

Inspection of Little Digmaor Primary School

Abbeystead, Skelmersdale, Lancashire WN8 9NF

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 October 2024
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at school. They particularly value times when they can play and socialise together. Pupils are respectful and take good care of each other. They are patient and kind. Pupils understand that some members of their school community may need more help at times, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Children in the early years quickly settle at the school. They benefit from the well-established routines in place and high expectations for behaviour. Most pupils in key stages 1 and 2 maintain high standards of behaviour in class and as they move around the school. Those who find this more difficult respond well to the calm and consistent approaches used by members of staff.

Pupils take full advantage of the many clubs and other opportunities on offer at the school. For example, they enjoy developing their fitness and agility in the outdoor adventure play and wooded areas. Older pupils are proud of their leadership roles as ambassadors and school councillors.

The school aspires for all pupils to achieve well. However, pupils' achievement has been low across the school for some time. Pupils are not as well prepared as they need to be for their next stages of education.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school understands the community it serves well. It has redesigned its curriculum since the last inspection to better match the needs of pupils and their interests. The new curriculum is ambitious. It sets out what pupils are expected to learn and the order that this should happen within each class. Members of the governing body have worked closely with staff to ensure that workload has not been unduly affected during this period of change.

Despite ongoing improvements to the curriculum, the school has not delved deeply enough to identify why pupils continue to underachieve. This is most notable in writing. The school does not check the improvements it has made with enough rigour. It has not identified some of the reasons why changes made are not bringing about the expected improvement in the quality of education that pupils receive.

In some subjects, new curriculums are still being embedded, including reading. While pupils are beginning to learn the new curriculum, they are not learning as well as the school expects them to. In part, this is because teachers do not check and address gaps in pupils' knowledge as carefully as they should. This impedes how well pupils build up secure knowledge across the curriculum. Most pupils try their best during lessons. However, when they find learning too hard, some pupils become disillusioned and become distracted.

Reading is central to the school's curriculum. The school has introduced new high-quality texts that capture pupils' interests. Children are introduced to a wide range of stories,

songs and rhymes in the early years. Older pupils look forward to times allocated for reading for pleasure.

Children begin to learn how to use phonics to read words in the Reception Year. Pupils practise the sounds that they know with well-matched reading books. The school provides additional phonics support for the many pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge. The number of pupils who can read with accuracy by the end of key stage 1 is increasing. However, as in other subjects, the impact of the reading curriculum is lessened when teachers do not notice or address weaknesses in pupils' reading knowledge.

The curriculum for early years children is not as well aligned as it could be with the curriculum in key stages 1 and 2. As a result, the school does not ensure that children are fully prepared for their next steps in learning. For example, children in the early years struggle to produce clear and legible letters. This makes it more difficult for them to practise and apply their phonics knowledge to their writing as they progress into Year 1.

Under-developed writing skills impact pupils' achievement across the curriculum. This is because they continue to struggle to record their ideas as they progress into key stage 2. The poor standard of most pupils' written work means that they are unlikely to cope with the challenges of the key stage 3 curriculum when they leave the school at the end of Year 6.

High numbers of pupils have irregular attendance or are frequently late when they first join the school. As a result, they miss important learning. Leaders provide well-targeted support for pupils to develop regular habits of attendance and punctuality. Nonetheless, some pupils continue to struggle with this.

Some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they could. This is because the school does not ensure that staff are consistently well trained to identify when pupils are struggling to learn due to their additional needs. As a result, some teachers are unclear about what strategy might work best or what they need to focus on with these pupils.

The school places a high priority on pupils' wider development. Opportunities to broaden pupils' understanding of the wider world are woven skilfully through the curriculum. Pupils develop a range of useful knowledge that prepares them well for when they are older. For example, pupils learn about how their body changes during puberty. They learn how to develop safe and healthy relationships with others, including when they are online. Pupils are introduced to other faiths and cultures. Their learning in this area prepares pupils well for living in a modern and diverse Britain.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not ensure that pupils develop some of the key knowledge that they need as they progress through the school. This is particularly true for writing. Pupils do not achieve as well as they could across the curriculum as a result. The school should make sure that pupils learn what they need to be able to access other areas of the curriculum more easily.
- The school does not make sure that teachers check that pupils fully understand prior learning before moving on to something new. This makes it harder for pupils to make sense of new information. The school should provide the support that teachers need to ensure that their pupils are fully prepared for their next stage of education.
- The school does not identify pupils' SEND consistently well. As a result, at times, teachers do not focus on what these pupils most need to learn. The school should ensure that teachers are well equipped to ensure their classes' curriculum is delivered more effectively to meet pupils' differing needs.
- The school does not identify and address consistently well underlying issues that prevent pupils from achieving as well as they could. This slows down the rate at which the school improves the quality of education that pupils receive. The governing body should provide more support for the school in accurately evaluating how effectively the curriculum supports pupils in their learning. It should also help the school to sharpen its focus when weaknesses begin to emerge.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	119297
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10348153
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Joanne Hill
Headteacher	Karen Houldsworth
Website	www.littledigmoor.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection. There have also been a number of changes to other leadership roles during this time.
- The number of pupils on roll has increased since the time of the last inspection. The structure of the classes has also changed as a result, including in the early years.
- A high number of pupils have attended other schools before joining the school.
- The school provides a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- The school does not currently make use of alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's educational provision.
- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school. An inspector also spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff, and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- An inspector observed pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 reading to a familiar adult. She also listened to other pupils from Year 6 reading.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, including early reading, mathematics and history. They spoke with the leaders of these areas of the curriculum. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes and when they moved around the school. An inspector scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and carers as they dropped their children off at school. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, to analyse. However, inspectors considered parents' free-text responses.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Timothy Gartside

Ofsted Inspector

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