

Newtown Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112599
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE
Inspection number	289336
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Robert Drew

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Woodgate
Headteacher	Mrs Claire Fisher
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2002
School address	Buxton Road New Mills Stockport Cheshire SK22 3JS
Telephone number	01663744358
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Newtown Primary is a smaller than average primary school, serving the village of New Mills in northwest Derbyshire. While the great majority of pupils are White British, a few come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Social and economic backgrounds are very mixed, but on balance disadvantaged. Attainment on entry to Reception is below that typical of children of this age. Nearly twice the national proportion of pupils has statements of special educational needs and learning difficulties or disabilities. The school holds a National Healthy Schools award. The current headteacher has been in post two terms.

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 and improving school. It is well run, provides pupils with good teaching and ensures very effective personal development.

Pupils enter the Foundation Stage with significant shortcomings in learning and personal skills. Good provision and effective teaching help them to learn quickly and make good progress. In Key Stage 1 they continue to progress well and attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science. These strengths continue into Key Stage 2 where teaching is good overall and sometimes excellent. Areas of previous weaknesses in core subjects have been successfully dealt with so that Year 6 standards in English are now well above national levels, those in mathematics above average, and standards in science are average. Overall, pupils' achievement between entering and leaving the school is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress. Boys' writing in Key Stage 1, while satisfactory, falls short of the school's overall performance.

Personal development is good. Pupils show an excellent level of enjoyment of school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with pupils growing increasingly mature, reflective and confident. The school's award for health promotion is well deserved and pupils show a clear awareness of personal health issues and safety. They contribute well to supporting others in school and in the wider community. Preparation for their future economic well-being is good. Attendance has risen to match the national average. Teaching and learning are good. Positive relationships underpin lessons. In the outstanding teaching seen, pace is very strong, provision for the most able consistently challenging and the level of pupils' participation is strong. Planning in some lessons leads to a more modest pace and less active involvement of pupils.

The good curriculum and effective care, guidance and support provided by the school promote personal development well. The range of learning activities is wide and carefully designed to meet the needs of the many pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Extra-curricular provision is very good and in sport it is outstanding. There is good provision in music and art with heavy participation in local festivals. Overall, pupils gain innumerable opportunities to take initiative and gain new experiences, especially through educational visits. In many of these areas the school's good links with other schools and community groups contribute positively.

Underpinning all these strengths are effective leadership and management. The headteacher leads extremely well, both by example and by providing vision and clear priorities. School self-evaluation is good. Despite some long term staff absences, skilful management has allowed continuity for pupils to be re-established and many important improvements achieved. New strategies and a new focus on boys' writing standards have had some success and challenge for able pupils has been better. This has led to many more gaining high levels in Key Stage 2 this summer. Some subject leadership is good, but its quality in different subjects is not yet consistent. The governing body supports and challenges the school's leaders well. Parents rightly express very favourable views of the school. Value for money is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of writing in Key Stage 1 to ensure more boys reach the higher levels.
- Ensure that all subjects come to have the same good quality of leadership and management seen in those which have been made a priority.

