

Devonshire Park Primary School

Temple Road, Birkenhead, Merseyside, CH42 9JX

Inspection dates 7–8 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The welfare of the pupils is at the heart of all decisions made in the school. As a result, this is a very happy community which is valued by pupils, parents and the wider community.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher combine their skills most effectively. They provide excellent support for staff and lead by example. Teamwork is strong and governors, leaders and staff work together to ensure teaching and achievement improve.
- Achievement is good. From starting school with skills below those expected for their age, pupils make good progress and leave Year 6 at the level expected for their age. An increasing number exceed this level, especially in mathematics.
- The focus on extending pupils' confidence and instilling a desire to learn and improve is evident in the daily life of the school. A whole bounty of activities are on offer after school. These capture pupils' interests, introduce them to new ideas and raise their aspirations for the future.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and, for older pupils, often exemplary. They understand the importance of helping others and this contributes to them feeling safe in school.
- The support provided for pupils in the three resource bases for pupils with different barriers to their learning is exceptional. These pupils overcome many difficulties because staff meet their needs with confidence and reassurance.
- Teaching is effective and overall captures the interest of pupils so that they are eager to be involved. Pupils take part in role play and collaborate in teams, which makes learning enjoyable.
- Provision in the early years is good. Children make good progress. Attainment has risen over the last two years and many are growing in confidence to try out their skills when they move to Year 1.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attainment in Key Stage 1 is not rising as fast as at the end of Key Stage 2. The most-able pupils are not always challenged enough to enable more to reach above average levels.
- Pupils' attainment in punctuation, spelling and grammar is not as high as in other aspects of writing.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics but some pupils lack the skills to recall number facts quickly when solving problems.
- Marking does not always follow the school's policy.
- The school's plans for improvement are not precise enough and this makes it difficult for leaders and governors to measure success.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in all classes including the school’s three learning resource bases.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Pupils’ work was reviewed with a focus on reading and writing in Years 2 and 6.
- A range of documents were evaluated including the school’s improvement plans, action plans for subjects, data on pupils’ progress and the minutes of meetings held by the governing body. Information about safeguarding was analysed.
- The inspectors took account of the 28 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and the school’s own audit of parents’ views. Inspectors spoke to parents as they dropped their children off at school and followed up concerns raised through other communications.
- The 27 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff were reviewed.

