

Dronfield Junior School

School Lane, Dronfield, S18 1RY

Inspection dates 21–22 May 2015

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school is well-led. Senior leadership is a strength. Changes, introduced over the last few years, are bringing fresh impetus, which is improving teaching and pupils' achievement, after a period of complacency.
- Governors know the school well and support is strong. Their work in holding staff to account has improved markedly.
- Teaching is good because teachers know their pupils well and usually plan work which challenges pupils of different abilities to think for themselves.
- Work in pupils' books shows that they achieve well, maintaining the high standards they show on entry. Consequently, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are consistently above average at the end of Year 6.
- Teachers prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Frequent visits to a range of cultural and religious sites enable them to appreciate and understand perspectives different from their own.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. They listen closely to guidance and instruction. Their behaviour in class and around the school site at break times is good.
- The school pays good attention to safety. Pupils say they feel safe in school and their parents agree. As a result, the school is a warm and harmonious community built around respect for each other and the environment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes, a few of the most able pupils find the work too easy and the less able pupils find the work too hard. This sometimes slows their progress.
- Teachers' written guidance for pupils is thorough but it is not always leading to prompt improvements in pupils' work because it is not followed up sufficiently.
- Checks on teaching have improved, especially by senior leaders, but subject leaders do not check closely enough on the amount of learning taking place in lessons. This potentially could hold up any staff support or intervention needed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils’ learning in parts of 23 lessons, four of which were seen jointly with senior leaders. They looked at pupils’ work in all year groups and in several different subjects including mathematics and English. They listened to pupils reading.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils, parents, subject and senior leaders, class teachers, five governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors gained the views of parents through discussions at the school gates, through the 108 responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and by email communication.
- Inspectors gained the views of staff through various meetings, and from the 22 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documents and records concerned with; the safeguarding of pupils’ well being; the monitoring of teaching and learning; curriculum and school improvement planning; governing body meetings; school self-evaluation; and the progress being made by pupils currently attending school and those who have recently left.

Inspection team

Terry McDermott, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patrick Walsh

Additional Inspector

Heather Phillips

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Dronfield Junior School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Each of the four year groups comprises three classes.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, who are supported through the pupil premium, is much lower than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is lower than the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The new headteacher was appointed in April 2015, having previously been the deputy headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to outstanding and further accelerate pupils' progress by making sure that teachers:
 - always set tasks that are at the correct level of difficulty for pupils of different abilities
 - ensure that the written advice that teachers give leads to prompt improvements in pupils' work.
- Further strengthen the leadership and management of teaching and learning by making sure that subject leaders check more closely on the quality of learning taking place in lessons.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher, along with senior leaders and governors, is ambitious for the school and is determined to ensure that pupils continue to succeed, after a period of complacency, among some staff, about the progress pupils were making. Staff share her expectation and aspiration, and their morale is high.
- There is a strong and obvious culture of learning in the school, which the headteacher, in her previous role in the school, has helped to foster. This is built on a set of shared values which successfully promote flourishing teaching and good levels of pupils' achievement and behaviour. Tolerance and respect for others are cornerstones of these values. No form of discrimination is tolerated and all pupils enjoy the same good opportunities to succeed. The school makes every effort to meet the needs of all pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- The school's system for tracking the progress pupils' are making generates a wealth of reliable information. This is carefully analysed by senior leaders to identify pupils who may need extra help, and then to ensure that these vulnerable pupils receive the support they need.
- The school's mission statement: 'Achieving potential whilst making learning fun' is at the heart of a curriculum which promotes pupils' academic achievement and their personal development well. The school has a strong focus on consolidating pupils' above-average standards on arrival into Year 3, in English and mathematics. A topic based approach enthuses pupils. They enjoy researching about a wide variety of themes ranging from, for example, the science behind light and electricity, to the Hindu religion. The school also provides a wide range of experiences to enrich pupils' learning through musical tuition, the speaking and writing of Spanish, various trips, visits and visitors, and sports day at the English Institute of Sport, where everyone participates.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well through assemblies, lessons, visits and the clear expectations that pupils will behave with kindness, tolerance and respect for each other, and take responsibility for their own actions. In this way, the school makes pupils well aware of British values, and prepares them very well for life in modern Britain. Involvement in the school council, the anti-bullying committee and the ECO committee helps bring out the importance of equality, fairness, the rule of law and democracy.
- The school makes very good use of the pupil premium fund to provide disadvantaged pupils with extra resources and support, both inside and outside the classroom. This ensures that these pupils can play a full part in the life of the school. Disadvantaged pupils make consistently good progress, and gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils are closing rapidly. This success was recognised by the Minister of State for Schools in January 2015.
- The school makes good use of its primary physical education and sports funding to increase pupils' physical skills and extend the experiences available to them. Participation rates are high in a range of physical and sporting activities, including dance, golf and table tennis in addition to the traditional competitive school sports.
- The school works effectively to maintain strong links with the community it serves. Parents are very supportive of the school, its staff, and its work. The large number who responded to the online questionnaire were unanimous that their children are safe. Systems for safeguarding children's well-being meet all the latest requirements. Staff and visitors are properly checked and vetted, and access to the school is carefully controlled. Policies and procedures are clear and comprehensive, and fully reflect national guidance. All staff have up-to-date training and are well versed in how to recognise and deal with any concerns regarding pupils' safety.
- The school receives appropriate support from the local authority, as befits this good school.