- Ensure there is more outstanding teaching, by providing the challenge for able pupils, strong pace and clear structure seen in the best lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils in this school achieve well. They enter with below average standards and leave with standards which are above average overall. Pupils from all backgrounds, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make good progress. The Foundation Stage gives pupils a good start, countering many of their initial shortcomings in learning and social skills. Further good progress is made in Key Stages 1 and 2. Results for the current Year 2 and Year 6 are above average. In Year 2, reading, mathematics and science are all above average, with a greater proportion than nationally gaining the higher levels. Writing has improved dramatically to reach average standards but too few pupils, especially boys, gain the higher levels. In Year 6, English standards are well above average, those in mathematics above average and science levels match national ones. This marked improvement on 2006 results reflects the impact of stabilising staffing in Year 2, good teaching for older pupils and more focus from all staff on using assessment to support effective lesson planning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good. Pupils behave well and are positive about school. Some pupils are very mature while a few show challenging behaviour which staff manage well. The general level of enjoyment by pupils is excellent, both in lessons and at play times. Their understanding of personal safety and healthy lifestyles is good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good, with pupils able to reflect, notice the needs of others and willing to take up responsibilities. Pupils improve their awareness of others through supporting charities and taking part in local festivals. Visitors to school and events such as the creativity week enhance their understanding of cultures other than their own. An impressive range of sporting and musical extra-curricular provision, as well as visits, gives pupils invaluable opportunities to develop personal confidence and skills. The school council fosters responsibility and service and has a good track record of contributing to improving school life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, enabling pupils to make good progress. There is evidence of excellent practice where the pace of learning is exceptional and pupils are so deeply engaged in enjoyable work that they do not want the lessons to stop. Teaching assistants are particularly well briefed and involved in these lessons and generally play a helpful role. Teaching typically involves a consistent approach to behaviour management, effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and some further challenge for able pupils. Where teaching is good but not outstanding there is less emphasis on pace and longer periods in which pupils are less directly involved. Teaching and learning are particularly effective in many aspects of English, in information and communication technology (ICT), physical education and art. The strategies used to help boys reach higher standards in writing at Key Stage 1 are having some effect but are not yet resulting in sufficient high level work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is good. It offers a wide range of subjects for such a small school, including modern languages in all years and more time for physical education than usual. Music and ICT are important aspects of the curriculum in this school. The large proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities benefits from effective modifications of the curriculum which match their needs well. Some non-core subjects, such as geography and history await review and improved provision in line with school development plans. The curriculum is very effectively enhanced by educational visits and an excellent programme of sporting activities and good music tuition.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school exploits its small size by getting to know each pupil very well. It responds effectively to their day to day and longer term needs. Requirements to ensure pupils' safety are met and considerable effort has led to attendance levels rising to match the national average. Pupils joining the school settle quickly and good transfer arrangements help them move to secondary schools easily. The support systems for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities involve parents extensively and are well organised; these pupils' specific needs and targets are regularly updated and staff kept up to date. The monitoring of their personal needs is excellent and has a very beneficial effect on their progress and personal development. There is less explicit provision and support for gifted and talented pupils. The tracking of all pupils' academic progress is done well, with extensive data used wisely to guide teachers in their support and challenge for pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The new headteacher is providing excellent direction and fresh challenge for the school. This is evident in several new developments focused on improving good teaching still further. For instance, teaching assistants have acquired greater prominence and clarity about their role. Monitoring of teaching, while still limited in extent, has led to better pace and improved use of objectives in most lessons. Discontinuity in staff had hindered improvement in recent years, but this has been largely countered by good staffing decisions from the headteacher and governors. An early result of these changes has been the sharp rise in standards and achievement at both key stages this summer. Subject leadership is satisfactory overall. Several key subjects are led well, but the school rightly sees a need for improvement in the leadership and management of others. Governors know their school well and provide strong support and guidance. The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate. The capacity for improvement is good: it has already been demonstrated and is continuing to improve.

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Annex A

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?	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	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	1
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.

Annex A

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	2
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

9 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Newtown Primary School, New Mills, Derbyshire SK22 3JS

Thank you for making me welcome during the recent inspection. I very much enjoyed my visit.

Many things are working well at the school and some of its work is outstanding.

- You are making good progress in your subjects.
- Standards are above average and still getting better.
- Teaching is good and sometimes excellent.
- Your attitudes and behaviour are good.
- There is a good range of clubs and visits for you and the sports activity programme is excellent.
- Your headteacher leads the school extremely well.

If the school is to become even better in the future it should:

- make sure more lessons are like the best ones I saw, full of activity and enjoyment, but very demanding;
- help more boys in Key Stage 1 achieve the highest levels in writing;
- make sure that the teachers develop all subjects equally well across the school.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Robert Drew

Inspector