Inspection team

Jennifer Platt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Steve Rigby	Additional Inspector
David Halford	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those eligible for support through the pupil premium, is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding the school receives for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language.
- Children attend the Nursery provision on a part-time basis and then move to attend full time in the Reception classes.
- The school has three learning resource bases. Pupils in the speech and language unit remain with the school for two years before returning to their main school. There are 10 places in this unit and these pupils do not have a statement of special educational needs. There are 16 pupils in the two social and communication bases. One base caters for pupils in Key Stage 1 and the other for pupils in Key Stage 2. All these pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- There have been several changes in staff since the previous inspection. During the inspection, some staff were on temporary contracts covering staff absences.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard which is the minimum expectation for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school collaborates closely with three other local schools.
- The headteacher is a school improvement associate supporting other schools in developing tracking and assessment.
- At the time of the inspection, Year 6 pupils were absent for a day visiting the secondary schools they will attend next term.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress by:
 - improving pupils' skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling
 - building on pupils' strengths in mathematics to increase their accuracy in recalling information, such as multiplication tables, when solving problems
 - checking that the most-able pupils in Key Stage 1 are always set hard enough work to increase their progress
 - making sure all staff follow the school's marking policy so that pupils learn from their errors.
- Improve leadership and management by making the expected outcomes in the school's development plan and subject action plans more precise, and more closely linked to pupils' progress so that success is easier to evaluate.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders, governors and all staff are a strong team dedicated to the welfare and support of all pupils. Consequently, the school has an ethos conducive not only to ensuring pupils improve academically but also mature socially.
- Outstanding leadership from the headteacher and deputy headteacher is at the heart of all the school does. They combine their skills extremely well, always looking closely at new initiatives to ensure the school keeps up-to-date with national changes and new ideas. The collaboration with other schools is impressive. A project focusing on helping pupils to become better learners has been trialled with other schools and evaluations shared. This project has been fully embraced by staff and pupils; it instils in pupils the importance of respect and collaboration.
- The school's evaluation of what is working well and what can be improved is accurate. Staff and governors are involved in this evaluation process and so all recognise the importance of any proposed changes. As a result, the school is well placed to move forward.
- Leaders have successfully introduced a new approach to assessing pupils' progress. Progress is checked closely and interventions are put in place when appropriate. The impact of this is more evident in better achievement at Key Stage 2 and for lower-attaining pupils than for the most able in Key Stage 1.
- The evaluation of the quality of teaching is conducted rigorously by leaders. Strategies include formal and informal observations, reviews of pupils' books and moderation between schools to ensure all recognise the best practice. Support often has a priority on helping colleagues by modelling teaching and team collaboration. This has led to much improved teaching of phonics (letters and their sounds).
- Teachers are set targets to improve their performance, which are linked to the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and the school's priorities. Staff meet with leaders to share data on progress. Staff are left in no doubt of the high expectations of their teaching and salary awards are dependent on teachers' achieving performance targets.
- Senior and middle leaders use the information gleaned from the evaluation of progress and the quality of teaching to draw up action plans. Leaders know the key areas for improvement. Changes are well in hand to improve identified weaker aspects. For example, immediate action is being taken to improve the outdoor area used by children in the early years, and research is being carried out on how to help pupils improve their mathematics skills further. The impact on improvement of the school's action plan and the plans drawn up by subject leaders are less evident. Priorities in these plans are correct but lack precision, thus making it difficult to measure success and identify the impact of change on pupils' progress.
- Middle leaders are effective in supporting staff and successfully implemented the new curriculum. The leadership of the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those attending the resource bases, is good and ensures the needs of these pupils are met. The pupils attending these units often join in with school activities. This reflects the effective promotion of equality of opportunity.
- The curriculum enhances this equality by including a focus on personal development. Pupils discuss relationships and learn about the importance of tackling discrimination and fostering good relationships. Links are made with other subjects to make learning more purposeful and ensure pupils practise their basis skills across subjects. Pupils go on residential visits during which they are challenged to overcome fears about participating in some outdoor activities, including canoeing. Visits and visitors are regular features on the school calendar. The vast array of after-school clubs include ukulele tuition, drama and many sporting activities. Other clubs have encouraged families to support their children's reading, communication and good behaviour.
- Many opportunities are provided to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They learn about different faiths and respect other peoples' beliefs. Visitors from Uganda have extended pupils' knowledge of other cultures. Pupils value their own locality and learn about its maritime heritage with a visit to the Liverpool Museum. By learning to value themselves and each other, pupils increasingly understand what is right and wrong. British values are fully reflected in the ethos of the school, with posters reminding pupils of the importance of respect for others. For example, pupils instigated an event to abseil to raise funds for different charities, including the protection of Birkenhead Priory. Pupils have supported this because 'it is part of history'. Discussion with pupils demonstrated their understanding of the need for laws.
- The school panel is made up of elected pupils who take their role to represent other pupils' views and suggest improvements to the school seriously. They appreciate the need to ask other pupils for their opinions and then come up with ideas, such as the buddy bench for any lonely pupils.

