



Dowson Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106198
LEA Tameside
Inspection number 277508
Inspection dates 22 May 2006 to 23 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs June Sharpe CfBT Lead Inspector

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Marlborough Road
School category	Community		Hyde
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Cheshire SK14 5HU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 366 0177
Number on roll	420	Fax number	0161 366 0546
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Stuart Manson
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Janet Rathburn

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school is on a split site with two buildings. Children in the Reception classes and Years 1 and 2 are taught in one building, and children in Years 3 to 6 are taught in the other. Most children live in the Werneth or Godley areas of Hyde. Many nurseries feed into the school. The majority of children are White, and a lower than average proportion of children are from minority ethnic backgrounds. About 10% of the children are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is broadly average. The number of children claiming free school meals is broadly average. Plans to open a Foundation Stage Unit in 2008 are in progress.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Dowson Primary is a satisfactory school with some good and outstanding features. It has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. It gives satisfactory value for money, and has a satisfactory capacity to improve in the future. Inspectors agree with the school's own view of its effectiveness.

This is a welcoming and caring school. All children enjoy coming and there is good racial harmony. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard and have confidence in the staff. Although standards in English and mathematics have dipped recently because of staffing changes and difficulties, the school is starting to climb back up to its previous reputation as a school with high academic standards and very good national test results. This turn around is the result of creating a more effective senior leadership team who work in partnership with others to improve the quality of education. Standards and quality in the Foundation Stage (Reception classes), and in all other classes are satisfactory. Children throughout the school make satisfactory progress as a result of satisfactory, and improving, teaching. Children's personal development is good, and their moral development and understanding of healthy lifestyles are outstanding. There is a high standard of care for all children as individuals, and the curriculum is successful in making children want to learn. Satisfactory leadership and management are evident in the recent improvements in children's progress. There is a need for greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning, however, especially in providing the correct amount of challenge for children and in marking their work. The school needs to take better account of assessment information when prioritising improvements, and to have clearer and more detailed plans to guide staff.

What the school should do to improve further

Raise standards in English and mathematics, particularly in writing and for the more capable children by:

- improving the quality of teaching and learning, especially providing the right amount of challenge and marking
- making better use of the assessment data to find out how well the school is performing and where the most urgent action is needed
- improving plans to drive up standards and to tackle any underachievement quickly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

All children, including those with LDD, make satisfactory progress, and the standard of their work is average. In recent years, the attainment of children starting school has been declining, and it is below what is typical for children of their age. This largely accounts for a dip in the Year 2 national teacher assessments since 2004, especially in writing. Improvements in the 2006 assessments in reading, writing and mathematics, however, are an indication that the school has managed to halt the decline. Children

are starting to make better progress in the Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2 because the quality of teaching and learning is improving. The 2005 Year 6 national test results dipped significantly, especially in English. This interrupted a previously improving trend of very good results and high standards, and there was some underachievement. The school did not meet its Year 6 English and mathematics targets in 2005, especially in English and targets for the more capable children. This was due to staffing difficulties that have now been resolved. Targets for the 2006 tests are suitably challenging, and school data indicates that children are on track to achieve them. Despite improvements in teaching and learning throughout the school, however, writing remains a weaker area of children's work, and too few children reach the higher levels of the National Curriculum in both English and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's good personal development contributes significantly to their learning. Children have a good understanding of citizenship through their involvement with the school council. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong, and children's moral development is outstanding. They can reflect on important matters and are developing an understanding of values, such as care, cooperation, honesty and respect. In a discussion with children in Year 4 about organ donation, they put forward mature arguments about when it is appropriate and when it is not. Children in this school are well mannered and their behaviour is good. Attendance is broadly average. Children make a good contribution to their community by taking part in many worthwhile local events, such as singing in the choir and charitable fund-raising. They have excellent attitudes towards healthy living, and were keen to take part in the wide range of activities during the 'Healthy Action Week'. They have very strong views about issues, such as smoking, and a good awareness of safety matters, such as the safe use of computers. Teachers provide sound opportunities for children to prepare for their future economic well-being, such as discussing the idea of work and learning about the use of money in our everyday lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

