

Darrington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108243
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	356329
Inspection dates	19–20 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Lesley Clark

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sandra Huxley
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Young
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2007
School address	Denby Crest Darrington Pontefract WF8 3SB
Telephone number	01977 722635
Fax number	01977 722635
Email address	headteacher@darrington.wakefield.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed five lessons taught by four teachers. The inspectors held meetings with the vice-chair of the governing body, staff and a group of pupils in Years 5 and 6, including school council members, as well as informal discussions with pupils in the playground and in lessons. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including paperwork and policies relating to safeguarding, pupils' work in English and mathematics, records of children's progress and development in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school improvement plan and 60 completed questionnaires from parents and carers as well as completed questionnaires from pupils and staff.

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

- whether pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory or good progress and the aspects of provision which best help them
- the effectiveness of the governing body to challenge and support the school
- the quality and impact of the school's promotion of community cohesion
- whether the Early Years Foundation Stage is a major strength of the school.

Information about the school

This small village school serves the local community and other nearby villages. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average but varies considerably between year groups. The proportion holding a statement of special educational needs is above average. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes and in an Early Years Foundation Stage class. The school offers 'wraparound care' for children who are not entitled to begin full-time schooling at the start of the Reception Year. The playgroup, which shares the same site, was not part of this inspection.

There have been several staffing changes in the last two years. The school has Healthy Schools status.

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

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. Pupils say: 'Everything at school is great! It's small and so we learn more and we're all friends.' Each pupil is valued as an individual. Outstanding care, support and guidance foster pupils' independence, sense of responsibility and respect for others. Pupils have an excellent understanding of why it is important to lead healthy lives and they know that mental and emotional health are just as important as physical well-being. Their attendance is high. These factors, together with their advanced literacy, numeracy and computer skills, prepare pupils exceptionally well for their future lives.

Pupils, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, achieve well from their average starting points. Attainment is above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6, though there are minor variations depending on the mix of pupils in the small year groups. Pupils across the school are well taught. The outstanding lead given to teaching and learning is developing the skills of newly qualified and less-experienced staff at a rapid rate. Pupils are good at assessing their own learning and strive to improve their work. This aids their good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because teachers make sure that the work matches their needs. They get help when they need it but also have times when they work in groups with others and so they are fully included in lessons alongside everybody else. Pupils follow an interesting curriculum which enables them to practise their literacy, numeracy and computer skills in different subjects.

Since the last inspection, the school has built on its strengths and improved provision for its most able pupils, especially in mathematics. Assessment procedures are now a key strength and information is used effectively to pinpoint exactly where pupils need extra help. This track record of improvement illustrates well the ambition and drive that the senior management team provides. Through rigorous self-evaluation the school is aware of its strengths and areas for development and plans carefully to address these areas. This demonstrates the good capacity that the school has to improve further. The new governing body is 'finding its feet'. It has taken the right steps towards being more effective. It is keen to help but some governors are unsure of the boundaries between being a parent or carer, and a governor. While the school has a satisfactory partnership with parents and carers, it does not communicate with them sufficiently often to pre-empt concerns arising including how well their children are doing.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body by:

- ensuring that all governors have relevant, up-to-date training so they understand clearly their roles and responsibilities
 - developing governors' role as a constructive friend of the school through regular visits to school and talking to staff and pupils
 - extending governors' involvement in promoting community cohesion beyond the locality and monitoring its impact.
- Find additional ways to communicate more often with parents and carers to allay any anxieties which may arise regarding the progress their children are making.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Achievement is good and pupils clearly enjoy learning. They say 'lessons are fun' and 'rattle off' different times tables, each of which has its own special song, to demonstrate their enjoyment. In lessons pupils listen attentively and work hard at their different tasks. They work quickly and neatly, confidently writing in ink in their mathematics books, keeping a close check on whether they have met their targets or not.

