

Denfield Park Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121942
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314158
Inspection dates	12–13 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Alison Cartlidge

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vaughn Caradice
Headteacher	Angela Griffiths
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	Victoria Road Rushden NN10 0DA
Telephone number	01933 355961
Fax number	01933 412862

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with an above-average proportion of pupils being entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The distribution of these pupils is not even through the school. An eight-place designated special provision for pupils with autism opened at the school in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Denfield Park is a good school where pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The headteacher, other members of staff and governors are committed towards whole school development and the raising of standards. Whilst standards vary at the end of Year 6, they are broadly average overall and pupils' achievement is good from their differing starting points. Pupils' standards are higher in reading than in writing because they have very good opportunities to develop reading skills when working in the newly refurbished library. Whilst writing skills are taught well in literacy lessons, pupils have too few opportunities to practise what they have learnt when writing in science, geography and history and this means they do not all improve their writing as quickly as they could. Good teaching, including for those in the autism unit, meets pupils' differing needs well in most lessons, enabling them to make good progress. Well-trained learning support assistants provide valuable help for small groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, enabling them to be included in all aspects of school life.

Throughout the school, dedicated members of staff put the pupils first. They provide good care, guidance and support, especially for pupils' pastoral needs and, as a result, pupils become well-rounded individuals. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and help them to become thoughtful and very well behaved. Pupils are very proud of their school and thoroughly enjoy all it offers them. They are very eager to please and become responsible young individuals. They work together sensibly and help each other and those from the wider community exceptionally well. Teachers mark pupils' work frequently, although there are occasions when they do not show them clearly enough what they need to do to improve.

Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is a particular strength of the school and the good curriculum includes plenty of opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills in different subjects. There are good additional activities such as visits and clubs. These, together with good opportunities for pupils to develop life skills, help them to learn how to stay safe and healthy. The curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Good leadership and management ensure that the school continues to improve. The headteacher leads other senior managers in focusing on raising standards and consequently pupils' progress has improved year on year. Recently improved systems for monitoring the pupils' learning are helping to identify dips in progress more quickly and to provide support for individual pupils. The school is aware that this information could be used even more rigorously to check that all groups of pupils do consistently well in all classes and subjects. The school's good capacity to improve is evident in its success in tackling weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection.

Most parents are pleased that their children come to this school. They make positive comments reflecting the key strengths of the school, such as, 'I find all staff are supportive and have the children's welfare and schooling well in hand' and 'Overall, a lovely school'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing by providing pupils with greater opportunities to write purposefully across the curriculum.
- Ensure that teachers use marking consistently well to help pupils know how to improve their work.

- Compare the progress of groups of pupils more rigorously to ensure even provision across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good, although standards vary between year groups depending on the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in most years. The rate of progress has been improving over the last few years and pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science. Progress in reading is a particular strength because the school has recently improved the library and pupils have many opportunities to extend their skills. Standards in writing lag behind those in reading, and the school has identified correctly the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to write purposefully in science, history and geography.

Good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those in the autism unit, helps these pupils to make good progress towards targets in their individual education plans. Teachers match work to differing needs well so that all pupils achieve successfully. The school sets and achieves challenging targets for the end of Year 6 and is developing even more challenging targets throughout the school to ensure consistently good progress is made in all classes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are exceptionally polite and friendly and behave very well throughout the school day. They are very keen to learn and typically say, 'We do not just learn, we learn in a fun way.' Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those in the DSP, behave well, enabling them to take a full part in all school activities.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils learn the difference between right and wrong very quickly and follow the school 'PROUD' code. They care for each other exceptionally well and ensure that no one feels left out. They have a highly developed understanding of moral dilemmas. For example, pupils in Year 4 debated maturely what course of action they should take if they witnessed a theft. The depth of pupils' knowledge of cultures other than their own is not as extensive as other aspects of their personal development.

The broadly average rates of attendance are due to some parents taking their children on term-time holidays and do not accurately reflect how much pupils enjoy attending this school. Pupils' enthusiasm is evident in their very good participation in additional activities such as clubs and the way they speak so positively about the school.