- Pupils in this school enjoy their sport. Being located very close to a football league club enhances their enthusiasm for sport. The primary school physical education and sport funding has been used successfully to extend opportunities provided for pupils. Specialist coaches provide skills in a range of activities. Staff often observe coaching sessions in order to enhance their own skills. Additional activities at lunchtime provide more opportunities for organised sport. The school does not have a field and some funding is used to hire off-site facilities for competitive fixtures with other schools, in which Devonshire Park has good success.
- The pupil premium is spent effectively. It has been used to increase staffing. Pupils value the support of the behaviour mentor who is available when they need to share personal concerns. Extra staff in classes provide more support for disadvantaged pupils' learning. Additional resources to support speech and language development, and links with other agencies enhance the skills of staff to support these pupils so they make good progress.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. They are effective in ensuring that pupils feel safe, for example, during the current building project. Pupils arrive at and leave school safely as a result of effective staff supervision.
- The local authority is effective in providing support as required, including the analysis of data on pupils' achievement. The school invests wisely in support for performance management and budget control.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective and has improved since the governing body was reconstituted. Additional governors were enlisted with skills linked closely to the needs of the school. Individual governors' experience in areas such as finance, welfare and health and safety are utilised fully by leaders.
 - Governors have a good overview of teaching as a result of informal visits to lessons and more formal evaluations of pupils' work. They support the headteacher's high expectations of teaching and are aware of procedures taken when teaching falls short of this expectation. Governors endorse leaders' emphasis on support and peer guidance but do not shirk their responsibilities to challenge when improvements are not forthcoming. Teachers' performance targets are reviewed and checks made to ensure salary awards are deserved.
 - Data on pupils' achievement is reviewed at every meeting and challenging questions asked where necessary. Governors are less sure about the precise actions taken to improve weaker aspects, such as pupils' writing skills, because there is some lack of precision in the school's action plans. Nevertheless, they are aware of successes, such as the rising attainment of Year 1 pupils in the national screening check on phonics, which is linked to the new approach to teaching these skills.
 - Governors manage the school's finances effectively and keep a close eye on safeguarding procedures. They play a full role in the management of the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy school and appreciate the warmth of relationships they have established with staff. There are examples of excellent behaviour in upper Key Stage 2 when pupils are inspired by teaching which sustains their interests and creates a thirst to learn more and improve their skills.
- Many opportunities are provided in lessons for pupils to discuss and collaborate. Pupils relish these opportunities and are keen to share their opinions with others.
- Pupils who have had difficulty sustaining good behaviour in other schools are welcomed at Devonshire Park. They flourish in this caring atmosphere, supported patiently by staff and pupils. Pupils clearly understand how their behaviour will be either rewarded or sanctioned. They therefore opt to abide by the school's rules and greatly value the reward of Golden Time when they move between classes and select from a range of interesting activities.
- At play, pupils are energetic and most enjoy joining in a game with their friends. At times, some may annoy others but these incidents are rare and usually resolved amicably by pupils.
- Older pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and this is reflected in their perseverance in lessons and the ready show of hands to answer questions. This is not as prevalent for the pupils in Key Stage 1 when they can lose interest, especially when an aspect of the lesson continues for a long time or fails to capture their interest. On these occasions, pupils become restless. At times, the work in their books suggests that they have not tried their best nor presented their work neatly.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe and have a good understanding of how to look after themselves. Year 6 pupils have had extra training on road safety to prepare them for travelling to their new secondary schools.
- Pupils who met with the inspectors, including members of the school panel, said there is no bullying in the school. They have a detailed understanding of different types of bullying and know that this is hurtful to others and is disrespectful. A concern about some bullying was raised by a few parents in their responses to inspectors. When this was discussed with pupils, they felt if it happened it would be name-calling and quickly resolved by staff. Pupils in Years 4 to 6 attend sessions at Tranmere Rovers Football Club called 'equality and diversity' where they learn about the need to value all, regardless of differences. Most who spoke with inspectors said they had not been bullied and that it did not happen in school.
- Messages delivered in assemblies and lessons, together with advice from the police and fire services, ensure pupils are well informed about hazards in and out of school. They know the dangers of cyber bullying and explained the risks of providing personal details to people they do not know.
- Older pupils identified many strengths in the school that prepare them well for transition to secondary school. They have followed the principles a learning programme for several years and consider it very influential in improving their ability to learn. The school panel provided this quotation about their school. 'We like school because the focus on the learning programme is daily and helps us to respect others and work better as a team so that we have many friends.'
- The quality of care provided for pupils who attend the resource bases is exceptional. Staff treat pupils with patience and gentle perseverance. They are highly trained in dealing with any problems as they arise, so that when pupils are having difficulties they are resolved swiftly with limited disturbance to others. It is very clear that these pupils are happy and enjoy their learning.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Although at the time of the inspection several of the school's permanent teachers were not in school, the overall good quality of teaching has been sustained. One of the many strengths in teaching is the quality of the relationships with pupils. Lessons often include light-hearted banter between pupils and staff but in most cases, as soon as teachers request 'down to work', pupils respond, listen closely and settle to their tasks.
- In classes where pupils may have difficulties in managing their own behaviour, a calming atmosphere is established. This soothes pupils and puts them in the right frame of mind for learning.
- The appropriate move from one activity to another sustains pupils' interest. For example, Year 6 pupils were preparing a report for the local radio. They planned interviews, pauses for weather forecasts and identified a leading presenter. Activities moved smoothly from a class discussion on to group work where pupils planned and practised their ideas before trying them out on the rest of the class. Some pupils demonstrated they have a certain future in presenting radio programmes. Pupils assessed the work of others and the performers appreciated their comments.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use effectively to ask questions. They check carefully that the level of the question matches the ability of the pupil. Pupils look forward to being further challenged by more searching questions and prepare themselves well with answers.
- Support assistants make a useful contribution to learning by clarifying any misconceptions pupils may have and by leading small groups. Pupils' gain in self-esteem and achieve success as a result.
- Staff give considerable attention to organising classrooms. Vibrant displays provide useful prompts for pupils, as well as celebrating their achievements.
- A strength in many lessons is the well-chosen texts which capture the imagination of boys as well as girls. In Year 5, pupils are reading an adventure story as part of their theme about Vikings. This enables them to see links between literacy and history, adding more purpose to their learning.
- Reading is taught effectively. In the early years and Key Stage 1, staff teach pupils across the age range in groups that match their ability. Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) are now taught more effectively. Only when pupils in Year 2 lost interest in their text was learning not effective. In Key Stage 2, pupils have sessions with a specific focus on improving an aspect of their reading. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 were questioned astutely to identify which part of the text was powerful and so understood the text in more detail.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective and lessons promote a variety of methods for pupils to carry out calculations. Practical activities help pupils to reinforce new learning. For example, pupils made a large line graph in the hall. At times, pupils need more practise in their mental recall of facts to enable them arrive

