopped. At the time of the inspection the school was led by an acting headteacher.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to attainment, pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and the curriculum.

The school is not currently offering adequate educational provision although it is improving. It is recovering from a period of great uncertainty and upheaval. There have been significant changes to the teaching staff and senior leadership during the last two years which have prevented the school from fully resolving any of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection in 2007. They remain areas of concern today. These include low levels of attainment throughout the school and inadequate progress made by many pupils but especially the more-able. Standards of writing throughout school are low and attainment in science is especially low. A previous concern was about the insufficient quality of the school's strategic planning. This remains the case. The quality of teaching is variable but inadequate overall despite glimpses of good practice in some classes. As a consequence of unambitious lesson planning and the low expectations of many teachers, the curriculum on offer is also inadequate. Many pupils are not well prepared for the next phase in their education as a result of low levels of literacy and numeracy. As a consequence the school does not offer value for money.

There are some areas of strength in the school however. This includes provision for the youngest pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is good. The school is also a caring community where adults show consideration for pupils, especially for the most potentially vulnerable. Relationships are generally positive and encouraging. Pupils are kept safe and feel safe. They enjoy the occasional inspiring session and are rightly proud of their efforts to contribute to improvements. The school council, for example, are especially proud of their contribution to the new playground markings.

A new headteacher has been appointed and, although working in the school already, plans to start full-time mid-way during the current term. The school has been successfully led by an acting headteacher since November 2009. She has managed, within a short period, to secure the support of the school community and refocus efforts onto improving pupils' progress. The school now has a very useful raising attainment plan and the acting headteacher is implementing rapid change based on accurate analysis of its performance. The children are especially appreciative of her energy and ambition. This, together with strengthened governance, rising attainment and the use of

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increasingly accurate data about pupils' progress, demonstrate a capacity to sustain the improvement.

With the exception of the areas of weakness outlined above the school is generally satisfactory in all other aspects but lacking in ambition. Current leadership is beginning to improve this approach and instil some aspiration. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils are encouraged to live healthy and safe lifestyles and safeguarding arrangements are secure. Although the school does not have pupils from a range of different cultural heritages, pupils are generally aware of and sensitive to the differing beliefs of others.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by:
 - ensuring a greater emphasis on engaging and practical activities to inspire children
 - making more effective use of assessment to tailor lessons better to individual pupils' needs
 - using time better so less is spent listening to teachers and more on learning activities
 - ensuring the subject knowledge of teachers is stronger, especially in mathematics in Years 3-6
 - increasing the emphasis on literacy in all subjects
 - better questioning and higher expectations of pupils.
- Improve the attainment and progress of pupils by:
 - helping all pupils, especially boys, to develop better writing skills
 - ensuring that standards in science reach at least national averages
 - giving pupils greater opportunity to use their calculation skills in investigative and problem solving activities in mathematics
 - providing more-able pupils with more frequent experience of challenge.
- Strengthen the strategic planning by increasing the contribution of subject leaders and the governing body in writing a new school improvement plan and planning the frequency and focus of monitoring activity.
- Enhance the curriculum by developing a far more stimulating and coherent set of activities for children to experience.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Pupils enter school with average levels of language and communication skills and get a good start in the Early years Foundation Stage. However, the school's results in national tests for pupils aged 11 are well below national averages. Key Stage 2 results had fallen to an all time low in 2008 and despite a recovery in 2009, pupils' attainment remains low overall. In English in 2009, only two thirds of all pupils reached the expected levels

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and very few the higher levels. It illustrates inadequate progress for many during their time in Donisthorpe. Although standards in mathematics are closer to national averages these too are below what may be expected. Results in science are very low and have continued to decline since the last inspection in 2007. Particular groups of pupils who underperform are lower-ability girls in all subjects, boys in literacy and the more-able pupils in general. Of particular concern are standards of writing which fall below those of reading. Particular weaknesses are pupils' limited understanding of basic grammar and punctuation, insecure spelling and teachers' acceptance of their poorly presented written work. In mathematics, an increasing knowledge of basic number work is seldom applied in problem-solving and statistical work. In science, the school is amongst the lowest attaining 5% of all schools nationally. The low results do not ensure that pupils are well prepared for their next school or for future workplace expectations.

