

Devonshire Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134743
Local Authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	341521
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen Isherwood 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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	476
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sylvia Taylor
Headteacher	Mr Neil Hodgkins
Date of previous school inspection	8 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent 80% of time looking at learning, visited 18 lessons and saw 18 teachers, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of evidence including: the school improvement plan, the tracking of pupils' progress, monitoring reports, the work pupils were doing in their books and the questionnaires completed by 107 parents.

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

- how well pupils achieve from their starting points
- the quality of pupils' learning and engagement in lessons and across the curriculum
- whether the quality of teaching and use of assessment has improved since the last inspection
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in raising standards further
- the capacity of the school to sustain improvement.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average school in an area of high social disadvantage. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage with a small number from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, as is the number of pupils eligible for free school meals. The school provides before and after-school childcare provision for pupils aged three to 11. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two Nursery sessions and two Reception classes. The school has gained several awards including the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the ICT Quality Mark, the Eco School Award, the Artsmark Silver Award, the Healthy School Award, the Physical Education (PE) Activemark and the ICAN Enhanced Accreditation for language and communication in the Early Years.

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 and improving school where the care, guidance and support for pupils are exceptionally strong. It is a happy place for pupils to learn. As a consequence, all pupils whatever their circumstances make good progress and are keen and enthusiastic learners. They have positive attitudes to their work, feel safe and behave well. They have an excellent understanding of maintaining a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise and a balanced diet. When asked to express their views, they were in no doubt that the school is special to them. 'I think it's fabulous', said one child. They found it very difficult to think of any improvements they would like to see. There was strong praise for staff and the wide range of activities on offer.

Parents too have recognised that the school is improving and are aware of its strengths. One parent's view was typical of many, 'The ethos of the school is fantastic, welfare is of paramount importance'. Another commented, 'My child loves school, when it was snowing she prayed that the school would stay open'.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make great strides in their learning from the moment they enter the school. By the time they leave in Year 6, they reach broadly average standards in reading, mathematics and science. This represents good achievement considering their low starting points. Much of this success is down to good teaching and a rich curriculum. Where teaching is strongest, pupils are given every opportunity to make decisions, direct their own learning and work independently. Nevertheless, the progress pupils make in writing is not as rapid as in other areas. Not enough pupils reach the higher levels. This is because opportunities that encourage pupils to write in other subjects and talk about their ideas are sometimes missed and there is a lack of consistency in the levelling of pupils' work. In addition, senior leaders are correct in recognising that strategies to gauge the impact of the school's work on improving standards in writing could be sharper.

Attendance is improving slowly because the school has worked hard to reduce persistent absence. It remains, however, below average because many families take pupils away for holidays during term-time and too many pupils are arriving late for school in the morning.

Good quality leadership ensures that staff work closely together as a team to keep improving the school. Senior leaders are very clear about the direction the school must take in order to improve further. There is an excellent record of the progress being made by different groups and individuals. This has resulted in good improvements in a number of areas, including pupils' progress and the support they receive. Given the school's rigorous self-evaluation and track record of improvement, its capacity to

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improve further is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress further in writing, so that more pupils reach the higher levels, by:
 - strengthening opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects
 - ensuring a consistent approach to the levelling of pupils' work
 - developing pupils' speaking skills to encourage them to talk about their ideas for writing
 - improving systems for evaluating the effectiveness of writing interventions.
- Improve attendance further, by:
 - working with parents to promote a shared understanding of the importance of regular attendance
 - reviewing current procedures and seeking pupils' views to establish effective incentives to encourage more pupils to arrive on time
 - researching attendance strategies for similar schools in other authorities to learn from examples of effective practice.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' current work, as well as the test results for 2009, show that while their attainment is broadly average, the progress pupils make from their starting points is good overall. Pupils enter Year 1 approaching the levels expected for their age and have made good and sometimes very good progress from their low starting points. Pupils are now making good progress in Key Stage 1 where provision has improved. In 2009, standards at age seven were broadly in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics at the expected national curriculum Level 2. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in all core areas of English, mathematics and science, was below average and significantly so in writing.