- The leadership and management of teaching are good. Senior staff check teaching thoroughly. Subject leaders are effective because they provide good role models for their colleagues. However, they cannot pinpoint precisely where teaching needs to be improved because they do not check often enough on the amount of learning taking place in lessons.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body bring a wealth of experience and professional knowledge to their work. They are very knowledgeable about the school, and have a very clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses. They give a significant amount of time to carrying out their roles.
 - They have supported the school well over the last two to three years, securing good leadership and eradicating weak teaching. They understand very well how effective performance management brings about improvement, and they make sure that only effective teaching, as measured by the progress pupils make, is rewarded.
 - Because they hold learning to be central to the school’s activities, they receive regular updates about the overall performance of the school. They know how well the school is doing against other schools nationally, and they are able to interpret data about pupils’ achievement easily and accurately. They are fully aware of the standards that pupils join the school with, the standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6, and how these compare with other schools nationally. They are well placed to oversee the school’s continuing improvement.
 - Governors manage the school’s finances prudently and effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They have positive attitudes to learning and are attentive in lessons. They try hard, especially when teaching is demanding and challenging.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school, and this is borne out in their consistently above-average attendance.
- Pupils take good care of their books, and take pride in setting out their work neatly and tidily. This is especially the case in mathematics where they understand the need to be precise when reasoning their way through a problem.
- There is a calm atmosphere around the school, both in classes and on the playgrounds. Pupils can be trusted to behave sensibly and work hard even when not directly supervised.
- Pupils usually focus fully on their learning. However, when work is too easy or too hard, their focus sometimes slips, and some pupils’ response to teachers’ written advice is spasmodic.

