



Denbigh Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109534
Local Authority LUTON
Inspection number 288417
Inspection dates 13–14 December 2006
Reporting inspector Marina Gough

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Denbigh Road
School category	Community		Luton
Age range of pupils	7–11		Bedfordshire LU3 1NS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582 571597
Number on roll (school)	381	Fax number	01582 494356
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Jean Kilby
		Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Hearn
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated near the centre of Luton and serves a large Asian community. Pupils belong to a variety of ethnic groups but most pupils are either Pakistani or Bangladeshi. Many of the pupils speak little English when they start school and for most, English is their second language. Almost all pupils transfer from the infant school that shares the same site. The percentage of children known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. About one third of pupils have learning difficulties.

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 and improving school. The school knows itself well, and its evaluation of strengths and weaknesses closely matches the findings of the inspection. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection, and over the last eighteen months, since its involvement in the Intensive Support Programme, has begun to move forward faster and with more confidence. However, many of the positive initiatives are still in the early stages of development and so their impact is not yet fully evident.

Over recent years the school has struggled to recruit and retain teachers. After much hard work on the part of the governors and senior staff, the school now has a stable teaching force. The staff is beginning to gel together and to work effectively towards whole-school targets for development. As a result of measures introduced by the headteacher, working closely with the local authority, the quality of teaching has improved considerably. Teaching is now satisfactory, but there is still too much variation within and between year groups. In some classes teaching is of a consistently good standard. In others, teaching is at best mediocre, and occasionally weak.

Standards are starting to rise after a long period where they were significantly below the national average. Standards in English are now close to the national average but there is still more work to be done. Standards in mathematics and science have also improved but are still below the national average. Pupils of all ages and abilities struggle to cope with technical subject language in mathematics and science, and have difficulty with solving problems and carrying out investigations. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall but the school has identified that Pakistani boys tend to do less well than other groups.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, and the school has been exceptionally successful in raising levels of attendance so that they are broadly in line with the national average. Pupils generally have positive attitudes to work but they are heavily reliant on their teachers for support and advice. This lack of independence means that pupils find it difficult to work under test conditions, where they have to work out for themselves what is required. Levels of support, care and guidance are good and are strengths of the school's provision. The school does much to help pupils to understand healthy living and pupils take part in a good range of sports activities. Pupils know that they are part of a community and are keen to take on roles of responsibility. Behaviour is very good; pupils are polite, sociable and friendly.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The strategic leadership team sets a clear agenda for improvement and takes a good lead in monitoring the school's work, so that strengths can be shared and weaknesses addressed. A key strength of the school lies in the way in which it reaches out to parents through its Family Workers, so that barriers to the pupils' learning can be removed and parents understand what the school expects from them and their children. Governors are supportive and well informed. The school is well placed for further improvement and provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the pupils' problem solving skills and their understanding of mathematical vocabulary.
- Increase the pupils' basic scientific knowledge and improve their investigative skills.
- Help the pupils to become more independent in their learning.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching is more consistent and make best use of the most effective teachers within year groups.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school's results in the 2006 national tests were close to the national average in English but below the national average in mathematics and science. The school's recent focus on English has been successful in raising standards of reading, speaking, listening and girls' writing, although writing is still a relatively weaker area of the pupils' learning. In mathematics, pupils have a secure understanding of number but have difficulty in solving problems, mainly because they do not always understand what is being asked of them. Pupils' attainment in science is hampered by their lack of knowledge of the world in which they live. For example, some Year 6 pupils do not know what farm animals eat, nor are they able to name and recognise different types of birds.

