

Pear Tree Community Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112727
Local Authority	City of Derby LA
Inspection number	321950
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Patricia Cox

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	284
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Maddie Oldershaw
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2007
School address	Pear Tree Street Derby Derbyshire DE23 8PN
Telephone number	01332 760610
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Age group	7-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated in a multicultural area of Derby. The proportion of pupils who are identified as needing some support with their learning is average but the proportion entitled to free school meals is high. Over 80% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, and about 70% have a first language other than English. The ethnic background of almost half of the pupils is from the Indian subcontinent, but there are increasing numbers of pupils from Eastern Europe and a few from Traveller families. There are 30 nationalities represented in the school and 22 languages. About a quarter of pupils join the school with little or no English, and some have had no previous experience of school. The proportion of pupils who leave or join at different times during their school career is high. Pupils' attainment on entry is exceptionally low.

The school was identified as requiring special measures in March 2006 because it was failing to give its pupils a satisfactory education and leadership and management were inadequate.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

This is because Pear Tree Junior is now a satisfactory school, giving satisfactory value for money. Although the school was slow to improve in the beginning, there has been good acceleration recently. The headteacher sets a clear educational direction and the assistant headteachers support her well. This senior leadership team has become competent and confident in making appropriate decisions for the school, based on an accurate evaluation of its effectiveness. The positive impact of several new initiatives has become apparent, demonstrating that the school is soundly placed to improve further. For example, the teaching of the pupils who are 'new to English' has been reorganised. Because the system is structured better and the teaching is lively and focused, these pupils are making good progress in acquiring the language and their attendance is improving.

There is a strong commitment to improvement among the staff and some have well-developed skills in leading and managing their subjects. The staff teams with responsibility for the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) mainly work effectively. The focused and effective work of the English team is a good example of the impact that teams can have. There is a good understanding of the pupils' needs in developing their language skills and several important measures have been taken. However, the school is at an early stage in developing the ability of other subject leaders to take responsibility for standards in the other subjects. The headteacher, with the support of the local authority, has been determined in improving the quality of teaching, which is now satisfactory. The inadequate teaching has been eliminated and much is now good and occasionally outstanding. New resources, such as the interactive whiteboards, have helped the staff to make lessons more interesting. They often use the school's detailed assessment systems to set work at the right level for the range of ability in their classes, although this is not yet consistent. Expectations of what the pupils can achieve are rising but are not yet high enough. Nevertheless, they are making adequate progress from their starting points.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, although some underachievement remains, particularly among the more able. Standards are extremely low, particularly in speaking skills, writing and science. Another legacy is the pupils' underdeveloped learning skills. They are unused to taking responsibility for their learning and tend to be over-reliant on adults. Pupils enjoy school and really appreciate the recent developments in the curriculum, where links have been formed between subjects. These improvements are at an early stage but have already helped to ensure that pupils use and develop their skills across the curriculum. The school takes good personal care of them and provides them with satisfactory academic guidance. Consequently, their personal development is satisfactory. They behave well in lessons, although pupils are often rather passive, and their behaviour around school and in the playground is satisfactory. There are encouraging signs that some are taking a more active role in school life, particularly through the school council. Pupils' personal development and their satisfactory progress prepares them soundly for the next stage of their education and their future lives.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in speaking and listening, writing and science, and for the more able, by raising expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensuring that the tasks set meet their wide-ranging needs.
- Improve the leadership and management skills of subject leaders so that they take full responsibility for standards in their subjects.
- Develop pupils' personal skills so that they take a more active part in lessons and school life, and take responsibility for their own learning.
- Build on the work already started to develop links across subjects that will make the curriculum more meaningful to pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although achievement is satisfactory, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard is much lower than the national average. The more able pupils often do not make sufficient progress because they are not always challenged enough, and therefore few reach average or higher standards. Standards are exceptionally low overall, especially in writing, where the boys have consistently done better than the girls. The strongest subject is mathematics, where pupils' lack of fluency in English has had less impact, although many pupils struggle to use and apply their mathematical knowledge. Limited spoken and written English is also hampering many pupils' progress in many other subjects, for example in science and history. Nevertheless, developments in teaching are accelerating pupils' acquisition of the language.

Standards in ICT have risen considerably as a result of much enhanced facilities, sound leadership of the subject and teachers' developing expertise. However, the school is unable to measure the improvement because there are no methods for assessing standards in ICT. The pupils who need additional support make satisfactory progress overall. However, there are times when the work is too difficult for them and they only complete the task because they have support. The achievement of pupils from different ethnic groups is generally similar, although some of those from Eastern European backgrounds make slower progress because their attendance is erratic.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, with particular strengths in their moral and social development. They have a strong sense of fair play and are often supportive of each other's success. There are good relationships between pupils of all ethnic groups and with adults. Instances of racist abuse are minor and relatively rare. Although the school does all that it can to ensure that pupils attend regularly, overall attendance rates are well below average. Rates are particularly affected by the number of pupils who leave and cannot be removed from the register until the school discovers their whereabouts. Pupils have a sound understanding of a healthy lifestyle and know how to keep themselves safe. While behaviour in class is generally good, some pupils rarely volunteer to answer questions. Many are too boisterous around school and in the playground, but overall behaviour is satisfactory. Pupils say that there is little bullying and if it occurs they are confident that the staff would deal with it effectively.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