Presentation is less assured in writing, partly because much of their work is on paper or worksheets which makes it hard for parents and carers to see the progress their children have made over the course of a year. Older pupils explain how drawing a face out of punctuation marks helps them to remember what to include, explaining that 'colons and semi-colons are earrings because they are extra'. Pupils ask lots of questions in lessons and speak up confidently in presentations because, right from the start, they do a lot of role play and so they know how to project their voices. Most pupils read very well for their age. The recent focus on promoting reading has injected a strong competitive element into pupils' reading records as they strive to become 'The King of the Jungle' in the class merit chart for reading. Attainment in national tests at the end of Year 6 is usually above average in English and mathematics, with a large proportion exceeding the expected levels.

The school council represents pupils' views well and is responsible for organising parish, community and some charitable events. One of its most innovative moves was to instigate a noisometer in the dining hall. Pupils say, 'Teachers are like family,' and, 'They are very kind if you are upset.' Pupils behave well in lessons but can be overly exuberant outside, especially younger pupils who have not learnt to share and take turns as well as the older ones. Pupils are quick to apologise and know that it is important to respect people's differences. Every pupil takes on responsibility on a weekly or daily rota. This makes a major contribution to pupils' excellent life skills.

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.

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

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Major strengths include good-quality questioning which encourages pupils to work things out for themselves and the setting of work that is tailored to five different ability groups within a class. This ensures that pupils work at a good pace at the right level for their needs. Teaching assistants are used flexibly to support different ability groups and so pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not become over-dependant on support in lessons. On occasions, demonstrations at the start of lessons are too long for pupils who are quick to grasp new concepts and who could therefore start their tasks sooner. Marking is effective. Scrupulous checking of the quality of marking involves pupils. They identify comments that have helped them improve their work and say if they have had time to make their work better.

The curriculum provides pupils with a broad range of interesting learning experiences and lots of opportunities to learn practically. It is adapted well to meet pupils' specific needs, targeting more-able writers, for example, so as to ensure that they do not become complacent. Subjects are linked together, providing different contexts for pupils to practise their skills. Pupils are extremely enthusiastic about what they learn saying, 'Everybody brings stuff in for the topics.' Opportunities are missed to involve pupils at the planning stage so the curriculum takes account of what they know already about a topic and what they would like to find out. A good range of extra-curricular clubs, educational visits and visitors to school enrich pupils' learning.

Excellent care, support and guidance enable pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, largely to overcome barriers to their learning and to make the most of the opportunities the school

provides. More reticent pupils, for example, are helped to become more confident because the school takes pains to ensure that their learning styles are catered for. A martial arts day introduced pupils to the rigours and benefits of self-discipline. The school's high attendance records testify to its sustained success in keeping holidays taken in term time to a minimum. The excellent quality advice and guidance prepare pupils very well for the next phase in their education, together with a class handbook written by pupils as a guide to the next class.

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The new staff team is blossoming, in responding to the headteacher's high expectations of effective classroom teaching and organisation. Extremely effective monitoring of teaching quality, involving team teaching as well as interviews with pupils, means that staff get a great deal of practical help and guidance. As a result, all pupils make good progress. Staff share the headteacher's commitment, ambition and drive to make the school highly effective and are beginning to develop their roles as middle leaders.

Leaders and managers keep a close check on the work of the school and track pupils' progress carefully. They have an accurate view of pupils' achievements and check the impact of new measures thoroughly. They take appropriate action to tackle weaknesses and promote equality of opportunity, narrowing the gap, for example, between pupils' performance in reading and writing to ensure that all pupils achieve equally well. Target setting is challenging and realistic.

The school has adopted good safeguarding practices across all areas of its work. Staff are vigilant at keeping records and noting potential problems so as to minimise risk. Governors have undertaken training in safer recruitment and ensure that staff are suitably vetted. The local authority has drawn up a code of conduct to help governors clarify their roles so training needs can be identified but this training has yet to take place. The new Chair of the Governing Body knows exactly what to do. As a first step, governors have canvassed parents' and carers' views but governors have yet to make regular visits to the school and consult more widely with staff and pupils. As a result, some governors do not have a well-tuned perspective on the school's work and tend to be overly critical rather than constructive in their comments. The school's commitment to community cohesion is good because of the school's strong local and international links. Governors' involvement in this process, especially in promoting community

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cohesion beyond the locality and monitoring its impact on pupils' social and cultural development, is underdeveloped. The school keeps parents and carers up to date each month about the main events in its calendar and provides them with curriculum information each half term. It also involves parents and carers in helping their children to read and complete homework tasks. However, the systems to ensure that parents and carers understand just how well their children are progressing are less effective. The school is a harmonious community with respect for individuals' rights and responsibilities at its heart. Any form of discrimination is not tolerated.