Most pupils make satisfactory progress but, as the school itself has identified, Pakistani boys tend to do less well than other groups of pupils. The school has put a good number of additional strategies in place to support these pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties make similar progress to their classmates and benefit from good levels of additional classroom support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They are orderly, polite, considerate and friendly. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and so there is a strong sense of community. School councillors are proud of the improvements that have taken place as a result of their suggestions. Behaviour is very good. Pupils say occasional incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively, so that they feel safe in school. The school rightly emphasises the importance of pupils keeping fit and healthy but there are some stumbling blocks. For example, pupils are often cautious about trying new foods and, despite very good input from Family Workers, parents do not always provide nutritious lunch boxes for their children. Pupils are well prepared socially for the next stage of their education but, because their basic skills of literacy and numeracy are still low, they are not as well prepared as they might be for the academic demands of high school. The school's constant efforts to raise attendance levels are outstanding; after many years of hard work, attendance levels are now close to the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is much good teaching and some that is outstanding. However, there is also some that is just mediocre and, at times, weak. As a result of this inconsistency in teaching across the school, pupils get a very different quality of provision depending on which class or group they are in. Whilst pupils have access to different teachers when they are in sets for mathematics, the skills of the best teachers are not sufficiently well spread across year groups. Pupils generally take an active part in lessons and are keen to answer and ask questions but staff do not yet do enough to develop pupils' independence. Consequently, many are over-reliant on adult support. They lack the confidence to tackle new learning and to untangle problems by themselves. Teachers make satisfactory use of assessment information to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning. However, the setting of targets for pupils is in the very early stages of development and so is not yet having its full impact on learning or achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is developing well and there is an appropriate focus on improving skills of literacy and numeracy. The school recognises that there are some gaps in the pupils' general knowledge of the wider world and does much to enhance pupils' learning through visits to places of interest. The physical education curriculum is significantly enhanced by the excellent links the school has with its main receiving high school, and an appropriate amount of time is given to physical development and to helping pupils develop a healthy lifestyle. Good links with outside agencies support the school's personal, social and health education programme, and pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good levels of care, support and guidance. Arrangements for ensuring that pupils are safe and happy in school are very good and do much to create a positive learning environment. Pupils know they can approach any member of staff with problems or concerns. The school has done a great deal to establish very good links with parents. Consequently, the learning mentor and Family Workers can provide sensitive support for pupils who have problems that stem from difficulties at home. The school has recently introduced targets for pupils which help them to see how to improve their work and give them a good picture of the progress they are making but the impact of these is yet to become wholly clear. Support for pupils who have learning difficulties is effective and is provided in an unobtrusive and sensitive way.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides good leadership and is well supported by her colleagues. She is very committed to raising standards and so pupils really understand the school motto - 'aiming high'. Together with the strategic leadership team and the governing body, the headteacher has set a clear agenda for improvement. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall but over the last eighteen months, as the staff team has become more settled, the rate of improvement has accelerated.

The school has been proactive in addressing low standards by joining the local authority's support programme. It is well placed for further improvement because there is now a full complement of teaching staff and staff and governors have the desire and the drive to continue to move forwards.

The governing body is supportive and knows the school well. Governors have taken a good lead in ensuring that there are enough teaching staff and, with the estate manager, have been tireless in their efforts to maintain an old and costly building to the highest standards. They manage the budget well and are involved in monitoring the school's work to a satisfactory degree.

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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 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?	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	3

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	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	2
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	3
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

Dear Pupils

Denbigh Junior School, Denbigh Road, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU3 1NS

I am writing to thank you very much for the kind way you welcomed me into your school when I visited a short while ago. Your school is a happy place to be, and I was pleased to see how well you behaved in lessons and when moving around the school. I can see that over the last couple of years your teachers have worked really hard to help you to do better with your learning. In English, you are now doing quite well. In mathematics and science, your test results show that you are not doing as well as you should be. In mathematics you seem to find solving problems difficult, mainly because the questions are sometimes complicated and need patience and careful thought. In science, your knowledge is not good enough, and you find it difficult to carry out investigations by yourself.

Some of your teachers are very skilled, and in their lessons you make lots of progress and really enjoy your work. There are times when teaching is unsatisfactory, and when this is the case, you do not make as much progress as you could. You generally work hard in lessons and are keen to answer questions and to work with your classmates. However, whilst it is good that you are able to ask your teachers and teaching assistants for support, you need to start being more independent. This will help you particularly when you do tests where you have to work by yourselves.

One of the strengths of your school is the way in which the staff ensure that you are safe and well cared for. You know that you can approach the learning mentor or the 'Family Workers' if you have any problems, or that you can put messages in the class 'voice boxes'. You know how to be healthy, although some of your packed lunches are not as healthy as they could be! I am pleased to hear about the sports activities that you can take part in at the high school, and was interested to find out about the 'enterprise day' that you had last year.

Your headteacher is doing a good job in taking the school forwards, and she has a very clear idea of what needs to be done next to make the school even more successful.

Marina Gough Lead Inspector