As they become more skilful and confident, teachers' use of ICT is growing and this is helping them to spice up their teaching and accommodate pupils' preferred way of learning. There is a very clear promotion of their enjoyment of learning. Classrooms provide increasingly bright and vibrant learning environments, working relationships are close and teachers manage pupils' behaviour consistently well. Teaching assistants also make a sound contribution by supporting those who find learning more difficult or whose first language is not English. This support contributes to pupils' steady progress. The better teaching is enthusiastic and is organised extremely well, using a wide range of interesting strategies to interest and motivate pupils. Where teaching is weaker, lessons lack this vibrancy, the pace of learning is slower and work is not as closely matched to pupils' needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school is introducing a more individual curriculum, while maintaining a highly appropriate focus on the development of pupils' basic skills in English, mathematics and ICT. In addition, the school is providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their speaking and listening skills. Other skills, particularly those in reading, writing and ICT, are being promoted through increasingly strong cross-curricular links. For example, the topic 'Chocolate' recently provided Year 4 pupils with opportunities to practise their reading, writing and research skills. In addition, they also learnt about the Aztecs and important issues such as environmental awareness and the fair trade of raw materials. The school is adding interest to the curriculum, for example through contributions from specialists such as visiting art and drama teachers. There is a satisfactory range of intervention programmes for pupils who are falling behind or those who find learning difficult. The school is beginning to develop additional provision for the most able but this is at an early stage.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff provide good pastoral support, particularly for those at the early stages of learning English who join the school other than at the usual times. Pupils feel confident in turning to an adult for help or advice. The school promotes pupils' safety and welfare successfully. Risk assessments are carried out regularly and are acted upon. The school works well with outside agencies to monitor and support attendance, particularly with pupils who have not previously attended school on a regular basis. Good links have also been formed with many agencies that provide additional support, for example with the pupils from Traveller backgrounds. In addition, the school is increasingly reaching out to parents, and classes for those who wish to improve their own English are held in the school.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school's rigorous methods for tracking pupils' attainment and progress are used appropriately to identify pupils who need specific support. Pupils know at least some of their targets for reading, writing and mathematics and these are helping them to understand how well they are doing. Their work is marked regularly but teachers' use of written comments to highlight the next steps in learning is inconsistent. In the best practice,

pupils discuss their work with each other and their teachers, and act upon the advice they receive. In a small but significant proportion of lessons, pupils are not sufficiently aware what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of leadership and management is satisfactory. The assistant headteachers are developing their roles and responsibilities successfully and supporting the headteacher well. In developing their skills in scrutinising planning and pupils' work in English, mathematics and science, staff are becoming more aware of how they can bring about improvement in pupils' learning. The leadership team is monitoring teaching more rigorously and the analysis of pupils' performance is now providing a satisfactory basis for planning for improvement. The greater involvement of staff and governors in the process is enabling the school to identify priorities for improvement more effectively. Although these concentrate on raising standards and quality, success criteria do not focus sufficiently on rapid improvements in pupils' progress. In addition, too many priorities have been identified for the school to be able to pinpoint and tackle the most urgent.

The governing body is supportive of the school. Their role in challenging it has improved significantly as the result of much improved reports and information, and training from the local authority. The appointment of additional staff and re-organisation of classes to focus more closely on improving achievement is beginning to pay off.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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

12 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Pear Tree Junior School, Pear Tree Street, DE23 8PN

The last time your school was inspected, it needed to do a lot of things to improve and help you to make better progress. My colleagues and I have visited Pear Tree regularly to check whether those improvements have been made and have enjoyed meeting some of you a few times now. We want to thank all of you for being so friendly and for the way you've looked after us and talked to us all the times we've visited.

- We are very pleased to be able to tell you that we don't need to visit your school any more because it is now satisfactory. We thought you would like to know what we found out and what you could do to help your school to be even better.
- Your behaviour is satisfactory and it's good in class, but it could be better if you took a little more care when you move around the school. You said that you enjoy school and that your teachers are kind to you. We can see that lessons are much more interesting than they used to be and you're really enjoying having the interactive whiteboards. Your school looks so much brighter and more attractive.
- You are making satisfactory progress with your work but still need to do better, especially in speaking, writing and science. We've asked the school to help those of you who find learning easier to do better - some of you aren't doing as well as you could. You could help by trying even harder to do your best, and to answer your teacher's questions and by coming to school every day. We think some of you could be more independent and try to learn more for yourself.
- Your teachers are checking how well you are doing, and you have your targets in reading, writing and maths. We've asked them to do that in the other subjects so that you can do better in those too.
- Many activities are more interesting than they were and your teachers are making some good links between subjects. This is so that you can, for example, practise your writing more in other subjects or use the drama studio to act out stories from history. We want teachers to continue this approach.

With your help, the school can get better and better.

My best wishes

Pat Cox

Lead inspector