

Little Digmaor Primary School

Abbeystead, Skelmersdale, Lancashire WN8 9NF

Inspection dates	19–20 April 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has improved because leaders and managers have high expectations of staff and pupils. They have established a culture where success is sought, achieved and celebrated.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. As a result, all pupils, from the least to the most able, disadvantaged or not, are making good progress.
- Teachers are keenly aware of the need to improve pupils' chances in life. They mostly focus precisely on what each pupil needs to do to achieve well.
- Staff have risen to the challenges set by the new curriculum. The curriculum is planned well to ensure progress in all subjects.
- The new assessment systems are embedding well. Checks made within school and with other schools ensure that assessments are accurate.
- Nursery and Reception children make good progress. The staff know them well, identify their needs and plan their learning accordingly.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They are very enthusiastic about learning and keen to do well. Their behaviour is excellent. These are major factors in their rapidly improving progress.
- Pupils care for, trust and respect each other, adults and the school environment. They have a strong sense of fair play and are very proud of their achievements.
- Pupils' welfare, safety and well-being are given high priority. Pupils feel safe, they are safe, and they know how to keep themselves safe. Staff are extremely vigilant in all safeguarding matters.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The teaching of British values is an integral part of the curriculum.
- Parents are very satisfied with the school, and staff morale is high.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Relatively weak spelling, punctuation and grammatical skills continue to hold writing back.
- Handwriting and presentation are not always of a high enough standard.
- Although improving, reading skills are behind where they should be in early years and in Year 1, and the books pupils in Year 2 read are sometimes too easy.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' writing and handwriting skills throughout the school by:
 - achieving greater accuracy in grammar, punctuation and spelling in all written work, and encouraging pupils to use the correct grammar in their speech
 - improving handwriting skills so that work is neat and legible, including that of adults, especially when they mark pupils' work.

- Improve younger pupils' reading skills by:
 - in Years 1 and 2, making sure the books pupils read are not too easy for them, and that all adults know how to question them more deeply to sharpen their comprehension skills
 - in early years, making sure that adults make the most of opportunities to encourage children to read and to understand that print has meaning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since his appointment, the headteacher has done much to continue the improvement evident in recent years. He is highly respected and his strong determination to give pupils the best chance to succeed is shared by staff and governors, and strongly acknowledged by pupils and parents.
- Staff morale is high. Staff, parents and pupils are unanimous in their view that the school is 'a lot better' than at the time of the previous inspection. Parents are overwhelmingly satisfied with the school.
- Leaders and teachers work closely together to track the progress of every pupil. They are making good use of the new assessments to do so and to check how well different groups are doing so that underperformance by any pupil can be tackled quickly. Nevertheless, more remains to be done to achieve consistently good progress in writing and to develop early reading skills faster.
- The use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils (the pupil premium) has ensured that these pupils are doing at least as well as their peers, or catching up quickly. Leaders check carefully that additional help for these pupils, and any support programmes for pupils with special needs or disability, make a real difference to the pupils' progress.
- Staff performance is managed well. Leaders carry out regular checks on teaching and learning. The outcomes of these checks have resulted in good or better teaching over time. Staff receive helpful advice and guidance, and opportunities to learn from others, including by attending relevant training. All areas identified for improvement are followed up rigorously.
- Local authority support initially played a significant part in helping the school to improve. More recently, advisers have been able to withdraw because they rightly recognise that the school is in a strong position to sustain improvement by itself.
- The curriculum inspires pupils to want to learn. It provides them with rich learning experiences that develop them academically and personally. The school has planned its curriculum well to take account of the new approach to assessing pupils' progress without levels. Systems are in place for all subjects and staff use them effectively to determine how well pupils are doing for their age. They check their assessments are accurate by cross-checking within the school and by working with other schools.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Recent projects include, for example, being voted the most artistic choir in 'Last Choir Standing', being involved in charity projects with local churches, celebrating the Queen's 90th birthday and all things British, and several sporting successes.
- Pupils successfully learn about British values and life in modern Britain. The school creates a culture where pupils learn to welcome, respect and accept others as equals. It teaches them to realise that there could be times when someone might try to tempt them to do something they know to be wrong, and they should be strong and resist such temptation. By doing so, it enables pupils to consider carefully the dangers associated with extremism and radicalisation in different walks of life.
- Leaders have used the additional sports funding for primary schools well to increase the range of sports on offer and the opportunities pupils have to participate in competitive sport with other schools. The funding has also been used effectively to enhance the expertise of the staff so that improvements can be sustained into the future.
- The school can show that there is now a greater proportion of pupils at age-related expectations in physical education, and that pupils are more confident in themselves, and in their attitudes to school and to learning in the classroom and beyond. The school recently received the School Games Gold Award for extra-curricular sporting activities – a major achievement for a small school.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors know the school well. Their regular attendance at meetings and events, visits to school and discussions with staff and pupils all demonstrate their commitment to the school.
 - Governors show a good understanding of internal and external information about pupils' progress. They use the information well to question leaders about why things are as they are, and how they could be made better.
 - The systems for managing the performance of the headteacher and staff are rigorous. Governors support the headteacher well in making decisions about staff salaries, based on performance. They do so equally well when action has to be taken to challenge any underperformance.
 - Governors know what effect pupil premium spending has on the progress of the pupils concerned. The