Safety

- The school’s work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe and know who to go to if they have a concern. Parents who stated a view agree that their children are safe in school.
- Safeguarding requirements are implemented effectively. The school’s records are complete, staff training is up-to-date, and risk assessments are thorough. Governors monitor the school’s arrangements and procedures for safeguarding pupils’ well-being closely.
- Pupils are well aware of the different forms bullying can take, including homophobic or cyber-bullying, because of the anti-bullying work carried out by the school and also by the pupils themselves. When asked about bullying in the school, pupils were genuinely surprised that the question would be raised, and could not think of any instances when bullying might have occurred.
- The school teaches pupils about the risks presented by some activities. Pupils are well aware of the risks on roads and the dangers of substance abuse. They know about the dangers associated with careless use of the internet.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because teachers have strong subject knowledge, which is used to help pupils link different ideas together. They also show good professional knowledge, which enables them to spot and react quickly to any emerging misunderstandings by pupils. Pupils are thus confident in their learning as a result of their strong and positive relationships with adults.
- Good teaching consolidates pupils' above-average starting points. It secures good progress and above-average standards by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. This enables pupils to make a successful transition to secondary school.
- The teaching of reading throughout the school is good. Reading records show that younger pupils are heard reading regularly. Older pupils read for pleasure during guided reading lessons, where they learn the subtleties of 'reading between the lines'.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved since the subject was last inspected in November 2014. Effective action by senior leaders ensured that the school readily took on board the recommendations of the inspectors. The use of reasoning and logic to solve problems is widespread. This has consolidated pupils' confidence and achievement in the subject.
- The teaching of writing is good. Pupils regularly complete extended pieces of high quality descriptive or persuasive text. Their grammatical skills, such as the use of the semi-colon or the ellipsis, are precise, and their spelling is accurate.
- Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' good achievement. They give good support and guidance in class and when working with individual or small groups of pupils, often working with most-able pupils whilst the class teacher works with less-able pupils.
- Teachers' written marking of pupils' work follows the school policy and contains often excellent advice. Teachers spend a great deal of time checking pupils' work, often in minute detail. Besides celebrating good work, teachers regularly give extended guidance to pupils on what to do to get better. This guidance involves both corrections to complete and suggestions of small tasks to extend learning. However, follow-up by pupils is patchy, thus reducing the impact of marking, on pupils' progress.
- Work in pupils' books shows variations in the quality of teaching and the amount of learning taking place. Where teaching is most effective, the work set ensures that pupils of different abilities are appropriately and consistently challenged. The work captures pupils' imagination, motivates them to work hard, and ensures they learn rapidly. This can be seen clearly in pupils' books where the most-able pupils have more demanding work to complete than less-able pupils. In both cases, pupils learn well and make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. Where teaching is less effective, pupils' books showed that some pupils of different abilities spent too little time on task, their work was incomplete and was sometimes too hard or too easy. In these cases, learning was slower than it might have been, for both more-able and less-able pupils.

The achievement of pupils is good

- School data show that, overall, pupils make good progress in their learning, in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's accurate and reliable measurements of what pupils know and can do indicates that the current Year 6 pupils are already at a higher standard than the previous Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics, from similar starting points. The variance in performance seen in 2014 between mathematics and the other subjects is no longer apparent because of leaders' successful work in giving a greater focus, in mathematics, on the use of reasoning and understanding to solve problems.

- In 2014, the attainment of Year 6 pupils was above the national average in reading, writing, and mathematics. The school's records show that the large majority of pupils currently in Year 6 have reached standards in reading, writing and mathematics in advance of those reached by Year 6 pupils in 2014.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well. The school supports them fully through work which is well tailored to meet their specific needs. This ensures that they make good progress.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was about a term behind others in their class, in reading, writing and mathematics. Compared with others nationally, they were about a half a term behind, in reading and mathematics, and they were not behind others at all, in writing. The gaps in attainment are closing rapidly because the additional funding is well-spent and enables the progress of these pupils to accelerate. The school has received a national commendation for its work in this area.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the higher levels in the National Curriculum tests (Levels 5 or 6) in 2014 was broadly average. Not all of those who entered the school at the higher level in Year 3 (Level 3) managed to maintain their achievement to reach Level 5 or 6 in Year 6. This is because sometimes, especially in Years 3, 4 and 5, work is not challenging enough, and leaders do not always check with enough frequency on the amount of progress these pupils are making.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | Grade | Judgement | Description |
|--------|---------|----------------------|--|
| | Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| | Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| | Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| | Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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|--------------------------------|------------|
| Unique reference number | 112539 |
| Local authority | Derbyshire |
| Inspection number | 462667 |

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

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| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 359 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | John Harvey |
| Headteacher | Nicola Thomson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 5 March 2007 |
| Telephone number | 01246 413145 |
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