Work in lessons and in pupils' books, together with the school's own data shows that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress as they move through the school to Year 6. Standards in 2009 have improved and are broadly in line with national averages in all core subjects at the expected Level 4. Although standards dipped in English reflecting weaknesses in pupils' writing skills, increasing numbers of pupils made better progress than previously in mathematics and science. A notable success was that 41% of pupils reached the higher Level 5 in mathematics which was above the national average. However, standards in writing remain low and pupils' progress is not rapid enough.

Pupils are very eager to learn and apply themselves well in class. They are polite and well behaved. Their strong enjoyment of learning is seen in the way they try hard to do their best and are keen to answer questions. Typically lessons see busy pupils

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responding with enthusiasm and enjoyment to a range of practical and stimulating activities. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, pupils worked very well together in locating key words and features to use in pieces of writing about ancient Greece.

Pupils speak highly of staff and say they feel safe in school. As one child commented, 'I feel completely safe here'. They are confident their voice will be heard and that any problems will be swiftly resolved. They are keen to take on extra responsibilities such as looking after younger ones, being a 'playground champion' or becoming a member of the active school council.

Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is evident in the respect that pupils show to each other and people from different backgrounds and cultures. 'It is good that people are different' said one child.

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	1
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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching leads to good progress in the vast majority of lessons. A number of common strengths were seen. Teachers are enthusiastic, plan well and have good subject knowledge. Very good relationships exist between adults and pupils which mean that

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 behave well in lessons. Teaching assistants provide an effective layer of extra support, particularly for those that find learning difficult. Teachers make good use of interactive technology to enhance visual demonstrations and support pupils' learning. All staff use praise well to celebrate pupils' achievements. Teachers are skilled in developing pupils' thinking through effective questioning that keeps pupils on their toes. When the planning and teaching are at their best, pupils are allowed to make the learning their own with carefully crafted activities that promote high levels of discussion and independent thinking. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, pupils were highly motivated and engaged and were able to say why they felt they were making progress in their work with excellent prompting and use of time by the class teacher.

Where teaching is less strong, pupils' work is sometimes over-directed, with fewer opportunities for pupils to test and deepen their knowledge by investigating and finding things out for themselves.

Teachers have a good understanding of what each child can do and what they need to learn next based on accurate assessment and good use of tracking information. Systems to assess pupils' progress have improved and benefit from the outcomes of regular reviews. As a result, teachers are able to plan different tasks with accuracy, so that groups of pupils can work at their own level.

The well organised curriculum meets the different needs of learners effectively, particularly for those that find learning difficult. Careful attention is given to development of key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). For example, writing skills are supported in several areas of the curriculum, but this is not sufficiently well planned in all subjects. All pupils benefit from good enrichment opportunities, including French, visits and visitors to the school and the use of learning logs. There is high take up of the extra-curricular clubs and activities. These add considerable enjoyment and excitement to pupils' learning.

No stone is left unturned to ensure that all pupils, including the most vulnerable and those in the childcare provision are exceptionally well cared for and supported. There are excellent procedures for introducing children to the Nursery and for ensuring pupils' smooth transition to secondary school. Careful attention is given to the personal and emotional needs of each child. Guidance is thorough. There are some excellent examples in teachers' marking where pupils are given clear advice on how to improve their work and reach their next target.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection, there have been significant improvements to pupils' progress and to the quality of teaching and learning. This is because leaders and managers know the school extremely well and actively seek out ways to improve further by communicating ambition and driving continuous improvement. The headteacher sets the tone, has high expectations of the school community and is steadfast in his determination to see that all pupils, whatever their circumstances, reach their true potential. He is very well supported by an equally committed team of staff and governors who share his vision and sense of purpose. As a consequence, the school's commitment to equality of opportunity is strong, inclusion is high on the agenda and teachers are effective in improving pupils' life chances and in tackling discrimination. Central to this work is rigorous self-evaluation. There is clear agreement of what the school does well and where further improvements can be made. For example, senior leaders are well aware that the school improvement plan requires some fine-tuning to ensure a sharper focus on measuring success in improving pupils' progress in writing. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. Lessons that develop pupils' awareness of other faiths and cultures are sensitively taught. Senior leaders are not complacent and recognise that the school's procedures to judge the impact of this work require further attention. The school is responsive to local needs and works well in partnership with others to promote learning and well-being.