appointment of a 'pupil premium champion' to support these pupils and oversee the support they get from others, demonstrates the governing board's commitment to further improvement in this area.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school is extremely vigilant in all matters relating to safeguarding and child protection. All training is up to date and all staff know what to do should they have any concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- A major strength in teaching is the way it reaches out to individual pupils to help them learn. Pupils articulated this well when they said that 'Teachers don't just teach the class, they look at what *you* need to learn and that is what they teach *you*.' Parents said virtually the same when they spoke to the inspector.
- Staff have worked together well to develop a shared and accurate understanding of what learning and progress look like in the new curriculum. They use the new assessment systems effectively to gain accurate information about how well each pupil is doing in relation to his or her age. They then use the information to plan further work.
- Staff ensure that pupils enjoy learning. They capture pupils' interest quickly in lessons, manage their behaviour really well and mostly ensure that all time is used productively for learning. They use a range of ways to check pupils' progress, for example through effective questioning that probes and extends pupils' thinking, and by using their good subject knowledge to deepen pupils' understanding. This was noted particularly in English and mathematics sessions in Years 5 and 6.
- Reading, including phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is being taught well overall. However, pupils, especially in Years 1 and 2, sometimes have texts that are too easy and, therefore, do not extend their vocabulary. Additionally, some adults do not question pupils enough about the text to deepen their comprehension skills. Staff successfully encourage pupils to use their reading and writing skills in different subjects.
- In mathematics, staff place much emphasis on encouraging pupils to solve mathematical problems using their number skills. They are also sharpening pupils' ability to calculate more rapidly with a greater emphasis on learning multiplication tables and other number facts.
- Well-briefed support staff make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Teaching and support staff often exchange groups seamlessly during lessons, ensuring that all pupils benefit from direct teaching by the teacher. Thus, each teacher has first-hand knowledge of how well each pupil is doing, which they use to adjust learning as it proceeds by filling any emerging gaps or moving pupils on faster.
- Pupils receive good verbal and written feedback on their learning, which helps them to improve. They also benefit from learning how to mark their own and each other's work and to become better at checking and correcting it. Nevertheless, pupils sometimes make careless spelling and grammatical errors as they do not consistently apply what they learn in literacy sessions in their writing.
- Teachers insist that all work is dated and describes the learning objective, in line with the school's policy. They do not all insist on pupils' handwriting being neat and legible. However, some do not set a good example for the pupils to follow in this respect.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- An average of around a quarter of pupils, many of whom are disadvantaged, attend the breakfast club at different times. Some attend for the whole time and have breakfast in school, while others join part way through. All enjoy a good range of activities that set them up well for the day.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school. Attendance has improved. Last year it reached average and so far this year it is nudging above average. The school is rigorous in following up all absences to ensure pupils are safe.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet or mobile phones. They speak, for example, about the dangers associated with some websites, social media and chatrooms, and of the importance of being 'invisible' when they are online. They readily explain what cyber bullying is and are very clear on what to do about it should they know of any.
- When asked what they would do if they experienced or knew of any bullying, pupils explained what types

