

Dowson Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106198
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	377375
Inspection dates	18–19 April 2012
Lead inspector	Andrew Clark

This inspection of the school 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	470
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Plackett
Headteacher	Janet Rathburn
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Andrew Clark
Steve Rigby
Mark Hilton

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View in planning the inspection. They observed 14 teachers teaching 18 lessons, including joint observations with members of the school's senior leadership team. Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, the Chair and other representatives of the Governing Body, and school staff including senior and middle leaders. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, records of pupils' progress, safeguarding and behaviour policies, and minutes of the governing body meetings. Parental and carers' questionnaires were analysed from 172 responses, together with those completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Dowson Primary is larger than an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is also average. The school meets the current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school has achieved Healthy School status, Silver Eco Award and the Activemark.

Almost half the teaching staff, including members of the senior leadership team, are new to the school since the previous inspection and one third are new to the profession. The school is housed in three separate buildings all of which have undergone major building work since the previous inspection.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good as some weaknesses in the quality of teaching have still to be addressed and these limit pupils' progress. Good leadership has ensured that standards and provision have improved since the last inspection through a period of significant staffing and other changes. Achievement is satisfactory overall and pupils reach average standards in English and mathematics by time they leave at the end of Year 6. Pupils are keen to learn and take pride in their work. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The senior leadership team provides a positive role model for effective teaching. However, teachers do not always ensure all pupils are actively engaged in learning throughout the lesson and challenged fully. The effective work of the school's inclusion staff supports disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and others whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable and, consequently, they achieve in line with their peers. Marking and feedback provide good guidance to pupils and have improved well since the last inspection.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe because they are cared for well. Their behaviour is good in lessons and they relate well to other pupils and adults. They have a good knowledge of how to avoid unsafe situations, such as cyber-bullying, and they help others to manage and improve their own behaviour through their roles on the school council and other responsibilities. Pupils' attendance is above average.
- The headteacher provides a clear vision and is well supported by the senior leadership team and good governing body. Self-evaluation procedures are largely accurate. The management of teachers' performance is good, although some lesson monitoring does not focus sharply enough on pupils' learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to good or better in order to hasten pupils' progress further by:
 - ensuring all groups of learners are appropriately challenged throughout the lesson
 - making certain all learners are as productive as they can be at all points of the lesson
 - making full use of all adults to accelerate learning.
- Ensure that monitoring procedures focus sharply on pupils' learning and consistently raise their achievement.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' attainment is average in English and mathematics by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress through the school from their starting points, although it is sometimes irregular because of variations in the quality of teaching. Children start school with skills which are broadly typical for their age. They increasingly make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage and are well prepared for their future education. The school's strong drive towards improving pupils' basic literacy skills has had a positive impact on writing, particularly for pupils in Years 1 to 4. However, this has not yet fully impacted on the writing skills of the oldest pupils. Improvements to the curriculum for mathematics have led to higher standards since the last inspection. However, progress in mathematics is occasionally limited by too much repetition of computation skills with which pupils are already confident. Pupils listen well and speak appropriately in response to carefully framed questions and opportunities to share ideas with others. Pupils often use a rich vocabulary and show a good understanding of grammatical terms such as adjectives and adverbs. Occasionally, however, they are too passive during the lesson and not challenged enough to think for themselves. Pupils take responsibility for managing and improving their own work by, for example, following the teachers' marking and making use of reference resources, such as dictionaries, thesauruses and the internet. The results of national tests and assessments largely reflect average progress and attainment for all groups of learners.

Pupils' progress in reading is good and standards are average by Year 2 and above average by Year 6. There are good procedures to identify any pupils who have weaknesses in letters and word-building skills and to address them. Parents and carers share in their children's progress in reading through the home-school books. There is no significant difference in the progress that different groups of pupils make. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory, and sometimes better, progress. They receive well-trained adult support and appropriate interventions from teachers and teaching assistants, ensuring that their literacy and numeracy skills are developed systematically and applied regularly. Opportunities for pupils to apply their skills across the curriculum contribute well to

the progress the more able pupils make. The school is closing the gap between the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the rest. Parents' and carers' responses to the questionnaires are of the view that children make good progress. The findings of the inspection indicate that progress is satisfactory overall because learning is not always good enough to ensure consistently good progress.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Relationships are good and contribute well to pupils' behaviour and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers' questioning skills are often good and used well to deepen pupils' understanding. The senior leadership team is making regular use of imaginative modelling and training to make improvements, for example using discussion to improve writing skills, but staff changes have inhibited their overall effectiveness in hastening pupils' progress. In many lessons pupils of different abilities are set clear expectations to aim for and learning is fast-paced and motivating. This was very evident in a lesson for older pupils on non-fiction writing where all groups had work throughout the lesson that was sharply matched to their individual needs. In such lessons teachers encourage pupils to be self-critical and to measure their own achievement against agreed success criteria. However, in some lessons teachers expect all pupils to work through whole-class activities before starting those which are tailored best to their needs and this limits their capacity to reach higher levels. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide skilled interventions to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Sometimes they are less effectively deployed in lessons to react to the needs of individual learners and, thereby, support the best progress. Although pupils often write at length, they occasionally have to listen for too long and are, therefore, not as productive as they could be. Parents and carers are positive about the quality of teaching in the school and pupils also say that they enjoy their learning. The findings of the inspection reflect the positive features but also identify variations which currently inhibit the rate of pupils' progress.

