

Dee Point Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111218
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	295375
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2007
Reporting inspector	George Crowther

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms T Coathupe
Headteacher	Mr Dave Williams
Date of previous school inspection	29 March 2006
School address	Blacon Point Road Blacon Chester Cheshire CH1 5NF
Telephone number	01244 373072
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Dee Point is a smaller than average primary school. In the past seven years, the number of pupils has fallen from over 400 to 184 because much of the housing surrounding the school is being redeveloped. It serves an area of considerable social disadvantage. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Pupils' attainment when they start school is well below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds and none is at the early stage of learning English.

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 with many good features. In the very short period of time since the last inspection it has improved rapidly and significantly. It has taken outstanding leadership by the headteacher and senior staff and good teaching and learning to raise pupils' achievement from inadequate to satisfactory. Pupils' achievement is now good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory across the rest of the school. The headteacher, well supported by senior staff, has been single-minded in implementing measures to raise standards. Staff changes and high expectations have led to a far better quality of teaching and learning, which is reflected in lessons and pupils' work. There are clear signs that the school is continuing to improve rapidly. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

From a low starting point, children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because the teaching is good and a wide range of interesting, practical activities encourages them to be enthusiastic learners. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In lessons there is an improving picture because the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics are taught methodically and lessons are interesting and challenging. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Good teaching and lessons that focus strongly on what pupils need to learn next are helping to overcome a legacy of underachievement. Year 6 standards in English and mathematics, while better than last year, are still well below average and as yet are not high enough.

Pupils' personal development is good. The school provides a positive, friendly and caring environment in which pupils enjoy their learning. They try hard in lessons and behave well. Experiences in school help pupils to have a good grasp of how to be healthy and stay safe. They make good contributions to the school community, for example through the school council, and they say the staff listen to and act on their ideas. A good curriculum is enriched by many activities outside lessons. An increased emphasis on developing reading, writing and mathematics skills systematically has provided a more balanced curriculum, better matched to pupils' needs. As yet, however, these skills are not being used and developed sufficiently through work in subjects such as science, history and geography. Care, guidance and support for pupils are good.

Leadership and management are good. Outstanding leadership from the headteacher and key staff have been the key factor in the school's success. Accurate and realistic self-evaluation helps leaders to pinpoint exactly what needs to be done. Concerted and targeted action to raise pupils' achievement has already led to significant improvement, and there are clear signs that this will continue. The rapid progress already made gives the school a good capacity to improve further. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics across the school.
- Improve the ways in which pupils use and develop their basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics through work in a range of subjects, such as science, history and geography.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When children start school, standards are low. In the Nursery and Reception classes, a strong emphasis on making learning fun through practical activities helps children to make good progress, particularly in their personal skills. Nonetheless, by the time they join Year 1, most do not reach the levels expected of children of their age. By Year 2, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, with progress in lessons indicating an improving picture, particularly in the way pupils are now acquiring basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Year 6 national tests results in 2006 in English and mathematics were very low and measures of progress since Year 2 showed that many pupils had not done well enough. The school has taken strong action to improve achievement in Years 3 to 6, which is showing success. Good teaching is helping pupils to make good progress in most lessons. However, progress over time is satisfactory because many pupils are still catching up following weak progress in the past. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Across the school, although pupils' progress is accelerating, raising standards in English and mathematics is still a high priority. Pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make similar progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Many children start school with weak personal skills. By Year 6, most have positive attitudes to learning, are confident to express their views and contribute well to the school community. They enjoy being at school. A typical comment was: 'There are loads of interesting things to do in lessons and the teachers make them fun.' Pupils particularly enjoy the rich variety of activities, clubs and visits. Around the school, pupils are friendly, polite and well behaved. Relationships are very good. As one pupil, summing up the views of many, said: 'The teachers respect us and we respect the teachers.' Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Themes in assemblies, living by the school's positive behaviour rules, and finding out about other cultures all contribute to pupils' growing understanding of themselves and the wider world. Pupils have a good understanding of how to take care of themselves. They know that exercise and eating the right things are important for good health. They feel safe in school and recognise dangers out of school. Pupils have a very strong voice in school matters. The school council said: 'The teachers listen to us when you have something to say,' and this is reflected in the current debate about a new school logo. The current levels of basic skills in Year 6 are a satisfactory preparation for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good, occasionally outstanding teaching is enabling pupils to make good progress overall in lessons and begin to catch up following a legacy of inadequate progress. Lesson planning and teaching have a strong focus on ensuring that work is well matched to helping pupils take the next step in their learning. Teachers make good use of regular assessments to ensure that work is suitably challenging. Teachers also make lessons enjoyable and use a good variety of methods to help pupils learn. For example, Year 6 pupils enjoyed a game in which, if they could work out the answer to a fraction problem, they could trade their question with a partner. Both

teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for learning, often working with a small group, which helps pupils to do their best. Good relationships help teachers to organise and manage learning well, so that lessons move at a good pace and no time is lost. Occasionally, however, when pupils are working independently, teachers do not ensure that enough work is completed. Good systems for assessment and tracking pupils' progress help the school to improve achievement. For example, the school identifies groups of pupils for extra, targeted support, which has been successful in raising standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A well planned curriculum, with an outstanding range of additional activities, meets pupils' need successfully. Since the last inspection, a new curriculum plan has placed a far greater emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics more systematically. As a result, pupils are making much better progress in these subjects. As yet, pupils' basic skills are not used and developed sufficiently through work in subjects such as science, history and geography, but the school has plans to rectify this. Good links with the local high school enrich the curriculum, for example in the creative arts work with Years 3 and 4. Good support for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities helps them to be confident in their learning and make steady progress. Pupils' good personal development owes much to a strong programme of personal, social and health education. Almost all pupils attend one of the exceptional range of activities outside lessons, for example sports, music or gardening. The curriculum is also enriched by visits and residential experiences which strengthen pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Levels of care are outstanding and support for pupils' learning is good. Very positive relationships between staff, pupils and parents ensure that each pupil is happy and ready to learn. The school is particularly successful in supporting vulnerable pupils, both in the day-to-day life of the school and through the work of the learning mentor. Good procedures for safeguarding pupils from harm are implemented well. Pupils say they feel safe in school because, if they have a problem, the teachers look after them. If pupils need extra help, the school has good links with outside agencies. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for pupils' learning, both in lessons and through high quality intervention sessions. Pupils know their learning targets, but these are too general to support individual progress. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is strong on praise but does not include enough pointers to how pupils can improve. The school has good procedures for helping its pupils move from one stage of education to another.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's outstanding leadership, strongly supported by senior staff, has ensured that since the last inspection, many aspects of the school's work have improved significantly. Staff, governors and parents speak highly of his enthusiasm and commitment, which encourage everyone to share his clear vision for the future of the school. Leaders have an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and learning and frequent assessment of pupils' progress. As a result, action taken

to improve pupils' achievement is well targeted. For example, weaknesses in pupils' writing have been tackled through better teaching and by changing the pattern of lessons so that skills are developed more systematically. Pupils are making better progress because they learn new ways to improve their writing and then use them in a range of tasks. Subject leaders are taking a much more significant role in raising standards. Governors have played a good role in steering the improvement of the school. They have a perceptive view of what has been achieved and what still needs to be done. Parents' opinions of the school are very positive. The wider work of the school in the community, for example providing adult education and child care, is an important and successful part of its vision. Although leaders and managers have achieved much during the past year, they recognise that there is more to do to raise pupils' achievement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	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?	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	1
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	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

Inspection of Dee Point Primary School, Chester CH1 5NF

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school to find out how well you are doing. There are lots of good things about your school, but we also found a few ways in which it could be even better.

Your school has improved a lot during the past year and you are doing much better with your work. In particular, you have improved your writing and mathematics, but you still need to work hard on these skills because you are capable of even higher standards. The children in the Nursery and Reception classes are doing really well because they have lots of exciting activities to do. Your teachers are doing a good job and so you are learning more quickly than in the past. You say there are lots of interesting things to do in lessons, and we agree. The work your teachers are giving you is making you think hard, but it is usually good fun and you are keen to learn. You must try as hard as you can with your work, particularly when it is difficult. You know a lot about being healthy and we think the Tasty Tuck Shop is a good idea. The jobs you do in class and the school jobs the older children do help you to make a good contribution to your school. All the staff look after you very well and make sure you are happy and ready to learn. Your headteacher is doing an outstanding job in helping your school to get better, and all the staff are working hard to help him.

We would like you to work with your teachers to improve the way you learn.

- Your reading, writing and mathematics skills (basic skills) are still not as good as they could be. We have asked your teachers to continue to help you to improve these skills quickly. You will need to work hard in lessons.
- You do not use and develop your basic skills enough when you do work in subjects such as science, history and geography. We have asked your teachers to give you more chances to do this.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school.