of bullying there might be, then demonstrated a high degree of trust in each other and in the staff to deal with it. They stated unequivocally that no one would tolerate any bullying in their school.

- Relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils of different ages, are excellent. Pupils help each other in many ways, for example with friendship, behaviour, reading, and work and activities in and out of school.
- Staff are keenly aware of the pupils' backgrounds and abilities and do everything they can to ensure that pupils develop well, physically and emotionally. Nurture provision (in the Forest Room) is particularly effective in these areas, because it helps pupils to deal with and control their feelings and emotions, and to get along with others.
- Pupils and their parents talk of school being a happy place, and feeling like one big family, where everyone looks out for everyone else. Pupils are very proud of their own achievement and readily celebrate that of others. All can see the benefits of the recent improvements in all aspects of school life.
- Pupils readily accept responsibility, for example as school councillors within school, being members of the sports council for West Lancashire, and representing the school in the borough pupil parliament. These responsibilities instil in them the importance of contributing to the school and wider community, and what it means to be a good citizen in a democratic society.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. In lessons and around the school, it helps to make the school a place where pupils want to be and where they can learn well. It also makes breaks and lunchtimes happy, social times where pupils relax with each other and with adults, still mindful of how to conduct themselves well.
- Pupils appreciate the rewards for good behaviour, and that they extend to those who are always good and not just to those who can demonstrate improvements in their behaviour. Pupils understand and appreciate the need for rules and for sanctions if rules are broken. They talk of how these things are necessary for the school and, in later life, society, to function properly.
- There are several instances where the school can pinpoint the difference it has made to pupils' behaviour. Parents highly commend the small-group and individual work the school does with pupils via the Forest Room and how it helps them as well as their children because the school involves and supports them every step of the way.
- Pupils speak positively about how every one of them can be involved in all sporting and other activities because the school is small. They are proud of their success in competitive sport and try to be their best in everything.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Year groups are small, the make-up of each is very different and, relative to the small numbers, a high proportion of pupils join or leave the school at different times. These factors make it difficult to compare the school's results accurately with national results over time. Therefore, the following judgements are arrived at by looking at the progress of individuals within each year group.
- All groups of pupils are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and their knowledge and understanding in other subjects are also increasing rapidly. Where progress falters, whatever the reason, the school takes swift action to get it back on track.
- Pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 last year reached the standards expected for their age, and the majority of Year 1 pupils met the expected standard in the phonics screening check. From typically low starting points in literacy and communication, these outcomes demonstrate good achievement.
- Pupils in Year 1 this year demonstrate a sound understanding of phonics. The good support they receive is helping them to catch up rapidly with learning they missed last year, but they do not yet apply their phonics skills well enough to help them read new words, or read fluently and with understanding.
- Pupils in Year 2 are beginning to read with confidence and expression, and to explain what they are reading. However, for a small number, the books they have to read are too easy and do not sharpen their comprehension skills or their ability to work out what new words mean, for example by using clues from the text.
- Handwriting is developing well in Years 1 and 2. Most pupils write in simple sentences, using full stops and capital letters accurately. The most-able pupils join sentences with words that denote the passage of time, or cause and effect.

