

Dropmore Infant School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110223
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	378062
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2012
Lead inspector	Wendy Ratcliff HMI

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jean Horwood
Headteacher	Hazel Watt
Date of previous school inspection	12 May 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Wendy Ratcliff

Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed teaching and learning in nine lessons taught by four teachers. Five of these were joint lesson observations with the headteacher. She listened to pupils from Year 1 and Year 2 reading. Meetings were held with two groups of pupils from Year 1 and Year 2, school staff and four members of the governing body. The inspector looked at a sample of pupils' workbooks. She spoke to parents and carers at the end of the school day. She observed the school's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including data on pupils' attainment, progress and attendance, self-evaluation documents and plans for improvement, key policies and the school's monitoring. The inspector took account of the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. She analysed a total of 57 questionnaires from parents and carers and others completed by staff.

Information about the school

Dropmore Infant School is a much smaller than average rural infant school and admits pupils from the surrounding villages. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Around a quarter of pupils come from minority ethnic groups and a few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs is lower than in most schools. Currently, no pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals.

Pupils are taught in three year groups in the mornings and come together in two mixed-year group classes for most afternoons. The headteacher is also a class teacher.

The school has achieved Healthy School Status, holds the Activemark award and the local authority's Swan Award. In March 2011, the school successfully completed the Challenge Award.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. Pupils are highly motivated and enthusiastic learners. They feel completely safe and extremely well cared for by staff. Parents and carers overwhelmingly praise the school. One parent wrote, 'The teachers provide a warm, caring and inclusive environment which encourages a genuine love of learning.'
- Children get off to an excellent start in the Reception class. An increasing number of pupils are now achieving higher levels across all subjects at the end of Year 2 and standards are above average and rising. Pupils do particularly well in reading and are confident as they read aloud with expression.
- Pupils' achievement has continued to rise since the last inspection because the quality of teaching is now outstanding overall and never less than good. Pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to improve as they discuss their work with teachers. However, the opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work, so they gain a greater understanding of how they can raise expectations of themselves and do even better, are not consistent across the school.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher, all the staff and the governing body pursue excellence through the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. They are quick to identify weaknesses and take action; for example, the focus on improving writing across the school has been highly successful. Highly effective management of classroom practice and of teachers' performance has resulted in outstanding provision.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is impressive for their age and stage of development because the school successfully promotes a culture of inclusion. This, and the vast opportunities embedded in the curriculum, is helping pupils to respect and understand the views, beliefs and cultures of others, preparing them well for life in a multicultural Britain.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding throughout the school by:
 - enhancing pupils' understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to improve through opportunities to evaluate their own work.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

All parents and carers who completed the questionnaire say they are happy with the progress their children make, a typical comment being, 'We are thrilled with our child's progress since joining.' Inspection evidence confirms that pupils' attainment is above average and achievement is outstanding. Pupils are motivated to learn and show high levels of enthusiasm in lessons.

Children start school in Reception with varying skills and abilities that are broadly in line with typical expectations. Children make exceptional progress and the attainment of the majority is above average as they join Year 1. Both the indoor and outdoor learning environment for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is exceptionally well planned and resourced, providing stimulating activities for children. These activities are highly effective in developing their communication, reading, writing and numeracy skills. Children enthusiastically used their counting skills as they 'cleaned out' the school's pet chicks, using language such as 'one more' or 'one less'.

Pupils continue to make fast progress in Key Stage 1, particularly in reading and mathematics. Standards in both reading and mathematics have been above average over time. Pupils are confident readers, and daily teaching of letters and sounds is helping pupils to make sustained progress as they move through the school. Progress is accelerated in Year 2 as pupils begin to use vocabulary that is more adventurous. Pupils enjoy reading and confidently use their acquired skills for decoding in order to read new words. Pupils enthusiastically read their own writing aloud and shared their poems about the chicks, demonstrating how they had used rhyme and rhythm. The school's tracking data and pupils' work show the accelerated progress that is now being made in writing due to increased opportunities for pupils to write across the curriculum.

Adults know the pupils exceptionally well and quickly identify when pupils require additional support. The few pupils who have special educational needs receive excellent levels of support and, as a result, they too do as well from their starting points. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are high achievers and do better than their peers nationally. Girls have generally done better than boys in reading and writing, but the school can

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demonstrate that this gap is now significantly closing.

Quality of teaching

All teaching is at least good, with much that is consistently outstanding. All parents and carers agree that their child is taught well. A typical view of parents and carers was expressed in the comment, 'The teachers provide a warm, caring and inclusive environment which encourages a genuine love of learning.' The lessons observed during the inspection confirm the school's view that the quality of teaching, judged to be good at the last inspection, is now outstanding. The impact of these improvements can be seen in the achievement of current pupils. In the majority of lessons, highly effective use of assessment ensures tasks are skilfully matched to individual learning needs. There is a balance of teacher-directed and whole-class tasks as well as small group tasks and independent activities. In many lessons, pupils are highly challenged through the exciting tasks and skilful questioning of adults. Teaching assistants play a key role in supporting pupils with special educational needs, as well as challenging pupils that are more able, so individuals do as well as they can. For example, adults questioned children in Reception about their work as they enthusiastically practised their early writing and reading skills to retell the story of *Three Billy Goats Gruff*.