The progress pupils make is hugely variable. It has been significantly below that seen nationally over the last three years despite occasional glimpses of promise. However, the school has implemented a system of tracking pupils' progress which is accurate and comprehensive. It is used to inform regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress and identifies individual pupils at risk of underachievement. This now shows progress to be improving slowly. It remains inadequate however and all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make secure progress. Progress is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in some classes but too much later progress relies on 'catch-up' activities such as test practice sessions and booster groups rather than sustained high-quality teaching.

School lunches include healthy options but there is only a limited range of extra sports activities for pupils to benefit from. The pupils do get the opportunity to contribute to the wider community with charitable collections and a very talented choir which gives frequent public performances. During the inspection behaviour was satisfactory and often good. It is noticeably better when the teaching is engaging. Pupils were polite and respectful to others and worked well together. However, a significant minority of parents and pupils made specific reference to some unruly behaviour to suggest an element of concern. Some of the methods teachers employed to manage behaviour were unnecessarily intrusive to learning. As a result pupils were generally compliant rather than engaged. Incidents of bullying are not frequent but, according to pupils, are evident. There was little evidence of any provision for pupils' spiritual development during the inspection.

The pupils have a clear view of their hopes for the school. They like their teachers and generally enjoy school. They hope for a greater range of after-school activities and clubs, especially creative and sporting, and do not like it when they are cancelled. They feel many lessons are too easy and are very keen to work well on more challenging tasks. Inspection evidence supports the pupils' need for more challenging work. t.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is inadequate overall. This is because until recently it has been too variable in quality and has had little impact on raising attainment. Despite this there are examples of good teaching in which pupils are enthused about their work and have a clear idea of the purpose behind their activities. In these sessions relationships are very positive, teachers show enthusiasm and resources, including interactive technology, are used imaginatively. This was especially evident in the classes for the youngest children but this is not always the case and there are common reasons why teaching was judged to be either inadequate or just satisfactory. No outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection.

Common weaknesses in teaching are sessions dominated by very lengthy introductions by teachers. This reduces the time available for learning and impedes progress. Too many lessons lack genuine pace and challenge and questioning of pupils' knowledge is often cursory. It is rare for teachers to use their questioning to assess pupils' understanding or to develop pupils' language and vocabulary. Literacy skills, acknowledged as a weakness by the school, are not developed during other work. Brief and untidy written work is too easily accepted. Some teachers betray fragile subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics, by their own imprecise use of vocabulary. This leaves pupils with some significant misconceptions. The main weakness evident in teaching however is that expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. Marking is

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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usually completed but is inconsistent and some workbooks show lengthy periods of time without sufficient work being completed. Not many comments help pupils improve their work.

The curriculum offers an appropriate coverage of subjects but is not stimulating enough to engage pupils fully and, as a consequence, is inadequate. This is closely linked to the inadequate quality of teaching and there are some significant gaps. These include practical sessions in mathematics and science and links between subjects.

The school cares for its pupils and offers support where appropriate. This is evident in some very specific examples of additional support for pupils with complex personal lives and very particular needs. Where they are deployed well by teachers, the classroom assistants provide good support. Occasionally however they wait patiently while teachers talk at length. This is not an effective use of their skills and time.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Governance has recently been strengthened by the establishment of a full committee structure and a programme of monitoring visits to school. The governing body is now more prepared and, as a result of recent training, equipped to challenge the school about its performance. The new Chair of the Governing Body is taking a robust and pro-active approach to improving standards and has rapidly ensured governors meet their statutory responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and promoting community cohesion.

