

Drayton Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130254
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	315603
Inspection dates	1–2 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Keith Williams

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	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Lisa Alexander
Headteacher	Mrs Caroline Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2002
School address	Bala Way off Drayton Road Bletchley Milton Keynes MK2 3HJ
Telephone number	01908 375137
Fax number	01908 645058

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves an area of significant deprivation. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, the largest groups being those of White British and Bangladeshi heritage. Above average proportions are eligible for free school meals, learn English as an additional language or are identified with learning difficulties. The proportion who change schools at other than the usual times is well above that usually found. The school has healthy school status. The headteacher joined the school at the beginning of the current term. It was previously led by two interim headteachers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with legislation, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' standards and achievement.

The legacy of low standards and underachievement is a direct result of a period of weak provision in Key Stage 2, together with the inadequate tracking of pupils' progress. The interim leadership successfully improved the climate for learning, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to work. In addition, the appointment of new staff in Key Stage 2 has meant that pupils are increasingly receiving better teaching. As a result, the rate of progress in lessons is accelerating, and is often good. Even so, the school's overall effectiveness remains inadequate because gaps in pupils' learning mean that too many are underachieving. This is reflected in the national test results for Year 6 pupils, which have been exceptionally low for some years and reflect inadequate achievement. Close examination of the school's data, and pupils' work, shows that those currently in Year 6 are on track to achieve better results than in recent years, particularly in writing.

The school's leaders are tackling weaknesses with determination. The new headteacher is ensuring that improving pupils' learning and raising standards remain at the forefront of the school's work. The focus has rightly been on raising standards of literacy and numeracy, and good assessment systems are now providing the necessary information about pupils' progress. Although it is too early for this to have had enough impact on pupils' achievement, the school can now identify those who are underachieving and is beginning to ensure that they get the help they need. Strong teaching in Years 5 and 6 and more robust tracking of pupil's progress have contributed to the rising standards amongst this group. Inroads have been made into pupils' underachievement, but there are still too many who are failing to reach their targets, and standards remain too low. The school is not complacent. While the emphasis on literacy and numeracy continues, the leaders recognise the need to extend their work beyond these subjects, for example to science, where standards, too, are exceptionally low.

One of the reasons why the school is improving is the successful promotion of pupils' personal development. Pupils say they enjoy school and appreciate the improvements that have been made to the now satisfactory curriculum. Their enjoyment is evident in most lessons and is reflected in a rising attendance rate that is close to the national average. Their willingness to learn, coupled with improvements to teaching, account for pupils' improved progress in lessons, but the leaders recognise there is still much to do. Whilst teaching is improving, and is satisfactory overall, inconsistencies remain in the quality of marking and the expectations placed on pupils. Pupils generally understand their class and group targets, but are sometimes unsure about what precisely they need to do to improve their work. Good steps have been taken to ensure that literacy and numeracy leaders keep a close check on teaching and learning. Systems in other subjects are not sufficiently developed. Recent improvements show there is good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start school with well below average skills, especially their speaking, listening and personal and social development. They make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage, although fewer than usual reach the goals expected of them by the end of Reception. The school's strong emphasis on pupils' social development starts well in the Nursery and Reception classes and, as a result, children generally behave well. Consequently, they are beginning to understand how to co-operate, play well together and are better prepared for their learning. Planning takes appropriate account of children's widely differing needs. Staff work well together as a team, keep a close check on children's progress, interact, and participate well in their work and play. The outdoor area has recently been resurfaced and is not yet developed. Staff have suitable plans to extend and improve this aspect of the provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and increase pupils' achievement, particularly in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2.
- Improve the quality of the teaching to the level of the best by ensuring that expectations are high and pupils are challenged in all lessons.
- Ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of how they should improve.
- Ensure all subject leaders are more effective in improving teaching, learning and assessment in their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

By the end of Year 2, standards are below average. Whilst the achievement of most pupils in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory, significant weaknesses in basic skills hold back their learning. These weaknesses are beginning to be tackled through a more systematic approach to the teaching of letters and sounds. By the end of Year 6, standards are exceptionally low and, over time, pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2 has been inadequate. Their progress in lessons is accelerating, and it is often good because of increasing amounts of good teaching. However, the legacy of previous underachievement remains and, despite recent improvements, standards in English, mathematics and science are too low. There is no significant variation in the achievement of different groups of pupils. Test data show that pupils learning English as an additional language sometimes make better progress than other pupils, for example in mathematics, although their achievement is still too low.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is a direct result of efforts to develop a strong community spirit and improve behaviour. They understand the importance of making healthy choices. A younger pupil noted, 'I don't want you to think I eat bananas just because I like them ...it also helps me to have a balanced diet...and that is really important!' School councillors take their responsibilities seriously and are proud of their work as 'peer mentors' and 'playground buddies'. Pupils enjoy practical ways of working and cooperate well in small groups and pairs because, 'We can test each other out and learn from our mistakes'. They usually try hard and concentrate well, although they become restless when asked to sit on the

