

Dene House Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114200
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311512
Inspection dates	1–2 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Bannon

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	291
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Joe Williams
Headteacher	Mr Paul Lonsdale
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2004
School address	Manor Way Peterlee County Durham SR8 5RL
Telephone number	0191 5862937
Fax number	0191 5866809

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Dene House Primary is a larger than average size primary school. It was rebuilt on the site of the original school in 1998. It serves a very disadvantaged area in terms of its socio-economic character. A well above average proportion of pupils takes free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also well above average. Almost all pupils have a White British heritage. The school has the Investors in Children, Quality Mark, Achievement Awards and the Investors in People Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Dene House Primary is a good school. It is a welcoming place where staff, pupils and visitors are valued highly. Dedicated staff work very well together in good partnership with external agencies to create a happy and secure learning environment in which pupils develop well. Standards are average by the time pupils leave school. This indicates that pupils make good progress from their starting points in Reception, although some more able pupils could do a little better. Girls' standards are higher than those of boys but achievement for both groups is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make consistently good progress partly because of rigorous monitoring. Throughout the school, standards in reading are higher than in writing. The strong start pupils experience during the Foundation Stage contributes to their good personal development. The excellent relationships, outstanding planning and good teaching in the Reception classes help build self-esteem in children and a joy of learning.

The school's strong ethos of caring and its efforts in developing spiritual awareness and a clear sense of right and wrong help promote pupils' good behaviour. Furthermore, it has instilled within pupils a desire to enjoy school by making the most of the good opportunities to learn well. Pupils accept responsibility willingly and are eager to help the school run smoothly, such as by operating projectors in assembly. They mature into confident, caring young people who act safely and sensibly. They show a good awareness of what is needed to live a healthy life and be a good citizen.

Teaching is almost always good. It has its roots in a good curriculum that is enriched on a well-planned basis with visits and visiting speakers. Pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress, particularly when they are involved actively such as Year 5 pupils making the best parachute in science. Pupils have access to a wide range of resources and in most lessons receive good opportunities to develop skills that help them learn independently. Where they do not, they become less engaged and make less than the good progress normally seen. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very well matched to their individual needs, with teaching assistants supporting teachers well. The new headteacher has gained the respect of the staff with his calm, assured manner alongside the clear direction and support he has given. As a consequence, the staff work as an effective unit to maintain and further improve on the good achievement seen over many years. There is good capacity to improve because the school recognises what could be better and has good plans to manage this.

Governors are kept well informed about the school and are supportive. Returns to parents' questionnaires indicate high levels of satisfaction with the school. A typical comment was, 'I have full confidence in all school staff.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Good links with local nurseries ensure children settle quickly into the Reception classes. They start school with levels of development that are well below those typical for their age. Their communication, language development and social skills are particularly weak. However, teaching is good so children make good progress and achieve well. By the time they move into Year 1, many children, especially girls, reach the levels expected nationally although they remain below the expected levels in communication, language and literacy. Children are exceptionally well cared for in a very safe and supportive environment

where relationships are excellent. Staff use praise and rewards wisely so children experience success and develop self confidence. Children behave well, take responsibility for their actions and enjoy learning. Links with parents are good and they are appreciative of being kept well informed about school activities and their children's progress. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. Planning and organisation are meticulous. Staff work well together. Teachers and teaching assistants monitor children's progress carefully and give good support to all, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so they achieve well. The school recognises that the outdoor classroom facilities can be developed further to maximise children's opportunities for learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop skills to learn independently.
- Raise standards further by the end of Year 6, particularly those of the most able pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school with standards that are well below those typical for their age. They make good progress throughout the school to reach broadly average standards by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. In 2007, pupils made good progress by the end of Year 2. In 2007, Year 6 pupils reached broadly average standards in national tests for English, mathematics and science. This showed good progress from their starting points in Reception. The school exceeded all its targets apart from that for the higher Level 5 in mathematics. Standards for Year 6 pupils in all these subjects have risen faster than the national trend over the last four years. Girls' standards are higher than those of boys because they started from a higher baseline. Achievement is good for boys and girls.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of very good additional support and guidance that is tailored to their needs. The most able pupils sometimes make no more than satisfactory progress because challenge in lessons for these pupils is less consistent. Pupils now in Year 6 are on course to meet their challenging targets. Throughout the school standards in reading are higher than in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils behave well and often show excellent attitudes to learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are strengths of the school. For example, pupils respond exceptionally well to the headteacher's assemblies, which are consistently based on moral guidance and in which pupils play a very active role. Pupils enjoy being at school because 'lessons are fun' and they see themselves as members of a close-knit community. They act in a safe and sensible manner in and out of the classroom and many respond well to the school's efforts to promote a healthy diet. Pupils accept responsibility willingly. They act as monitors, take a strong interest in the school council and partake regularly in school drama productions for the community. They enjoy organising fund raising activities. They are developing well for the next stage of their learning and have a good understanding of what it is to be a good citizen. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and, as a result, pupils achieve well. Teachers plan lessons carefully, explain tasks and concepts clearly and have high expectations of their pupils. Classes are managed very well and relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. Pupils respond really well to the good teaching they receive. Most work hard, are keen to answer questions and have a real enthusiasm for learning. Teachers make good use of varied teaching methods and a range of resources, including information and communication technology, to engage the interest of their pupils. In a minority of lessons, where teachers talk for too long and pupils have fewer opportunities to learn independently, pupils can become restless and their pace of learning slows down.