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	1
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	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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start and relish the many opportunities they have to learn both inside and outdoors. Skilful teaching guides them towards making sensible decisions about their daily tasks. These clearly reflect children's interests but are also carefully prepared for. For example, children were agog when a large letter and present arrived from the Painted Lady butterfly they had nurtured from the larva stage and subsequently released. They decided to make her gifts and write to her in return. The result was a hive of activity as some children assembled what they needed and others decided to turn boxes outside into cocoons from which they flew away, donning wings which just happened to be lying in readiness.

Good questioning enabled the children to verbalise what they were doing and why. Children make good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development and in their communication, language and literacy skills. Staff spend much time talking to children and helping them to interact with each other, paying attention to

other children's wishes as well as their own. By the end of the Reception Year, almost all children are working comfortably within expected levels in all areas of learning and a small proportion exceed them. The provision is well led and managed. Staff make careful observations of children's learning and use these well to plan children's next steps in their learning and development. While the assessments are extremely detailed and give a clear picture to staff of children's progress, they are not collated into an individual record to show each child's 'learning journey'. This means that opportunities are missed to share children's rapid progress with parents and carers, and for parents and carers to contribute their own observations too.

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

A majority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The very large majority of parents and carers agree that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps them safe. They are happy with the education their children receive and think their children are taught well. The inspection team agrees with these positive views. A small minority expressed concerns relating to there being: too few consultation evenings with parents and carers; not enough information about their children's progress; the school not taking notice of their views; reservations about the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school; and the way school deals with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team disagrees with parents' and carers' views about leadership and management. It is clearly effective given the positive outcomes for pupils. Behaviour is good. Observations in lessons and at breaks and lunchtimes confirm that the school deals very well with those who have behavioural problems. The inspection team agrees that the school should find more ways to communicate effectively with parents and carers because those parents and carers who have concerns about their children's progress do need more information to help them understand just how well their children are doing.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Darrington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior and Infant 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 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 99 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	48	26	43	2	3	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	29	48	25	42	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	10	17	30	50	16	27	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	28	30	50	10	17	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	30	32	53	5	8	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	17	36	60	10	17	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	22	37	62	8	13	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)	14	23	30	50	6	10	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	22	33	55	7	12	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	20	25	42	14	23	3	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	13	24	40	13	22	6	10
The school is led and managed effectively	10	17	20	33	12	20	7	12
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	33	25	42	9	15	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

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.



21 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Darrington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior and Infant School, Pontefract, WF8 3SB

Thank you for your warm and friendly welcome. A special 'thank you' goes to the group of seven pupils from Years 5 and 6 who spent time showing me their work and talking to me about your school. I loved the times-tables songs and punctuation faces! You go to a good school. Your lessons are interesting and you make good progress. You have an excellent understanding of why it is important to lead healthy lives and your advanced literacy, numeracy and computer skills and excellent attendance mean you are extremely well prepared for your future lives. Your headteacher and teachers take excellent care of you. I was impressed at how well you speak in public and at how much you read. Your attendance is excellent.

Your headteacher works very hard and makes sure that teaching is really good. She needs some more help from the governors who also have responsibility for making sure the school runs as well as it can. I have said that governors must have some more training and should try to get to know you and your teachers better so they know what is going on in school. This will help them to ask the right questions to make the school even better. Not all your parents and carers know how well you are doing because they need a bit more information from the school to stop them worrying, so I have asked the school to find more ways of communicating with them.

You can help by continuing to work hard, asking lots of questions and helping your teachers to plan the topic work so you have a say in what you learn.

With very best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lesley Clark

Lead Inspector

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