



Devonshire Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134743
Local Authority Blackpool
Inspection number 285101
Inspection dates 28–29 September 2006
Reporting inspector Kathleen McArthur

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Devonshire Road
School category	Community		Blackpool
Age range of pupils	3–11		FY3 8AF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01253 478271
Number on roll (school)	516	Fax number	01253 300519
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Sylvia Taylor
		Headteacher	Mr Neil Hodgkins
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 28–29 September 2006	Inspection number 285101
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This very large school was formed in September 2005, after the amalgamation of formerly separate infant and junior schools. The school had moved into a new building just three weeks before the current inspection. A fire in 2003 completely destroyed the junior building and seriously disrupted pupils' education as they were transported to temporary accommodation two miles away. The education of infant pupils was also disrupted whilst the new school was being built.

The school stands in an area of economic and social deprivation. A higher than average proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals. Children start school with attainment well below that typical for their age. A high proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and or/disabilities (LDD) and there are a number of 'looked after' children. A small number speak English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that has good capacity for improvement. The inspection confirmed the school's view of its effectiveness, and found that leadership and management are good. The headteacher's inspired leadership, commitment and vision for the future are driving the school forward successfully. He has overseen the successful amalgamation of the two schools after a long, difficult period of change and disruption. He is ably supported by a good management team and the governors. As a result, staff and pupils are fired with enthusiasm as they follow the new school's motto of 'Working together: New beginnings'.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall; training and the promotion of good practice are beginning to show results. For example, strong teaching in the Foundation Stage and Year 6 has resulted in pupils in these year groups making good progress. The satisfactory curriculum is enriched well by a varied range of visitors, visits and the popular after-school clubs. All staff demonstrate high levels of concern for pupils' welfare so they are well cared for. There are good systems in place to assess and track pupils' progress but they are not used consistently in all classes. This means that extra challenge is not always directed where it is needed most.

Good teaching and exciting activities in the Foundation Stage ensure that children make good progress from well below average starting points, especially in personal, social and language skills. Most are close to the levels expected for their age at the end of Reception, but lag behind in writing and calculation skills. Although standards are below average, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Weaker writing skills reflect pupils' lower levels of skill in language when they start school. The school is firmly committed to overcoming the legacy of some underachievement in pupils' previous education. Good developments in provision in the year since amalgamation have led to some good progress but have not yet had sufficient time to make a full impact on attainment levels. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are supported well.

Staff and governors have strong working relationships with parents, who are overwhelmingly positive about the new school. One parent summed up their views, 'A very happy place where learning is fun', and the children agree wholeheartedly. They enjoy all their activities and say they feel much safer in the new school. Personal and social development, including behaviour, is good. Pupils know how to stay healthy and are eager to help and accept responsibility. They enjoy taking part in local events. Speakers from different walks of life give them a useful insight into the world of work. Attendance rates are well below average.

The school evaluates its performance accurately and has good action plans for improvement. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, particularly in writing, and mathematics.
- Work with parents to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school has been in existence for just one year and has no published results for comparison with other schools or national standards. Attainment in the 2006 tests and teacher assessments shows it is below that found in most schools nationally in English, particularly in writing, and in mathematics for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. Few reach the higher levels at the end of either Key Stage. Standards in science are closer to those expected nationally, with more Year 6 pupils reaching the higher Level 5. This is because teaching includes a good element of practical work, which promotes pupils' investigative skills well.

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Some good progress has been made since amalgamation. This is because lessons focus on overcoming the legacy of underachievement that resulted from the many disruptions to learning in the past. Improved teaching, additional support in lessons and higher expectations of pupils are improving learning but, due to the short time span, have not yet made a full impact on attainment. Due to consistently good teaching, progress is especially good in Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they have skilled support, targeted to their needs. Looked-after pupils and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Children in the Foundation Stage benefit well from the improved provision. They progress rapidly from a low starting point, especially in their personal, social and language development. Most are close to the expected learning goals for their age at the end of Reception, except in writing and calculation skills. This is a much better picture than in the past.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that pupils' personal development, including that in the Foundation Stage, is good. Consistent expectations from all staff and good relationships result in pupils' positive attitudes. They look forward to coming to school, enjoy learning and feel safe and well cared for. Behaviour is good. Pupils are friendly, courteous and generally attentive in class.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The strong emphasis on developing social and moral skills has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes, their self-esteem and confidence. Spiritual and cultural development is promoted well through the curriculum and visits, including those to places of worship.