- Pupils use their reading and writing skills well in different subjects. By Year 6, they do so in different styles for different purposes, and often at some length. However, careless spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors and, in some year groups, untidy handwriting and presentation, sometimes detract from the quality of their writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. The gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils in the school and nationally have narrowed considerably in recent years, but with weaknesses still in writing, which the school is working on. Staff are very aware of the need to push these pupils, recognising that within this group the full range of ability is represented.
- The most-able pupils are also making good progress, as are pupils with special educational needs or disability. The concerted effort to treat every pupil as an individual is paying off. The most-able pupils benefit from the harder work they need to do to make the faster progress of which they are capable. Less-able pupils benefit from support programmes and precise teaching that help them to succeed.
- All groups of pupils benefit from the timely assistance they receive from teaching staff and well-briefed support staff at different times for different reasons. Overall, they are prepared well for secondary school.

Early years provision

is good

- Effective leadership and management have improved provision in the early years. As a result, children are making good progress. They are being prepared well for their work in Year 1, with more on course to reach a good level of development than last year.
- Children arrive at school eager to learn. They settle quickly and behave well, assisted by staff who know them well and are vigilant in ensuring their health, safety and well-being. Nursery and Reception children readily take turns, share equipment, and persist in their learning. They can often be seen helping each other to learn, for example reminding each other of the correct words to use when talking about the life cycle of a frog.
- Teaching is good. Staff have created exciting learning areas, indoors and out, that stimulate the children's curiosity and encourage them to find things out for themselves. The environment and the activities are planned and organised well and adults work together effectively to meet the children's different needs.
- All activities have clear learning objectives that are displayed on tables in the form of questions. However, staff do not often enough encourage the children to read the questions. They therefore miss valuable opportunities to reinforce that the written word has meaning and reading is important.
- Language and the ability to communicate are usually given high priority. There is much interaction between staff and children that encourages children to listen, develop and use a greater range of vocabulary, and speak clearly. These aspects continue to need constant work.
- Because phonics is taught well, children are beginning to read and write simple words. Some Reception children can already form letters correctly and write well, as is evident in the instructions they wrote for how to make scrambled eggs. Early number skills are also given due attention. Children quickly learn to count, add up and take away, and to write simple number sentences.
- Staff record children's learning and progress meticulously, dating and annotating all of the work done. Children's work is collated in attractive 'Big Books' and 'Learning Journeys' that show good breadth and depth in learning, as well as good progress.
- Staff are keenly aware of the children's different backgrounds and abilities. Working closely with parents, they make equally good provision for all children, from the least to the most able, and for those who are disadvantaged in any way.

School details

Unique reference number	119297
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10012122

This inspection 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	89
Appropriate authority	The governing board
Chair	Joanne Hill
Headteacher	David Paton
Telephone number	01695 724 539
Website	www.little-digmoor.lancsngfl.ac.uk
Email address	head@littledigmoor.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	January 2014

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-size primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding (additional funding for disadvantaged pupils) is well above average.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes. Nursery children can attend full- or part-time. Reception children attend full-time.
- The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at different times is above average.
- The school has its own breakfast club and an after-school club. It also has nurture provision for pupils with behaviour or emotional difficulties.
- The school shares its site with a private nursery, which is inspected separately.
- The present headteacher took up post in September 2015.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in parts of eight lessons, five of which she observed jointly with the headteacher. She also analysed the work in the books of pupils currently in the school, as well as the school's most recent information about the progress of pupils currently in the school.
- The inspector listened to pupils read in Years 1 and 2, and sampled six sessions where staff were teaching phonics (letters and the sounds that they make).
- Discussions were held with key leaders, the vice-chair of the governing board and a representative of the local authority to gain their views of the school.
- The inspector spoke with a large number of pupils both formally and informally. As there were no responses to the online questionnaire for pupils, she also took account of the school's most recent pupil questionnaire.
- A range of documents relating to school improvement were examined, along with policies and procedures relating to teaching, safeguarding pupils, and provision for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- The inspector gained the views of a number of parents at first hand as they brought their children to school. She also took account of the views of the 13 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector spoke to staff and took account of the views of the 11 members of staff who completed Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Doris Bell, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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