carpet for too long. Recent improvements in the progress of Year 5 and 6 pupils, and the opportunities they have to develop enterprise skills, mean that they are now adequately prepared for the future. Attendance is improving each year because of good systems to raise parents' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Previous weaknesses in Key Stage 2 are being dealt with through staff changes and improved monitoring, but inconsistencies remain. The school leaders have rightly identified that the marking of pupils' work does not sufficiently identify their next steps in learning. A significant proportion of good teaching was seen during the inspection and, in these lessons, high expectations meant that those pupils capable of doing harder work had the chance to do so. Occasionally, however, pupils are given too little opportunity to take responsibility for their learning, for example by assessing their own work. Strong teaching in Years 5 and 6 has contributed to the improving picture. Good systems for assessing pupils' work in literacy and numeracy have been introduced, although this is not extended sufficiently beyond these subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Pupils appreciate that the range of opportunities provided by the school is increasing. Improvements to the planning of literacy and numeracy are beginning to raise standards. A new thematic approach is helping pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and computer skills in different and meaningful contexts, although this is not yet sufficiently established to have a marked impact on pupils' achievement. The planning does not always stretch those pupils who find learning easy and this limits their progress. Pupils' personal and social development is promoted well. A good range of sporting activities, residential visits and after-school clubs are thoroughly enjoyed by pupils and they are keen to attend. Enjoyable opportunities for pupils to learn Spanish have also been introduced. These enrichment activities have a positive impact on their confidence, self-esteem and attitudes to school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for and most parents are happy that the school is safe and secure. A few report concerns about behaviour, but inspectors found that pupils behave well. Their personal and social needs are given a high priority, particularly those who find it difficult to work alongside others or deal with difficult situations. Learning mentors support them well and help build their confidence and readiness to learn. Health and safety procedures and systems to check on the suitability of staff are secure. Pupils report that they would feel able to talk to staff if they were troubled and staff are suitably trained and know what they should do if they have any concerns. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well. Effective support for those new to learning English ensures that they make good progress in learning to speak the language. Academic progress is now tracked carefully in literacy and numeracy. Class and group targets are set, but pupils are not always aware of what precisely they need to do to improve their own work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher is making good progress in building on the work of the interim leadership. Although the leaders' view of some aspects of the school's work is too generous, they have a clear understanding of what needs to improve and how it can be achieved. Satisfactory, and improving, leadership of literacy and numeracy is helping to accelerate pupils' progress. Leaders are now much more aware of the extent of pupils' underachievement and how to put this right. The school has rightly identified the need to increase the impact of leaders in other subjects, in order to secure consistently good teaching and learning. Governors share the leaders' determination to raise standards, but recognise that they need to ask harder questions to hold the school to account and ensure rapid improvement. All pupils are valued. Equal opportunity for all is secured, but pupils' underachievement means that too many are not yet able to fulfil their potential. Until recently, too little progress had been made in raising standards. The leaders' successful efforts to improve behaviour, teaching and learning, show that this is beginning to have an impact and demonstrates good capacity 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?	4
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

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	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	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Drayton Park School, Milton Keynes, MK2 3HJ

I am writing to thank you for the friendly way you welcomed us into school for the recent inspection and to tell you about our findings. We enjoyed talking to you and your views and opinions have given us a lot of helpful information.

At the moment, the school is not doing as well as it should and needs to get better quickly. However, many things have improved recently and your new headteacher is determined that they will continue to get better. One of the most important changes is that you behave well. Well done to the peer mentors and playground buddies because you help to make the school a safe place. You behave well in lessons, too, and this means that your teachers are able to get on with the job of teaching you new things. Everyone is trying hard to learn well and we saw how hard you and your teachers are working in lessons. Please keep it up. Your work is beginning to improve, but there is still a long way to go.

Your headteacher and teachers are going to work hard to help you do your very best. We know that you will want to help them. There are more good lessons now than there used to be and your teachers are going to make sure that they get even better. They now keep a close check on your work in literacy and numeracy and we want them to do this in other subjects. We were pleased that so many of you know the 'learning intentions' in your lessons, and your class and group targets. We would like teachers to make sure that you know exactly what you have to do to improve your own work. You can help by reading what they write in your books very carefully and by listening carefully to their advice. The teachers who are in charge of subjects have their part to play, too, by making sure that you are learning well.

Once again, thank you for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed being in your school and we wish you good luck for the future. We know you will work with your teachers to help your school to improve.

Yours sincerely

Keith Williams

Lead inspector