A satisfactory quality of teaching and learning enables children of all ages to make steady progress. Sensitive and purposeful teaching in the Reception classes gives children a positive start to their learning. Efforts to improve teaching and learning throughout the school are beginning to pay dividends. In most lessons, teachers explain what children are going to be learning from the outset. They use questioning well to check that children understand what they have to do. As a result, children enjoy lessons and work hard, one saying, 'I enjoy lessons because teachers try hard to make them interesting and fun'. Teachers deploy classroom assistants thoughtfully to enable children with LDD and those needing help to understand English to progress at the

same rate as other children. In the less effective lessons, teachers do not always expect enough of children, especially the more capable ones, and this sometimes results in slower progress and untidy work. The usefulness of teachers' marking is variable, and it does not always help children to know how they need to improve and reach their targets. Nevertheless, hard working teachers are keen to put weaknesses right, and children are beginning to benefit from the increasing amount of good teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum meets the needs of most children. The curriculum for children in the Reception classes takes good account of national guidance. The school gives satisfactory attention to developing children's basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Provision for children to learn information and communication technology skills and to practise using them as part of their work in other subjects is good. Teachers link subjects together as part of wider topics to make lessons more stimulating. Theme weeks, such as the 'Healthy Action Week', enable children to study topics in depth and to develop a keen awareness of the need to eat a healthy diet and to take regular exercise. A wide range of activities enriches the curriculum well. Provision for sport is good, and the use of visits, including two residential visits, and visitors to the school make learning interesting and encourage children to want to come to school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Every child matters at this school: as one member of staff said, 'Every child is different and needs different support'. Typical comments from school council members include, 'adults always make sure we are safe' and 'If you are struggling, just raise your hand and someone will help you.' Child protection procedures are robust and staff are well trained. Procedures for supporting children in local authority care are good. Health and safety procedures are strong, and many staff are trained to give first aid. Children receive good personal advice and guidance, and learning mentors make a significant contribution to removing any barriers to learning. Children with LDD, vulnerable children and children who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as other children because of the positive support they receive. The increased attention given to assessment procedures means that staff are now gaining a fuller picture of the progress being made by different groups of children. The computerised recording systems, however, are new, and information is still being collated.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. Owing to staffing difficulties in recent years, there have been significant problems with trying to build an effective senior leadership team. This has had a detrimental effect on the school. Things are starting to get back into line now, however, and the headteacher is supported well by

a deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. The school has introduced a new system of tracking children's progress and this, in turn, is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher's clear vision for the school is evident in the welcoming and friendly ethos and in children's good personal development. Good consultation with stakeholders gives everyone, including parents and children, a say in the school's future. The school successfully participates in many national and local initiatives in order to improve the quality of education and to have an inclusive school. Staff are getting better at using assessment data to find out how well the school is performing. They have, rightly, identified writing as a weakness and taken action to put this right. They do not yet use data as well as they should, however, in order to ensure that plans for raising standards, for example, for the more capable children, are robustly carried through. Consequently, governors are unable to keep a close eye on the school's performance. Improvement since the last inspection and capacity for further improvement are satisfactory. The school thinks that capacity for improvement is good, but improvements are very recent and their full impact has yet to be seen.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful and for making us feel welcome in your school. We enjoyed talking to you and finding out about all the interesting things that you do at school. We particularly enjoyed watching you taking part in the 'Healthy Action Week'.

What we liked most about your school.

- Your school is a very friendly and happy place.
- You like coming to school because adults look after you well.
- Everyone gets along very well together.
- Your behaviour is good and you work hard.
- You know the differences between right and wrong in how people behave towards others.
- You have an excellent understanding about keeping healthy.
- Your teachers are working hard to help you to make even better progress in lessons.

What we have asked the school to do now.

- Make sure that all your lessons are good.
- Look more closely at how well you are doing so that you always have the right kind of work to help you to improve.
- Make better plans for improving your school and helping you to reach your targets.

We are sure that you will help your teachers to make your school even better.