

Dashwood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123077
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	333390
Inspection dates	7-8 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Mo Roberts (HMI)

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of School	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	175
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Bob Wintringham
Headteacher	Vicki McLean/ Louise McGinty
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2007
School address	Merton Street Banbury OX16 4RX
Telephone number	01295 263240
Fax number	01295 263240

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves families from a wide range of backgrounds. A high number of pupils enter and leave the school during the academic year. More pupils speak English as an additional language than is usually the case and a growing number are new to learning English. A small number of pupils are from a traveller heritage. The youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage mostly attend part time. There are breakfast and after-school clubs on the site. The school has been run by two acting joint headteachers since September 2008. They have now been appointed to permanent roles from September 2009. The school will be in a hard federation with Banbury School from this date. The interim executive board also hands over responsibility to the new federation's governing body on 1 September 2009.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Dashwood Primary School is improving rapidly and now offers a satisfactory education for the pupils. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The issues raised at the last inspection have been resolved. However, the consequences of earlier underachievement are still evident in the low standards reached by Year 6, particularly in writing. Overall achievement is satisfactory. All these pupils have made steady progress from their low starting points at the start of this academic year and some have made good progress. Year 2 pupils have made good progress and reached the expected level for their age. Good teaching is accelerating progress throughout the school but especially among the younger year groups.

The joint headteachers are strong leaders and have given the school renewed purpose and direction. They have systematically tackled all the issues that required improvement. Some, like the quality of the pupils' writing, will take more time to overcome but the pupils' work demonstrates that they are moving in the right direction. The potentially negative impact of the number of pupils entering and leaving the school during the year has been successfully reduced. New pupils are now promptly assessed and given work which meets their needs. Pupils behave sensibly most of the time and know that they must work hard to learn more, and newcomers soon settle into this more productive atmosphere.

Since the move to the new school site and the establishment of the new leadership team, pupils have begun to enjoy their learning more. Attendance is up and exclusions are down. The school is a settled and orderly community. Pupils get on reasonably well together and are delighted with the additional space in which to play and learn. They work cooperatively in paired tasks but are less good at listening to each other's points of view in the playground and in more informal situations. Pupils trust teachers and teaching assistants to resolve problems but are still not fully confident that their minor disputes will be fairly resolved by lunchtime supervisors. Teaching and learning are good overall because well-planned lessons now engage pupils' interest and they try to do their best.

Middle managers have clear plans for tackling the ongoing pockets of underachievement. The previously slow identification of pupils with learning difficulties and/or those in need of additional support to learn English has been dealt with effectively. Systems are securely in place to avoid this recurring. Teachers' assessments are accurate and pupils are almost all challenged to learn as much as they can. Senior managers check regularly to see that pupils are making the expected progress and are beginning to catch up.

The interim executive board has been very effective in supporting the school's development and challenging the leaders' thinking and plans. They have planned the transition to the new governing body with due care. The school has appropriate strategic and development plans for its future as part of a hard federation with Banbury School. Its capacity to improve further is consequently good. The pupils' enthusiastic gardening has helped to make the school look inviting and achieve an Eco Award; this exemplifies the way it is moving towards a brighter future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They enjoy a well-balanced and interesting curriculum that covers all areas of learning. At the start of the day, they settle quickly to their own choice of activity and are eager to try new things and learn new skills. Teaching is good overall. Staff know their groups of children well and plan a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities that meet the children's differing needs. This includes smaller groups and activities for those who started school only recently. Adult-led activities are generally well planned. They are often particularly successful because the staff use a good range of resources, with enthusiasm and skilful questioning to encourage children to take the next steps in their learning. For example, very young children learned about the concept of subtraction while singing and gleefully participating in reducing the number of toy frogs on a log. Exploratory play activities are exciting and allow children to experience different creative opportunities and to make independent choices. From some very low starting points, most children, including those completely new to learning English, have reached

the goals expected of them by the end of Reception this year. However, writing is weaker than other areas of learning. Their physical skills are well developed, although they need access to some more challenging and robust climbing equipment. They achieve strongly in their personal, social and emotional development because the routines are well organised and staff support each small step towards independence with kindness and care for each child's welfare. The quality of the leadership and management is very good and, consequently, the whole team is keen to develop further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in Years 4 to 6, especially in writing.
- Further develop pupils' ability to listen to varied points of view, for example by using information and communication technology more collaboratively.
- Ensure that the school's expectations for behaviour are consistently applied across all outdoor time and that pupils learn the skills to resolve minor disputes themselves.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children currently enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities well below those normally expected for their age. An increasing number are learning English as a new language. They make good progress and most reach the expected goals by the end of Reception. Writing skills are still the lowest aspect and some are still acquiring fluency in their new language. The achievement of pupils in Year 1 is good. Considering their relatively low starting points at the beginning of this year, those in Year 2 have made impressive progress and have achieved standards that are now broadly as expected nationally. Pupils make good progress in the Years 3/4 class. Year 5, despite disruptions in staffing, has made steady progress because of the good teaching groups for literacy and numeracy. They have also begun to catch up but there is still much to be done to get this group to the level expected by the time they leave primary school. Standards for the current leavers are well below average despite strong teaching and better progress this year. The pupils' achievement is satisfactory because they have not yet been able to fill all the gaps in their skills and knowledge that are a result of earlier underachievement. It should be noted that very few of the current Year 6 have been at the school for their entire primary education. Measures to improve reading have had a good impact right across the school and those to improve writing are beginning to have an impact as pupils' phonic and spelling skills are improving. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities do as well as others in their year groups as a result of targeted support that clearly identifies what they need to do to improve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactorily promoted by a good variety of assemblies and themed weeks. Pupils really enjoy the increased opportunities they have to achieve in areas such as drama and sport. The recent sports day helped them to work successfully in cross-year groups and older pupils enjoyed coaching younger ones. Pupils have good knowledge about how to keep healthy. Better relationships are evident among pupils of all ages and they enjoy the mixed-age story club at lunchtime. Behaviour is generally good in lessons and in assembly. Pupils are less secure when they are outside playing, despite the increased range of activities now available. They lack resilience and strategies to resolve their own minor problems but there is no longer significant misbehaviour. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school and wider community, for example through putting on performances for

