



Dallam Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110972
Local Authority Warrington
Inspection number 288815
Inspection dates 13–14 September 2006
Reporting inspector Paul Bamber

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Boulting Avenue
School category	Community		Dallam, Warrington
Age range of pupils	3–11		Cheshire WA5 0JG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01925 633927
Number on roll (school)	217	Fax number	01925 575113
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs C Hyatt
		Headteacher	Mrs Jackie Watson
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	13–14 September 2006	288815

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

An average sized school, Dallam lies in a severely deprived area of Warrington. It provides the local authority with special provision for up to 35 pupils with severe communication disorders (mainly autism). As a result, it has a much higher proportion than average of pupils with learning difficulties and with a statement of special educational need. At least half of the pupils in each year group have learning difficulties. The school's effective work in management, promoting a healthy lifestyle amongst pupils, in art and design and in information and communication technology (ICT) has been acknowledged by a number of awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school in which pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding. This is particularly notable given the large proportion of pupils with severe learning difficulties, many of whom offer extensive challenge to the staff. Despite these difficulties, pupils behave well because they feel valued and enjoy the varied and interesting work and activities on offer. There are also some outstanding features in the care, guidance and support pupils receive.

Good teaching, often in difficult circumstances, ensures that despite the low standards attained in English and mathematics, pupils make good progress throughout the school, with some achieving exceptionally well. At the heart of what goes well is the tireless work of the headteacher and the leadership team, who constantly seek improvement by effectively checking the performance of all who work in the school. Good leadership has resulted in good improvements since the last inspection, including pupils' achievements in art and design and in ICT.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise because of the very successful way the school's health programme meets their needs. Subject leadership has improved well, resulting in higher standards in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. The curriculum increasingly offers pupils experiences that match their needs and stimulate their interests. The special provision provided for those pupils with severe difficulties in communication is spot on and ensures that they learn alongside others in the school as often as possible, which promotes both their good achievements and their ability to build effective relationships. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress from a very low starting point. They do not make such good progress in their speaking skills because staff do not encourage them enough to speak using longer phrases and full sentences. This is a relative weakness throughout the school and adversely affects standards in reading and writing.

Although the school has a good capacity to improve, its action plans are insufficiently detailed about the ways in which pupils will improve as a result of those actions. Parents are extremely pleased with the school and particularly appreciate the close partnerships the school maintains to support all pupils, especially those with learning difficulties.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics the end of Year 6.
- Improve the teaching of pupils' speaking skills.
- Make sure that school development plans detail the ways in which pupils' learning and achievement should improve as a result of the actions taken.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Many children enter the school with very poor skills, especially in their ability to communicate, to recognise and use number and in their personal and emotional development. Because of sensitive and well-matched teaching, they make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. Even so, many do not reach the standards expected nationally by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils, including those with the severest learning difficulties, continue to make good progress in Years 1 to 6. Because such a large proportion of pupils have complex learning difficulties, standards in English and mathematics are low throughout the school when measured against national averages. Pupils do better in science, especially in Years 3 to 6, because the curriculum is more practically focused. Importantly, the standards reached by the pupils who do not have learning difficulties match and sometimes exceed national averages. Pupils' achievements in ICT and in art and design are especially notable and have been recognised by external awards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding and make a vital contribution to their enjoyment of learning and to the good progress they make. Attendance is below average but continues to improve. Parents are very positive, with one parent saying: 'I have always found the staff friendly and prepared to go the extra mile'. The excellent relationships evident in the school community strongly promote pupils' personal and social development. From the start of Nursery, children very happily work together and develop independence. Pupils enjoy school, are polite, friendly and behave well. They treat each other very kindly, are extremely tolerant of others and know that bullying is not tolerated. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a strong sense of fair play. They proudly take responsibility, and discussions between school council members and their classmates teach them about democracy. They are very aware of the benefits of healthy eating and take part in a wide variety of physical activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is testament to the good quality of teaching in those classes containing pupils with the severest learning difficulties, that pupils enjoy lessons, strive to improve and take pride in their good achievements. A parent commented, 'I applaud the staff for their endless tolerance and the fantastic support my son receives'. This sums up neatly what is so good about provision in this school. The creative use of ICT during lessons, and to support pupils' learning in all