Pupils have an excellent knowledge of how to stay safe and healthy and follow this advice sensibly. Pupils make healthy choices about what to eat and participate enthusiastically in physical activity. Pupils learn about how to avoid dangers outside school and move around the school safely. They become responsible young citizens who contribute very well to the community by selecting and supporting charities and taking part in school decision making. For example, the school council took a leading role in developing the trim trail. Pupils develop a breadth of valuable life skills, including good self-esteem and relationships, and these together with the good progress they make in developing basic skills prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and make good use of resources such as the interactive whiteboards to enhance learning across the curriculum. For example, one pupil commented positively on its use at the start of mathematics lessons by saying, 'The games help to wake us up'. Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach and command the respect of pupils by forming good relationships with them. Teachers use 'talk partners' to involve all pupils in lessons and most activities are purposeful. Clear explanations enable pupils to tackle their work with confidence. Learning support assistants are prepared well and provide sensitive guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those from the autism unit.

All teachers mark pupils' work and praise them when they have tried hard, although they do not always provide clear enough advice on how they could improve next time to involve them more fully in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A well-planned curriculum helps pupils to build on what they have already learnt, although a lack of space in some classrooms can limit the extent of practical activities. Setting according to ability and special support groups in English and mathematics enable pupils, to have their differing needs met. A focus on developing the use of ICT across the curriculum has resulted in pupils improving their skills well. However, opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in different subjects are less well developed. This slows the pace at which skills can improve and pupils' written work does not always reflect their good subject knowledge.

Enrichment of the curriculum is good and educational visits are successful in extending the pupils' experience of the wider world and help them to learn about staying safe and healthy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are right to praise the excellent way in which the school supports pupils' personal and social needs. One parent expressed the views of others by saying, 'Everything is done with the children in mind.' All members of staff are deeply committed to the care of their pupils, helping to make this a very happy school where pupils are keen to do their best. Pupils are very confident that their needs are safeguarded and that they will always get help if they have any problems. The school works closely with external agencies to support pupils when necessary.

The school has developed thorough systems for assessing pupils' progress in English and mathematics. Senior leaders are aware that teachers do not always use this information fully to ensure that work builds on pupils' differing starting points. Pupils know their targets, although these are not always specific enough to make it easy to measure success. Pupils in the autism unit receive good support towards the targets set in their individual education plans. This also applies to those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the rest of the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The dynamic headteacher provides a strong lead in whole-school development and, together with other members of staff, is clearly focused on improving provision and standards. The school runs smoothly and provides a calm and welcoming haven for pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a strong sense of community and a determination to do the best for the pupils. There are good links with parents and outside agencies and these are especially successful in supporting the pupils' outstanding personal development.

The school's systems for self-evaluation are good. There is a shared and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. Subject leaders are involved well in monitoring provision. They check the progress of individual pupils well and are aware that they now need to monitor groups of pupils more closely to ensure that they all make even progress across the school. The school has improved since the last inspection and shows that it has a good capacity to improve further based on an increase in pupils' progress and improved provision, especially for reading and ICT. Governors are knowledgeable about whole-school developments and make good use of the school's resources to raise standards.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	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	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

Dear Children,

Inspection of Denfield Park Junior School, Northampton NN10 0DA

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for sharing your work with us. Your school provides you with a good education. Here are some points about your school:

- You make good progress and reach average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you have a brilliant understanding of how to stay safe and healthy.
- You are very polite and friendly and follow your 'PROUD' rules very well.
- You take responsibility well. The school council is doing a good job in helping the school to improve.
- Teaching is good. Teachers are especially good at making lessons interesting so that you enjoy your work.
- You study a good range of interesting things and go on exciting visits.
- The adults in the school care for you well and help you when you are finding your work hard.
- Your headteacher, other teachers and governors know how to make your school even better.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Help you to improve your writing by giving you more opportunities to write purposefully in science, history and geography.
- Ensure that teachers' marking always shows you clearly how to improve your work.
- Check carefully that all groups of pupils make the same good progress in each class and subject.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you about your work and watching you learn. We are glad that you enjoy coming to this friendly school and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Cartlidge Lead inspector

14 February 2008



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