

Dawley Brook Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103781
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	308419
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Ceri Morgan HMI

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	280
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Collier
Headteacher	Angela Hambrook
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2003
School address	Dubarry Avenue Valley Fields Kingswinford DY6 9BP
Telephone number	01384 818770
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Dawley Brook is an average size school that serves an area with low levels of socio-economic disadvantage. Class sizes are often well over 30 in the older year groups. The majority of pupils are from a White British background and currently no pupil is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. There are low proportions of pupils who are entitled to free school meals or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Dawley Brook is a happy school where good behaviour, an enthusiasm to learn and good relationships between pupils and adults have created a delightful atmosphere. However, the school's view of its own performance is slightly generous. The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory as pupils make adequate progress but the school has evaluated itself as being more effective than this. The school's response to any improvements required needs to be sharper if its effectiveness is to be improved to be better than satisfactory. School evaluation and the subsequent decision-making process are too informal at times. This has been the case for some time and a lack of rigour in monitoring the school's work has allowed an inconsistent pattern of achievement to continue, particularly in mathematics.

There is also much to be proud of, and the pupils and parents are overwhelmingly supportive of what the school is doing. The personal development and well-being of pupils are good, as is the wide range of extra-curricular activities such as visits and clubs. Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary. There is a genuine ethos in which the welfare of each pupil is important to adults and other pupils, and this is a particular strength. All these strengths are a result of the careful planning of the headteacher and a strong sense of teamwork.

There have also been some successes recently in gaining recognition for aspects of the school's work; for example, the school recently achieved the Healthy Schools award. Other current initiatives enrich the experiences of the pupils. A particularly good example of this is the recent development of work towards building an awareness of ecology and sustainability in school. The school has already received the silver award for its work in this area and has ambitious plans for the future.

Teaching is only satisfactory, although there are some examples of good practice. Teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and relationships are good throughout. The use of a wide range of resources, including new technology to stimulate pupils' interests, is commonplace and teachers' planning is detailed and up to date. Not all teaching, however, is matched carefully enough to the needs of the pupils. Where this is the case, pupils are allowed to move on in their learning at a comfortable level rather than being challenged to do as well as they can. This has contributed to the low numbers of pupils attaining the higher levels in national tests. A strong emphasis is placed on pupils' welfare, and teachers are increasingly accurate in their judgements about which levels pupils are working at. The use of assessment by teachers in their planning is now accurate, although more needs to be done to ensure that teaching is pitched at the right level for all pupils.

The lack of systematic and rigorous monitoring has led to inconsistencies in pupils' progress and in the quality of teaching. Although the school has now taken steps to improve this situation, it relies on informal monitoring and, as such, is slightly generous in judgements about how effective teaching is.

Lesson observations are not linked closely enough to the school's priorities or evaluated formally and, as a result, they lack a sharpness of judgement to help teachers know precisely how to develop their teaching. Future targets for school improvement, however, are increasingly ambitious although the school's own tracking shows a significant proportion of pupils in some year groups are still at risk of underachievement. The contribution of support staff in lessons is usually good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Overall, the Foundation Stage is good. The Nursery and Reception classrooms are bright and interesting, reflecting children's work well. A good induction process and the calm and happy atmosphere support the children in settling well into school. Teachers and teaching assistants provide stimulating and enjoyable activities that encourage the children to participate fully in their learning. The children are articulate and confident and this reflects the hard work and commitment of the Foundation Stage leader and her team. As a result of the good provision, children make strong progress during their time in the Foundation Stage and reach high standards. The tracking system ensures that all pupils have work planned for them that meets their individual needs on a daily basis, but long-term targets for progress are not set with a high enough challenge.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress pupils make, especially in mathematics.
- Increase the rigour and frequency of monitoring, especially with regard to the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making.
- Use assessment data more effectively to match teaching closely to all pupils' needs, improve the challenge for more able pupils and enhance strategic planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall although there has been some significant variation in the rate of progress made by pupils over the last three years. The progress made by some pupils over time has been below expectations, particularly in mathematics where it was well below expectations in 2007. The school has taken action to improve pupils' current progress in Years 3 to 6 to a level that is now adequate. Pupils enter school able to perform well and then make good progress up to age five. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory.

Standards reached by pupils are relatively high despite a gentle decline since 2005 by the end of Year 2. In 2007, around 90% of all pupils reached the required levels in national tests by the end of Year 6. The school has rightly identified performance in mathematics as a priority alongside improving writing skills across the school to match those of reading. Too few pupils reach the higher levels and girls perform better than boys, especially in literacy.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils are important to all in school and are good. Pupils behave very well and demonstrate very sensible attitudes to their work. The oldest pupils carry out a range of responsibilities effectively, such as being 'Play Pals' where they support younger pupils at lunchtime. They also diligently carry out other jobs around school. Pupils say they feel secure in school. They are rightly proud that they have helped make the school a safer and better place by reviewing security, carrying out activities such as litter picking, and improving the environment. School Council members accept responsibilities well and make decisions with great care.