The acting headteacher has established a radical change in the school's ethos. She has a clear vision and demonstrates impressive expertise in monitoring pupils' progress. The school community recognises her efforts and have a confidence in her to continue, this even though her role within school will change in the near future. The wider leadership team have some particular strengths, for example in the management of special educational needs provision. Together these leaders demonstrate a commitment and a capacity to improve but the distribution of work and responsibility amongst the wider team is not equitable. Too much relies on the few.

The school lacks a strategic improvement plan and is using the raising attainment plan for English and mathematics for this purpose. The system for the monitoring of teaching and provision is now secure but the data it generates are not yet used effectively to drive the required improvement more rapidly. Records of meetings are overly informal.

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Teachers do receive appropriate professional development opportunities linked to school priorities. Although this has been useful in securing improvement, it has led to concerns, expressed by parents, that too many classes are covered by temporary teachers. The school works with a satisfactory range of partners such as local schools and welfare agencies but is not fully evaluating the impact of this work, including the way it promotes a better understanding of the culture and beliefs of the wider community. As a consequence of this and the variation in the performance of groups equality of opportunity is inadequate.

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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

The setting provides a good, thoughtful range of activities indoors and out. Accurate observation and assessment are carried out by all staff and are based on child-initiated activities. As a result, children make good progress in all areas of development from their starting points. Teachers plan a suitable range of activities and there is a satisfactory balance between those led by an adult and those which children choose for themselves. The management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good.

There is an emphasis on talking and listening to children, whatever the activity, to develop children's language skills. As a consequence, language development is good. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to children's learning. Children demonstrate good behaviour. They are happy and well settled. They have good relationships with each other and with the adults who care for them.

The setting is in a very new building and there is a large, well-equipped outside area,

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which fully reflects the inside learning environment and is used in all weathers. Children are able to access the outside freely and thoroughly enjoy working together, for example to discover where the dragon has escaped to. Children serve themselves with healthy snacks from the snack bar and learn to keep themselves safe in their activities. All procedures for ensuring children's safety and well-being are in place.

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 majority of parents hold positive views about the school and are supportive of recent developments. There were, however, some concerns expressed by a significant minority about some aspects of the school's work. These parents or carers wished to see better behaviour, a more rapid response to resolve any bullying and fewer temporary cover teachers used. Inspection evidence supports these views although, as described earlier in the report, the behaviour of pupils during the inspection was satisfactory. A few parents also expressed a desire to have more detailed and frequent information about how well their children were progressing and how they could help. Again, inspection evidence supports their views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Donisthorpe 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 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 222 pupils registered at the school. Not all parents completed every answer.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	42	33	56	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	37	35	59	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	31	35	59	6	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	36	33	56	5	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	41	33	56	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	25	41	69	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	27	40	68	2	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)	10	17	41	69	3	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	27	37	63	5	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	22	34	58	8	14	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	24	40	68	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	16	27	39	66	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	39	34	58	2	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.



23 April 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Donisthorpe Primary School, Swadlincote, DE12 7QF

Thank you for your time and help when we inspected your school recently. We were delighted to talk with many of you and appreciated your views and opinions.

You told us that you enjoy school and like many of your lessons but feel that it could do better in some ways. We agree with you. We feel that, with your enthusiasm and talents, you could reach even higher standards in some subjects. We recognise that your teachers are working hard for you and care for you but have asked them to work in a slightly different way. Inspectors will return in about six months to check on how well the school is doing.

The areas we are asking the school to change are:

- to plan more interesting and practical lessons in many subjects
- to make sure teachers know in greater detail what will help each of you to learn more quickly
- to plan for the future in a more systematic way, including the way you study different subjects
- to help you to improve your writing, science and mathematics
- to make sure lessons are more challenging and to involve you in deciding how well you are doing.

We know you are keen to do well and that you attend school regularly and listen to your teachers. This will help. We were very impressed by your politeness when we were in school but also know that some of you worry about some poor behaviour, especially on the bus home. We would ask you all to do what you can to improve this and wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ceri Morgan

Her Majesty's Inspector

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