Marking and feedback are strengths of the teaching. Pupils are given opportunity to respond to comments raised and contribute their own ideas. Pupils have good opportunities to apply basic skills in different subjects. This contributes both to their progress and their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils' writing on life for children in the Second World War showed good understanding and empathy.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is good throughout school. They attend well, are punctual and keen to learn. The good relationships between adults and pupils have a positive impact on pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are involved in creating and monitoring school rules. The strong ethos and clear expectations are regularly reinforced through excellent acts of collective worship and daily routines. Pupils have good levels of responsibility for their own conduct and display considerable kindness and consideration towards others. The school council takes an active role in initiatives to maintain the good behaviour and raise pupils' self-esteem. Parents and carers have positive views about pupils' behaviour and feel they are well

looked after. Pupils strongly agree that behaviour is of a good standard around school and in lessons. The inspection findings reflect their views.

Pupils feel safe. The senior leadership team and governing body are proactive in promoting pupils' awareness of how to stay safe. The school maintains detailed records of the rare behavioural incidents and takes strong and appropriate action to address them. Pupils are well informed about different types of bullying and how to manage and avoid it, an improvement since the last inspection. There is very little indication of bullying of any kind, and pupils and their parents and carers are very confident that if it should arise it would be swiftly and appropriately managed. As one pupil explained, reflecting others' views, 'A bully is someone who feels small inside. At this school, the teachers look at you and tell you that you are really good at things. So you feel big inside and don't want to be a bully.'

Leadership and management

The drive of the headteacher is now well matched by the purpose and commitment of leaders at all levels. The expectations modelled by all senior staff keep the school moving forwards. Teachers take advantage of well-planned opportunities for professional development through in-house and wider training. This is an open and inclusive school. The governing body is well managed and ambitious, making a good contribution to school development planning. Its members and school leaders ensure promotion of equality and successfully tackle potential issues of discrimination. For example, assessment outcomes are now analysed well to identify and eliminate any emerging differences in pupils' progress so that all groups of learners achieve at least as well as their peers. The procedures for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, for example through the cross-phase 'learning lens' initiative, have enabled the school to ensure teaching is at least satisfactory and increasingly good and better. However, self-evaluation procedures focus more on the quality of teachers' activity in lessons, to increasingly ensure consistency amongst staff through a period of change, and less on the learning of groups and individuals. This has limited the school's effectiveness in aiming for the highest expectations and bringing pupils' progress to the best it can be. The school has thorough and closely monitored procedures to promote safeguarding, address any concerns and ensure all staff are suitable to work with children.

The curriculum is good in its breadth and balance. The school has good procedures for the teaching of early literacy and numeracy skills. Its commitment to enrich the lives of all pupils through memorable learning experiences contributes to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The bright and imaginatively used Early Years Foundation Stage unit contributes well to the children's progress. Regular visits and visitors and a good range of extra-curricular activities contribute to pupils' enjoyment of learning and desire to succeed. The partnerships with professional support services and the links with other schools contribute to the good levels of self-confidence that pupils attain.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 December 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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



20 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dowson Primary School, Hyde, SK14 5HU

Thank you for making the inspectors feel very welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed visiting you in your lessons and joining you at playtimes. You go to a satisfactory school. These are some of the best things about it.

- You reach average standards in English and mathematics by time you leave school.
- The headteacher and staff work hard to make the school an exciting place to be.
- You behave well in your lessons and at playtimes and are friendly and polite.
- Your teachers take good care of you and teach you how to stay safe from harm.
- Teachers make most lessons interesting and keep you busy. You enjoy your lessons and work well together.
- Teachers make good use of marking to help you improve your own work.

To help your school to improve even more, we have asked your headteacher, staff and the governing body to make the teaching and learning even better by:

- making sure you are always occupied with work that is just right for you
- making certain that you work as hard as you can throughout the lesson and that all adults give the best help they can
- asking leaders to check carefully what you are doing when they watch your lessons and to use the information to make learning even better.

You can help by always trying your best, working carefully and continuing to enjoy school.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Clark
Lead Inspector

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