Teachers are enthusiastic and motivate pupils through exciting projects that they carefully plan across the curriculum. During the inspection, the pupils' enthusiasm was captured through the chicks. Pupils clearly articulated how they had taken great care looking after the eggs, keeping them warm, and watching the eggs hatch. During assembly, the teacher helped pupils to understand different human feelings and emotions as they discussed how the chicks made them feel happy. Pupils' excellent cultural development is enhanced as they learn about different religious beliefs, such as Sikhism. Pupils are keen to share their own experiences of visiting the Gurdwara with their families.

Pupils talk with confidence about how adults help them in their learning. They recognise when they have to work independently to show they understand a particular concept. The large majority of pupils know their targets, and pupils in Year 2 are keen to practise their mathematics at home and return their target cards so their teacher can check their progress. Teachers use marking and feedback through discussion to help pupils to understand where they are at in their learning and what they need to do next. However, opportunities for pupils to self-assess their own work in order to enhance their understanding of what they can do better are not yet consistently applied across the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are exceptionally keen to come to school and this is reflected in their high attendance. They show extremely high levels of engagement and courtesy both in lessons and around the school. Pupils told the inspector that the excellent behaviour

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seen throughout the inspection is typical of behaviour generally, and their parents and carers agree. Pupils in Year 1 were able to tell the inspector that on occasions they help others to remember to 'sit nicely and listen' when on the carpet so they can all enjoy their learning. Discussions with staff show how the school has helped the behaviour of a very few pupils to improve over time. Groups such as 'social skills' run by the teaching assistants enhance pupils' understanding of how to behave and of expectations in different social situations.

Pupils feel extremely safe at school. They told the inspector that they are kind to one another, and if they have a concern, they turn to a 'Playground Pal' or an adult so any friendship worries are quickly resolved. There is no evidence of bullying. Pupils are adept at explaining how they contribute to their own and others' safety. For example, they talk about the rules for using the new adventure playground that they developed during an 'Our Voice' assembly. The Year 2 pupils take their responsibility as 'Playground Pals' exceptionally seriously. Parents and carers told the inspector how they value the 'family feel' of this small school, with one writing, 'It is a very special place that inspires and nurtures our children into becoming confident well-rounded individuals.'

The school is highly successful in its partnership working with parents and carers. This is reflected in the unusually high numbers of parents and carers who completed the questionnaire. This strong partnership begins as children and their parents and carers start the school through parent and carer 'buddy' systems and coffee mornings.

Leadership and management

Parents and carers recognise that staff work extremely hard. One parent wrote, 'I have been extremely impressed at every level – the team's dedication is above and beyond!' The pursuit of excellence is clear. The staff and highly effective governing body share the headteacher's relentless focus on continued improvement. Since the last inspection, the governing body's involvement in the life of the school has grown considerably. It has been quick to provide high levels of support and challenge. Excellent monitoring of pupils' progress by teachers, which is overseen by the headteacher, has ensured the correct levels of challenge and support for individual pupils, resulting in them making outstanding progress. This relentless, ambitious and successful focus on improvement demonstrates the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further. The school is now striving for even more teaching that is consistently outstanding in order to help pupils enhance their learning further and reach even higher levels of attainment at the end of Year 2.

Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work and discrimination is not tolerated. As a result, the progress made by all groups is outstanding. The curriculum was judged outstanding at the last inspection and continues to be under constant review to ensure exciting opportunities and all aspects are equally accessible for all pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. For example, the staff are investigating how music can be used more effectively to

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enhance the curriculum and the new science shed is in place ready for pupils to extend their interest as scientists. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about recent topics such as the Great Fire of London and opportunities they had in science as they explored the properties of different materials when the school's thatched roof was replaced. The school plans additional activities to stimulate the pupils' interest and enthuse their learning through visitors to the school and extra-curricular clubs, for example visits from drama groups and clubs such as French. The school's excellent promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates all aspects of its work.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



29 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dropmore Infant School, Burham SL1 8PF

Thank you so much for making me feel extremely welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking with you, seeing how well you learn and watching you play. Your school gives you an outstanding education. You are making excellent progress because the adults are very skilled at helping you to do as well as you can. They make your lessons exciting. I enjoyed finding out about the different things you had been learning about the chicks. It was lovely to hear the poems you had written using rhyme and repetition.

The way you behave is excellent and you get on extremely well with each other. You are particularly good at working together in lessons and sharing ideas. Your teachers teach you extremely well and ask you questions that make you think. It was good to hear how marking in your books is helping you to improve. However, I have asked your teachers to help you to assess your own work so you gain a greater understanding of what you can do to improve.

All the adults have worked extremely hard to make your school even better. They keep a close eye on how well you are doing to make sure some of you get extra help. They are now looking to make even more of your lessons as good as the best. I know you will continue to work hard. Thank you for a memorable visit and I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Ratcliff
Her Majesty's Inspector

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