parents and friends of the school. Pupils are increasingly keen to try taking on responsibilities and have begun to understand what a school council can sensibly hope to achieve. Pupils' personal and social skills in group situations require further extension; such as by additional group work in information and communication technology. This would also strengthen their preparation for the next stage of their education, which is currently inadequate due to the overall poor basic skills of the group moving on to secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers and their pupils have worked very hard this year to ensure pupils reached levels of learning closer to those expected for their age nationally. Lessons are generally well planned and organised; they run smoothly, with teaching assistants working effectively with pupils and teachers. There is a productive working atmosphere based on good relationships and the positive way that staff manage pupils' behaviour. Resources, including interactive whiteboards, and hands-on activities, such as writing in a role play 'post office', are used well to engage pupils' interest and participation. Most pupils are keen to contribute their ideas and they work well with their 'talk partners'. Years 3 and 4 show a good grasp of historical facts thanks to the exciting re-enactments they have undertaken. Good practice is evident in both Key Stage 1 classes where the teachers have widened the range of tasks available so that pupils can be more independent; this successfully frees the teacher up to give more concentrated small-group and individual support. Occasionally, teaching is slightly less effective due to poorly sequenced activities or to weaker explanations slowing the rate of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. There is increasingly good enrichment from a developing range of clubs and the links with Banbury School. Recent themed weeks supported pupils' knowledge of French. There are also good links with the on-site breakfast and after-school club for pupils. The curriculum does not yet build pupils' social skills sufficiently well but a new programme of personal and social education is planned for the autumn. There are regular opportunities for pupils to develop computer skills and they have begun to develop some library skills and to exercise responsibility through the school council. Curricular provision has been enhanced by increasing the use of the outdoor environment, as in the pupils' plans to develop the wildlife area. There is strong emphasis on pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles. The regular whole-school exercise at the end of lunchtime, together with the new hot meal service, is having a positive impact on pupils' overall well-being. Overall, pupils are not yet leaving the school with standards that will fully support them in their next stage of learning and in their future economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good and staff see to it that any problems pupils face are sorted out. Adults promote pupils' health and safety successfully and there are no health and safety concerns. Playtime supervision is effective and pupils feel confident that teachers will support the resolution of any disputes. Some pupils are less confident that lunchtime staff will resolve issues, despite the recent training staff have undergone. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good. The school has satisfactory links with external agencies to gain support for pupils with learning difficulties. In the past, the referral process was too slow but now that pupils' progress is effectively tracked, issues are highlighted and dealt with promptly. Academic guidance is increasingly good. All pupils have targets for improvement in literacy and

mathematics and they mostly know what they are trying to achieve. Pupils get clear information, through marking, on how to improve. At present, targets for the most able are still not fully challenging every individual. There are no targets for personal development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Diligent monitoring of the school's work ensures that senior staff have a clear view of what is working well and what could be improved. A high priority is being given to raising pupils' aspirations both academically and in terms of their behaviour and social skills. Curriculum innovation is beginning to turn pupils' views around and they appreciate that they are safe and secure in the school. Community cohesion is satisfactory as the school has begun to reach out to other potential partners locally. Staff work well together and have come through all the changes as a committed and strong team. The headteachers have worked tirelessly, particularly to provide a good-quality and accurate analysis of pupils' assessment information as a strong platform for continued improvement. This information is increasingly used by all staff to meet pupils' widely differing needs more effectively. The interim executive board has been a steadfast supporter of the necessary changes and has greatly assisted the senior staff in dealing with the many complex problems they faced. They have been typically thorough in preparing for the transfer shortly to the new governing body. All staff now share a common sense of purpose, which is to ensure that all pupils fulfil their full potential.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are the children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interest of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

14 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dashwood School, Banbury, OX16 4RX

We enjoyed seeing your improved work when we visited your school recently. We especially enjoyed the rehearsals for the end-of-year production and watching the younger children learning about subtraction through singing songs.

Your school is much better than it was and it is no longer in what grown-ups call 'special measures'. This is because the chief inspector is pleased that you are all learning much more now. You are also behaving better - well done and keep it up!

These are the best things about your school.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are learning lots and get off to a good start in their education.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 work especially hard and have caught up to the same level as most children in the country who are the same age.
- You are all learning more because teachers and teaching assistants give you more work at just the right level for you.
- Your two headteachers are leading the school very well and have good plans for next term and for the future of the school.

These are the things I have asked the teachers to improve.

- To help you improve your writing and how well Year 6 do in their end-of-year tests.
- To learn to listen more to each other's ideas and to see if you can work together more on computers.
- To be sure all use the same rules when you are outside so that your problems are solved fairly.

I would also like you to see if you can learn to solve some of your little quarrels yourselves by negotiating with each other. Well done on your better attendance and I hope you have happy summer holiday.

Yours faithfully

Mo Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector

