



Devonshire Park Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104991
Local Authority Wirral
Inspection number 287085
Inspection dates 7–8 March 2007
Reporting inspector Frank Carruthers

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Temple Road
School category	Community		Birkenhead
Age range of pupils	3–11		Merseyside CH42 9JX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 6089243
Number on roll (school)	389	Fax number	0151 6087964
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs T Swindlehurst
		Headteacher	Mrs Jillian Billinge
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school. The great majority of pupils are White British and very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds or are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is high compared to most primary schools because the school has two classes for pupils with speech and language difficulties. Pupils come from outside the immediate locality to attend these classes. The school holds The Basic Skills Award and the Sports England Active Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school is providing a good education for pupils and gives good value for money. Outstanding features of the school are: the quality of provision for children in the Foundation Stage; the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; partnerships with external agencies, schools and other institutions; and the headteacher's skills of leadership and management. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are below average. They achieve well in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Pupils with additional needs do particularly well, thanks to the expertise of specialist staff, who support not only pupils with speech and language difficulties but those with other learning needs exceptionally well. By the end of Year 6, standards are average overall. However, too few pupils reach the higher level in English and mathematics. Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well and enjoy school. They develop a good awareness of how to stay safe and be healthy and they contribute well to the school community, for example, acting as playground monitors and pupil councilors. They learn good skills of cooperation and working independently, which give them a good start in secondary school. These outcomes are the result of the good care, guidance and support that the school offers its pupils. The pastoral needs of all pupils, including the most vulnerable, are identified and addressed well. Links with specialist agencies contribute exceptionally well in this respect. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and is built on very good relationships between staff and pupils and well-planned lessons. In a minority of lessons, however, the pace of learning dips at times and pupils are not always engaged enough in their learning. The curriculum has a good emphasis on basic skills and information and communication technology (ICT). There are recent, exciting initiatives to stimulate learning in other subjects that are developing well. The curriculum for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is outstanding and helps the children's progress so well because it is rooted in first-hand experiences and learning through play. Leadership, management and governance of the school are good. The headteacher's vision for the school, her energy and enthusiasm has led to significant developments in how the school is managed. A newly established senior leadership team has been effective in developing systems to track the achievement of pupils and set clear and challenging targets for them, as well as in monitoring the quality of provision and standards across the school. The school's procedures to assess how well it is performing are good and the school's view of its performance reflects the judgements of the inspection team exactly. The improvements made since the last inspection indicate the school has good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise expectations for what more able pupils can achieve so that by the end of Year 6, more are reaching the higher level in English and mathematics.
- Ensure the pace of learning is maintained in all lessons and all pupils are engaged and motivated to achieve well.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The attainment of most children on entry to the Nursery is below average, many have very little knowledge and understanding of the world around them and a minority has poor communication skills. Children make good progress in the excellent Foundation Stage classes, which operate in a single unit where younger and older children work and play alongside one another. This benefits the achievement of all. By the end of the Reception year, most have reached or are close to reaching the national expectations expected of children at this age. Pupils make good progress in both key stages. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good, and often outstanding, progress because of the highly effective support they receive. The expertise of staff and visiting specialists is used extremely well to help pupils who attend the two language classes as well as pupils in mainstream classes. Those with speech and language problems make rapid gains in their learning and reintegrate well into mainstream classes or their own schools. Parents express their full appreciation for the school in this respect. A typical comment is, 'I have seen his confidence increase tenfold, he is keen to learn and has made excellent progress.' The very few pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress because their needs are also well catered for. The school's published results in national tests in Year 6 are frequently affected adversely by the above average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need. When an analysis is made of the achievement of pupils in mainstream classes, it is clear that overall, pupils achieve well and the proportion reaching expected levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science is in line with the national average. However, too few pupils are achieving the higher level in English and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The great majority of pupils behave well and have good attitudes to their schoolwork. The few who are easily distracted are managed well by the staff employing a 'zoning' system of discipline. Pupils say that they have few concerns about bullying and any that occurs is dealt with well. As one pupil commented, 'Since the zone system, there is less name calling and everything is more disciplined.' There have been few exclusions and the sanction is used only as a last resort. Levels of attendance are in line with the national average and pupils understand the importance of attending school and being punctual. Pupils keep physically active as a result not only of lessons in physical education but of the 'Active Playgrounds' organised by staff and older pupils each lunchtime. They have the opportunity for healthy snacks and lunches and make well informed choices as a consequence. The pupil council gives the pupils a voice in how the school is developing and they have contributed, for instance, to a survey of safety in the playground and helped the health promotion campaign. The school encourages citizenship by engaging pupils in local Civic Awards which involve pupils in community activities both in school

and the wider locality. Initiatives such as these help the pupils to develop important skills that serve them well when they move on to secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning across the whole age range is good. Key strengths of the teaching are: the very good relationships staff have with pupils, which result in pupils being keen to work; lesson planning, which leads to purposeful learning; and the use of praise, which is a feature of all lessons and promotes pupils' self-esteem well. The pace of lessons is generally good, though on occasions it slows and time is not used as effectively as it might be. Also, when teaching is not stimulating enough, pupils engage less well with staff and are less motivated. As a consequence, in these instances, learning is not as rapid. The teaching and learning of pupils in the two language classes are good and at times outstanding, helping pupils to gain skills and the confidence to return to mainstream classes. The marking of pupils' work focuses effectively on how well pupils are doing and how they might improve. Procedures for pupils to assess their own work and evaluate other pupils' work are well developed throughout the school. Even the youngest pupils and those with additional needs are developing a mature understanding of their targets. This enables them to be aware of what they need to do to improve and to experience success.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good quality curriculum is broad and well balanced and meets statutory requirements. The school places a strong emphasis upon the teaching of basic skills and has received national accreditation as a result. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is outstanding, covering all the areas for learning appropriate to the age group exceptionally well to provide a rich, exciting range of activities very well suited to young learners. The curriculum and work planned for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also outstanding. There are very effective programmes and strategies used to support pupils in small groups and individually, which lead to them making good progress toward targets in their individual education plans. Further strengths include provision for ICT, which has been improved since the time of the last inspection and is being used well in subjects across the curriculum. The good range of extra-curricular activities organised by the After-School Study Coordinator are popular with pupils and enhances their enjoyment of school. The curriculum promotes the pupils' understanding of a healthy and fit lifestyle well. There are new initiatives that are just being established this year and are planned to stimulate pupils' enjoyment of school, but whose impact is yet to be measured. These are: the creative curriculum for the humanities and arts subjects; French for pupils in Key Stage 2 classes and the language class for older pupils; and improved provision for talented and more able pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

An outstanding element of this aspect is the support provided for looked-after children and pupils with additional needs. Their difficulties are identified early, parents are consulted and progress monitored well in regular meetings. The school makes excellent use of specialists, both in school and from other agencies, such as on-site speech therapists, to help pupils. The teachers of mainstream classes draw upon the expertise of staff in the language classes to benefit pupils who require help with speaking and listening skills. The improved confidence of these pupils is evident in how they answer questions and join in discussions in class. The home/school liaison officer makes a good contribution to care and guidance, offering, for instance, support for families in times of stress and helping pupils to achieve good attendance. A new programme of lessons has begun to promote pupils' social and emotional development, but its impact has yet to be measured. Procedures to promote child protection, the safe recruitment of staff, health and safety, and to reduce risk are in place. Systems to track the pupils' personal and academic progress provide detailed information for staff from which they are able to set targets to further pupils' achievement. Pupils know their targets well and are becoming increasingly aware of what they need to do to improve, for example in reading and writing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Since her appointment two years ago, the headteacher has introduced a vision for the school's leadership which seeks to empower senior and middle managers. The leadership team has been extended and more responsibility delegated to subject and aspect leaders. There is a good focus on tracking and supporting the progress of individual pupils so that all are being encouraged to work to their potential. This is clearly well established for most pupils, especially those with additional needs, but the support for pupils identified as talented and more able is in the early stages of development. There is an excellent commitment to include all pupils in what the school offers, and this is evident in the appointment of an Inclusion Manager to the school leadership team, and in the successful integration of pupils from the language classes. School self-evaluation is good and grounded on a very effective range of monitoring procedures. School development planning is good, and is focused on raising achievement and improving provision; though at times the criteria for judging the effectiveness of actions are too vague and not linked directly enough to specific standards for pupils to achieve. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in developing the curriculum, assessment procedures, target-setting and the Foundation Unit. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well and have a good awareness of how the school is performing. There are clear examples of how they challenge the leadership of the school to account for its actions.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
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	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Thank you very much for your help when we inspected your school. We enjoyed our visit very much. Now we want to share with you what we thought about your school.

Your school is giving you a good standard of education. This means that you are making good progress. In addition, there are some things that the staff do exceptionally well for you:

- your headteacher is outstanding in the way she leads your school
- the staff take good care of you, helping you all to be fit, safe and healthy
- the children in the Nursery and Reception classes get off to a great start, thanks to the excellent work of the staff
- the staff help anyone who finds learning, and so you make good progress
- your behaviour and attitudes to learning are good and you are growing into sensible students who want to learn
- the staff are teaching you interesting topics and themes that cover several subjects of the curriculum
- they provide you with good opportunities to enjoy activities after school and go on interesting trips.

To make the school even better, we want the staff to make sure they always give you challenging work to do, especially the quicker learners among you. We want you all to take a full part in lessons, concentrate and do as well as you can.