at an answer more quickly.

- Staff effectively teach pupils how to write in different styles, for example, reports, poems, descriptions and letters. The most-able pupils' writing includes the use of highly imaginative vocabulary. It is structured well and includes the good use of paragraphs. Teaching has been less consistent in ensuring pupils use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation. Some pupils continue to make the same errors and some staff expectations of the younger pupils to write neatly are not always high enough.
- Teachers have effectively applied the school's new assessment system to set work that matches the different abilities in class. This is usually very effective, especially in identifying work for the lower-attaining pupils. The older, most-able pupils are consistently set harder work and relish a challenge. This is not always the case for the most-able pupils in Key Stage 1. Sometimes, the work set is too easy or they are not sufficiently encouraged to complete the work.
- Most teachers follow the school's marking policy and inform pupils how to improve. Examples of pupils responding to advice and completing extra work are evident in books. However, sometimes teachers' comments lacks precision, leaving pupils unclear about what they have to do to improve.
- The calm and caring management of pupils' learning and behaviour is pivotal to the successful teaching in the resource bases. The focus is on learning through fun and practical tasks. Pupils' days are full of interesting activities, such as growing tomatoes and lettuces and learning to make goo with cornflower. During these activities, staff extend pupils' communication skills, as well as their social development. These pupils do not miss out on basic academic skills, for example, older pupils were challenged to use the correct terminology when describing the properties of three-dimensional shapes.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement overall is good. Pupils make good progress from their individual starting points and over time attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Progress in the early years is improving. Most pupils currently in the school started in Year 1 with skills that were not fully secure, especially in reading, writing and number. Teachers have given good attention to enhancing these skills in Key Stage 1. Currently, attainment by the end of Year 2 is higher than was achieved in the 2014 national assessments and it is moving closer to average. Many pupils in Year 2 have reached the level expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents good progress from their starting points. However, few have reached beyond this level in all subjects and this limits overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 1.
- Progress is good in Key Stage 2 and accelerates in Years 5 and 6 where some inspirational teaching moves pupils on at a brisk pace. The results of Year 6 national tests in 2014 were average in reading, writing and mathematics. Early indications from the 2015 test results show attainment remains broadly average, with an increased proportion reaching the level expected for their age in writing.
- Pupils' attainment in reading is improving. Success in teaching phonics is reflected in Year 1 pupils' broadly average results in the national screening assessment. Older pupils read confidently to the inspectors and the most-able pupils named favourite authors. They appreciated different styles of writing and predicted story endings accurately.
- Most pupils show confidence in expressing their ideas in writing and use their literacy skills appropriately in other subjects. Attainment in writing is improving overall but pupils' punctuation, grammar and spelling remain below average, albeit with improvement on last year's results. Punctuation, grammar and spelling are aspects leaders are addressing with urgency.
- Many pupils are skilled at calculations and some identified mathematics as their favourite subject. They have secure number skills but at times lack the mental recall of information, such as their multiplication tables, to apply these skills promptly when solving problems. This should not overshadow the fact that the school has some highly skilled mathematicians in Year 6.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Their needs are fully met and additional support in lessons helps them to learn effectively. For example, year groups are sometimes sub-divided into smaller classes so that these pupils benefit from closer interaction with staff.
- The pupils attending the three learning resources bases make good progress. In the speech and language base, pupils sometimes make enough progress to return to their main school before the end of the two years. Older pupils in the social communication base have learned to manage their behaviour and actions so that at times they attend lessons with other pupils in school. Many make excellent progress in overcoming their specific difficulties so that they enjoy school and interact well with others.
- The most-able pupils make good progress overall, with an increase in the proportion of pupils in Year 6 reaching the higher Level 5 in reading and writing. In mathematics, some achieve the very high Level 6.