subjects, is a strength of both teaching and learning. Pupils enjoy using the computers to find information and take great delight in operating electronic whiteboards and computers well. Where teachers have the highest expectations of pupils' work rate and behaviour, lessons proceed at a cracking pace and learning and achievement are very effective. In those few lessons where teachers do not fully meet the needs of all pupils, learning is less effective and achievement rarely rises above satisfactory. In the Nursery class, the right mix of play, choice and directed activity matches the needs of the youngest children very well, enabling them to settle happily and quickly into school life. Pupils report that they enjoy learning more because they are now involved in setting and assessing targets to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. There is a strong emphasis on developing skills through a creative and enriched approach. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about the interesting and exciting activities offered. A wide range of highly popular out of school activities helps to promote pupils' social skills, health and their contribution to the community. Overall, the curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good, but shares an overall weakness across the school in that it does not adequately develop children's speaking skills. The programme for personal, social and health education is excellent and makes a very telling contribution to pupils' outstanding personal development. Provision for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very effective enabling them to enjoy learning and to make good progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good with some outstanding features. Pupils have confidence in staff and know that help is always available. Child protection procedures are followed effectively and staff quickly identify and deal with any concerns. However, written guidance in the school does not reflect current best practice in the control and positive handling for those pupils with the greatest need for emotional and physical support. The school identifies and tracks vulnerable pupils very well and is outstanding in the way that it includes all pupils in its full range of activities. The school does all it can to improve attendance and punctuality. This includes rewarding pupils for good attendance and providing a breakfast club, which has the benefit of encouraging them to arrive at school on time. Good links with a wide range of external agencies aid sensitive support. The good arrangements to settle children into the Nursery and for transition to secondary school, support their preparation for life in the wider world. Parents are well informed about their children's progress. Pupils' involvement in setting and assessing their learning targets is evidence of the good academic guidance they receive.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides an excellent example to all staff and pupils because she is 'hands on', constantly puts pupils' interests first, ceaselessly strives for improvement and embraces partners for the benefit of the school. The headteacher and the effective leadership team, promote good achievement, continually strive to raise standards by carefully analysing weaknesses in pupils' work or in provision and successfully encourage pupils to lead increasingly healthier lives. Senior managers and subject leaders have made crucial contributions to match the curriculum to pupils' needs and to enhance their enjoyment of learning. High on the agenda of all staff with management responsibilities is the personal development and welfare of the pupils in their care. They do very well in this aspect. The management of the provision for those pupils who find it most difficult to learn and of the pupils' personal and social development is outstanding. However, action plans insufficiently focus on specifically what pupils need to do to improve. Senior managers know the school well and self evaluation is generally accurate. The school's view that its care, guidance and support and its leadership and management are outstanding rather over-values these aspects because there are one or two key areas that still need to be improved. Governors play an effective role in supporting the school's aims and in checking on standards and provision. The school offers good value for money.

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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	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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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?	1
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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 for making us so welcome during our visit to your school. The other inspectors and I very much enjoyed our two days and these were the things we found that were good about your school:

- the good progress you make in your work
- the way in which you get on so well together and behave sensibly
- many of your lessons are exciting and involve you fully in your learning
- how well the children who find learning very difficult are looked after and are involved in so much of what happens in and out of school
- how well the school is run.

There were a few things we asked the school to do a bit better. They were:

- to help you to read, write and do mathematics even better
- to help you to say more when you answer questions or try to explain your ideas
- to make sure that the school knows exactly in what ways your work should improve when changes are planned.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. We hope that you continue to really enjoy school and do very well with your work and carry on trying really hard.