Pupils do not consider bullying to be a problem and they are confident in the support of staff should any problems arise. Attendance is good although the school is rightly concerned about the increase in term time holidays. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to live healthy lives, and they benefit from a varied range of opportunities provided by the school for exercise. Their understanding of the multicultural society in which we live is well developed due to a good range of visits and thoughtful assemblies. Pupils are adequately prepared for their later education because they are developing satisfactory skills in literacy and information and communication technology (ICT). Further work needs to be done to ensure that skills are as well developed in mathematics and to give pupils more regular opportunities to research and find out for themselves.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Overall teaching is satisfactory. Teachers plan well and deliver lessons that are satisfactory, and sometimes good. The behaviour of the pupils is good and relationships between adults and pupils are very positive, resulting in a willingness to learn that is evident throughout the school. Accurate assessment of pupils' needs is improving but lacks rigour, leading to some lessons which lack challenge, especially for the more able. Some pupils find it difficult to articulate how to improve their learning or are unsure of the purpose of their tasks and, as a consequence, learning slows down and pupils do not then make good progress.

Where teaching is good, the learning objectives are clear and expectations of the pupils' achievements are explicit. Teachers set a brisk pace, use resources well and engage pupils' interest. In the best lessons, teaching assistants are active in all parts of the lesson, supporting pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets all statutory requirements and is broad and balanced. The headteacher and staff are building a curriculum that is more responsive to the needs of pupils and provides many enrichment activities such as visits to local places of worship. A particular strength is the work on environmental awareness that supports the pupils in gaining a strong awareness of the world around them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified quickly and action is taken to support their learning within the curriculum. The use of ICT is threaded throughout the curriculum and supports pupils well in their learning. The SEAL project is supporting the pupils effectively to gain understanding of their own and others' social needs. However, despite these strengths, the curriculum does not provide sufficient academic rigour for all learners and is judged satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are satisfactory. The academic guidance is not as strong as other aspects. Procedures for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their health and safety are good. Staff use discussion time well to dispel worries and ensure that pupils develop confidence. The very good relationships between adults and pupils help pupils to feel secure and settled. Parents speak highly of the way in which the school cares for their children.

A thorough assessment system has been introduced recently and is helping teachers to identify pupils who are at risk of underachieving. However, assessment information is not used consistently enough to plan well-matched work or to ensure that pupils are given clear guidance about how to improve their performance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership is satisfactory. The headteacher has established an ethos in which the care and personal well-being of pupils is central to all the school does. This has secured a positive atmosphere in school, with pupils feeling valued and well cared for. The progress made on the key issues from the previous inspection has been good. Recent changes to the way pupils are assessed are beginning to lead to improvements. This indicates a satisfactory capacity to improve. However, there has been too little attention to monitoring the academic progress the pupils make and the quality of teaching. In particular, the lack of any systematic monitoring by senior leaders has slowed the pace of school development. Governance is well organised, diligent and committed but relies too heavily on the views of the senior staff and is not focused enough on the progress pupils make. As a result, much of governors' undoubted hard work and commitment to the school has not yet had enough impact on standards and achievement.

There are examples of good subject leadership, for example in literacy and the support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with accurate views of the relative strengths and weaknesses and appropriate plans for the future. However, in some cases, subject leadership lacks rigour and is less secure because monitoring does not fully reflect the school's priorities. The school has completed a useful improvement plan but there is often too little action following various questionnaires and surveys and, as a consequence, the pace of change is sometimes slow. There are encouraging signs that senior leaders, in particular the headteacher, are taking action that shows a growing sense of ambition on behalf of the school.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	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?	3

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

8 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dawley Brook Primary School, Dudley, DY6 9BP

We would like to thank you for the welcome and politeness you showed to us when we visited your school recently as part of an inspection. In particular, we would like to thank those of you we spoke to and who shared their views with us.

It is clear that you enjoy school and feel lucky to attend a school with such a delightful atmosphere. You are right to think that this is partly due to the hard work of the adults in school but it is also due to your own good behaviour and positive attitudes.

We think that there is much to be proud of, for example the start the youngest children get to their education and the personal attention the adults show all of you. There is also a wide range of interesting and stimulating clubs and activities, such as visits, to help with your learning. We also think the school could improve in certain ways too.

We have asked those responsible for leading the school to do three things to help make it an even better place to learn. These are:

- to help you make more progress in mathematics and set higher challenges for those of you who learn quickly and can do harder work
- to check more regularly and thoroughly how well you are making progress and how well teaching is meeting your needs
- to make better use of information about your progress to pitch teaching at the right level and to support planning for the school's future development.

Once again, thank you for your help, and best wishes for the future.

Kind regards

Ceri Morgan Her Majesty's Inspector