Although progress in mathematics is good overall in Key Stage 1, this is not consistently so for the most-able pupils. At times, they are set work that lacks challenge or teachers do not insist that they work at a fast enough pace.

- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from the effective use of the pupil premium. These pupils make good progress compared with others in school. Test results in 2014 showed that disadvantaged pupils made similar progress to other pupils nationally. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils was three terms behind others in the school in mathematics and reading and two-and-a-half terms behind in writing. When compared with other pupils nationally, these pupils were behind by about three-and-a-half terms in all subjects. Current data points to the gaps closing.
- Pupils' artwork is often of a high quality, including work in pottery and paintings done in the style of famous artists such as Matisse. Pupils are confident using computing skills, for example, in Years 5 and 6 they use tablet computers to support their learning.

The early years provision

is good

- Children enter the school with skills that are below those typical for their age, especially in basic language, number and social skills. They make good progress through the early years. Effective teaching enables them to gain confidence in developing their skills across all areas of the curriculum. They move purposefully towards the levels expected for their age and are ready for learning when they enter Year 1.
- All staff have a secure understanding of the needs of this age range. Basic phonics and number skills are taught in small groups in the Reception classes as well as being extended across other activities. Children practise forming their letters using sand of different colours. Children in the Nursery class learn the importance of taking turns and sharing. Children enjoy role play, and boys and girls play happily together. Outdoors staff provide stimulating activities. They enjoy setting up the water pipes and collecting water in jugs. Staff are on hand to encourage counting and discuss 'full' and 'empty'.
- The welfare of children is pivotal to the provision in the early years. Children in the Nursery class have key workers, and share a story and snack times in small groups. In the Reception class, children are divided into three classes and the ratio of adults to children is good. As a result, pupils feel safe and behaviour is good because staff are at hand to remind children how to act responsibly.
- Leadership is good. Currently, the children in the Reception classes have difficulty accessing the outdoor area. The area, although used imaginatively, is rather bleak and plans are in place to revamp the area and improve access over the summer holidays. Staff are deployed efficiently and the curriculum is planned carefully to meet pupils' needs. Assessment is rigorous and progress recorded rigorously in individual files. Those with additional needs are identified promptly and additional advice sought promptly. Support, such as the use of picture images of activities, to guide those with communication difficulties, is quickly put in place. The most able are effectively challenged, especially in their early reading and writing skills.

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

Unique reference number	104991
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	461905

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	480
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Heywood
Headteacher	Jillian Billinge
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2011
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