Pupils know how the type of food you eat and exercise contribute to a healthy lifestyle. They enthusiastically enter into the wide range of sporting and healthy living activities offered by the school. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for jobs, for example, older pupils act as lunchtime 'PALS'. They make a useful contribution to the wider community through their performances and entering competitions. The development of skills for the world of work is satisfactory. Attendance is well below the national average despite

the measures introduced to encourage full attendance. The situation is not helped by the number of parents who take their children on holiday during term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are examples of good, and occasionally outstanding, lessons, but the school has yet to secure consistently good teaching across all age groups in its quest to take learning forward more rapidly. There are many new systems in place, such as for planning and assessment, which are helping pupils to overcome shortfalls in their previous learning. In Year 6, teaching is consistently good and learning accelerates. However, the improved provision over the last year came too late for these older pupils to make up entirely for lost time.

Teachers are well organised and enthusiastic so that pupils respond well and work hard. Sometimes, such as in writing lessons, the pace of learning is too slow, and a few pupils felt their work could be more challenging.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. All statutory subjects and areas of learning are taught, and French is a significant extra for Years 3 and 4. The school is currently reviewing the curriculum to ensure that work provides enough support and challenge for all pupils all of the time. Units of work are being tailored to meet the interests of the pupils and opportunities for writing across the curriculum are being successfully extended in order to raise standards.

In the Foundation Stage, children have good opportunities to follow their interests and become independent learners but there is not enough emphasis on developing early writing skills.

Provision for educational visits, visitors and optional activities after school provide a good enhancement for the curriculum. They are varied, well attended and include exciting residential visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good quality care, support and guidance. Good arrangements for safeguarding pupils are fully in place. Staff make exceptional efforts to ensure that the new building is a comfortable, inviting and stimulating place. Despite the large numbers, staff know the pupils and their families well, and make good use of professional agencies to promote pupils' welfare and learning opportunities. Parents really appreciate this and one commented, 'My child has received help over and above what is expected due to the teachers' caring attitudes'. Pupils say they feel safe in

school and are confident that they can turn to any adult for help. Staff respond quickly to the individual needs of pupils so those with learning or personal difficulties receive good support.

Good procedures to assess, monitor and guide pupils' progress have been established but are still in the early stages of implementation through the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong, dynamic leadership which has inspired and underpinned the successful amalgamation of the two schools. He is supported well by very competent senior managers and knowledgeable subject leaders. Together, they have created a harmonious, vibrant learning community. Governance is good. Governors challenge and question whilst offering loyal, informed support. This good team gives the school good capacity for improvement.

Valuable, productive partnerships with the local authority and outside agencies benefit the school and all pupils. The school is committed to providing equal opportunities, and is working hard to eliminate the remaining underachievement amongst a significant minority of pupils.

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Managers evaluate the school's performance well. Good action plans for further improvement and to raise standards have resulted in good progress in the Foundation Stage and Year 6. These actions have not had time to make a full impact on attainment in the short time since the amalgamation.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Devonshire Primary School

Devonshire Road

Blackpool

FY3 8AF

30 September 2006

Dear Pupils

You will remember that three inspectors visited your school recently.

We would like to thank you all for making us so welcome. All the children we met were very friendly, polite and happy.

What an exciting new building you have! We were really delighted to hear how much you like your new classrooms, the after-school clubs and the 'Muga' play area. You helped us carry out our work by telling us many good things about your school. We would like to let you know what we found out.

Mr Hodgkins is a very good headteacher and has helped the school through all the moves, changes and the building work.

The staff and governors worked really hard to get your new school ready and to make it really bright, safe and exciting. They provide interesting work, look after you well and carefully check how you are progressing. You are sensible, look after one another and behave well.

We think you work hard in your lessons but could reach higher standards. We have asked the teachers to do all they can to make sure you all do better in English and mathematics.

You can help by continuing to work hard and making sure you all come to school every day and that you arrive in good time, ready for school each morning.

We know you are looking forward to the 'Tech Deck' opening. We hope you will continue to enjoy your time in the new Devonshire Primary School.

Our best wishes to you all

Mrs McArthur (Lead inspector)

Mrs Parrish and Mrs Havard (Team Inspectors)