Work is marked regularly and clearly focussed assessments in English, mathematics and science are helping pupils to make good progress. Work is well matched to the needs of most learners except for some more able pupils who are not always sufficiently challenged to achieve their very best. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in lessons because they receive very constructive help and encouragement from teachers and teaching assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of all pupils well. Pupils' learning is enriched by a wide range of visits and visiting speakers. This provision is evaluated by the school and identifies the positive effect it has on pupils' personal development. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who receive very good support from teachers and from well deployed teaching assistants, is a strength of the school. Provision for literacy and numeracy is good and the recent purchase of new information and communication technology equipment ensures pupils' computer skills are also developed well. A comprehensive personal, social, health and citizenship education programme makes a good contribution to pupils' understanding of how to stay safe and healthy and the importance of being good citizens.

Boys and girls enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities including football and cookery clubs and are particularly enthusiastic about camping and outdoor activities trips. Good use is made of specialist teachers to give pupils lessons in subjects such as dance and French. The curriculum is reviewed regularly and the school is keen to develop it further by planning closer links between subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Highly committed staff work hard and successfully to promote the personal development of pupils. The school makes effective use of external agencies to support all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable. The school's focus on attendance and punctuality has improved these areas. Systems to support and guide pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very effective and promote good achievement. There is rigorous monitoring of these pupils and information is used to ensure that their individual needs are well met. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are in place.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. It is clearly improving as a result of a strong focus on marking and assessment. The best practice uses success criteria which are shared with and understood by the pupils. The older pupils in particular are improving their personal development by assessing their own work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher has won the confidence of staff and ensured that the school works in unison to promote a good education for its pupils. He, along with the senior leaders, has set clear direction for improvement, such as the focus on marking and assessment which was an issue at the previous inspection. Almost all teachers have extra responsibility, usually for a subject area and are accountable for all aspects of the development of this area. Middle leaders are innovative, keen to improve things and monitor and evaluate the performance of their subjects rigorously. This is working well in bringing about good achievement. Resources are deployed effectively and the school has strong links with partner institutions. Responses from the parents' questionnaires indicate good levels of satisfaction with the school.

Governors are committed and supportive of the school. The areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been addressed successfully. The school is well placed to improve further.

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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
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 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	3
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	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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

3 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dene House Primary School, Durham, SR8 5RL

I am writing to let you know why the inspection team considers that Dene House is a good school and to thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited you recently. It was a great pleasure for us to see how well you all get on together.

From the Reception class up to Year 6 you enjoy school, work hard and care for each other. It is easy to see why you learn so well and make good progress. Everyone at the school is proud of you and also you are proud of your school. Your behaviour is good and in some lessons you show a wonderful enthusiasm. This is one of the reasons you learn so well. You have fun in lessons yet act sensibly. Your school is a delightful and safe place where you work well together and prepare well for your future. Your school council is taken seriously by you and your teachers and plays an important role in making your views known. We think your personal qualities are good.

You think teaching is fun. We agree. It is well planned and the interesting activities and visits and visiting speakers help you learn well and do well in tests. Your teachers and all the other staff look after you well and are there if ever you need to talk to them.

Even though your school is a good one, your teachers want it to become better still. They will be concentrating on two things to improve the school even more. One is to give you more opportunities to decide how you might find out information without being told how to do it. The other is to keep on improving how well you do in the Year 6 tests, particularly some of you at the higher levels who could do even better. You can help them to do this by continuing to work hard and being determined to do the very best that you are capable of.

Thank you again for your courtesy and friendliness. You made our two days interesting and enjoyable. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Peter Bannon

Lead inspector