The school has good safeguarding procedures. Staff are vigilant in identifying and responding to any potential dangers that pupils may encounter. All required checks, systems and procedures are in place to safeguard the pupils' well-being.

Governors bring a wealth of experience to their work and play an effective role in shaping the school's direction. They are well informed about the school's performance and are increasingly confident to act where necessary to support improvements or to question proposals.

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

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children start school in the Nursery their skills and levels of learning vary, but overall are below and frequently well below those typical for their age. Children make good progress from these low starting points. By the time they transfer to Year 1, most are approaching the levels expected of them and have achieved well. This is because children get off to a good start, settle quickly into routines and are well taught. They are keen to take an active part in learning and there is a purposeful buzz to activities which are well targeted on key learning goals that match well with children's stages of development. Children become absorbed in their learning and have increasing confidence to initiate activities for themselves. For example, children made good progress in their personal development and independence by signing themselves into class using badges. Elsewhere children improved their language and communication skills by answering questions about the story of Goldilocks and the three bears. In addition, children had great fun in writing on invisible ink mats and playing with remote controlled cars.

Staff continually assess how well children are achieving and use this information to plan further challenges. Parents are encouraged to become actively involved in their children's learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. There is a good awareness of the strengths in provision and where further improvements can be made. For example, staff are well aware that links between the outdoor learning activities and those inside the classroom are sometimes unclear and require some fine-tuning.

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 vast majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school. There is strong agreement that children enjoy their work, make good progress and that the school is

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well led and managed. They are confident that their children are safe and happy in school. A small number of parents said the school did not take account of their views. Inspectors do not agree with this minority view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Devonshire 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 107 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 476 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	58	39	36	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	76	71	28	26	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	63	59	38	36	4	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	58	54	41	38	5	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	72	67	31	29	2	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	63	59	39	36	1	1	3	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	55	42	39	3	3	1	1
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)	40	37	61	57	2	2	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	53	50	49	46	3	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	36	59	55	5	5	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	40	54	50	6	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	57	53	44	41	2	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	57	41	38	3	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.



15 January 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Devonshire Primary School, Blackpool, FY3 8AF

Thank you so much for helping the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed chatting to you in lessons, on your play decks and in the pupil interviews. We learnt a great deal about your school. You expressed your views very clearly and they were very helpful to us. As I told some of you I would, I am writing to you all to say what we found out about your school.

We are pleased to tell you that your school has improved since its last inspection and is now good. You are taught well, make good progress in your work and are very well looked after. We were delighted to see how well you behave and how you help one another in class and around the school. We were very pleased to see how much you know about keeping fit and staying healthy.

You told us that your teachers make lessons fun. We could see this with our own eyes when those of you in Year 1 were recording your sentences about the gingerbread man on your talking postcards, when those of you in Year 2 were using your laptop computers to write about how a snake sheds its skin and when those of you in Year 3 were speaking French.

Your teachers work hard to make the school as good as it can be. To help them, we have asked if you could make faster progress in your writing and that more of your lessons give you opportunities to use your writing skills. We have also asked the school to work with you and your parents to improve your attendance still further and to make sure that more of you arrive for school on time. This is because your attendance is still well below that of other schools.

You can help by having the confidence to practise your writing in lots of different subjects and by doing your best to arrive in time for lessons at the beginning of the day. Keep trying hard. We can see why your teachers love working with you every day.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector

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