

Dowson Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106198
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	324348
Inspection dates	11–12 February 2009
Reporting inspector	David Law

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	470
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Plackett
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Rathburn
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Marlborough Road Hyde Cheshire SK14 5HU
Telephone number	0161 366 0177
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Dowson Primary is a much larger than average sized school housed on an extensive site. Early Years Foundation Stage provision includes a Nursery with 52 part-time places and 60 full-time places in two Reception Year classes. Children in this unit moved to a new building in January 2009. In preparation for the Foundation Stage unit opening, the whole school has been restructured into the Early Years Foundation Stage, lower school (Years 1 to 3) and upper school (Years 4 to 6). Every class in school was moved into their new location in December 2008. The Nursery first opened before this in September 2008. The school serves an area where social deprivation is average and the number of pupils in receipt of free school meals is below average. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Most pupils are of White British background and the proportion from minority ethnic groups is below average. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award, Activemark, a Local Authority Inclusion Award and British Cycling Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Dowson Primary School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Their academic achievement is satisfactory. The personal development of pupils is good; they enjoy school and develop positive attitudes. They feel safe, well cared for and have good opportunities to take part in a wide range of before and after-school activities. Pupils benefit from healthy snacks and understand the importance of exercise. They make a good contribution to the school community by carrying out various responsibilities. Behaviour is good and pupils learn to appreciate the feelings of others. Pupils are prepared for adult life as they learn to work cooperatively, but inconsistent progress in developing key skills, such as numeracy, hampers the achievement of some.

Children enter the Nursery with skills that are generally at levels expected for their age, although some have weaker language abilities and personal development. They settle well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress. Their welfare needs are particularly well provided for. Many children leave the Reception Year at levels above those typically expected. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average at the expected Level 2 but below at the higher level. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 1. Pupils' progress at Key Stage 2 is now satisfactory overall but in the past too many did not achieve well enough. Test results in 2007 were average in English, above average in science but below in mathematics. Provisional results for 2008 showed some improvement in English, due to the school's focused work on writing, although pupils continued to reach average standards. Although mathematics results also improved somewhat, standards remained below average and pupils made too little progress, having gaps in key skills and understanding. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory rather than good because pupils are not always challenged to achieve more. School leaders are now putting strategies in place which are tackling past underachievement at Key Stage 2. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The assistant headteachers and middle leaders make a valuable contribution. However, the monitoring and evaluation of the impact any actions have on raising achievement are not yet rigorous enough to guide school planning. Governors are an active presence in the school and governance is sound.

The school places great emphasis on pastoral care, and its partnerships to promote well-being are good. However, care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall rather than good because pupils are not given enough guidance about how to improve their work and the quality of marking is inconsistent. The curriculum is satisfactory. The school is addressing the need to raise achievement at Key Stage 2. Recent improvement in results and the good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage indicate that the capacity to make improvements is satisfactory, as is the improvement made since the previous inspection.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with broadly typical skills and make good progress because of the consistently good quality teaching provided within the stimulating and well resourced unit. Their skills on entry to Year 1 are mostly above those expected for their age. Adults listen well to children and respond creatively to their interests, for example in the very busy 'hairdressing salon' where children book appointments and have their hair styled by their friends. During such role-play adults help to extend children's thinking skills by careful questioning. Key workers support children in family groups for a number of learning

opportunities. Snack times are enjoyable and children learn about good manners, develop their conversational skills and happily take on responsibility. They contribute well to children's good personal development and well-being. Weekly welly walks', and frequent opportunities to develop children's cultural awareness, contribute well to their understanding of the wider world. For example, recent visitors during Chinese New Year taught the children tai chi and cooked authentic Chinese food for them to sample. Adults gather a wide range of information on children's learning during their 'VIP Week'. Parents, who contribute to this, say it is, 'brilliant because it gives us an opportunity to really see our child's progress'. Parents are fully involved in the good induction and transition procedures and they attend workshops on reading and mathematics in large numbers because, as they comment, they are, 'Great, with lots of good ideas to try at home!' Good leadership, management and teamwork among staff have ensured that the recent move to the new building has not disrupted children's good quality learning and development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Tackle underachievement and raise standards in mathematics.
- Ensure greater consistency in marking so pupils know how to improve their work.
- Base plans for school improvement firmly on raising achievement identified through rigorous monitoring and evaluation.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

At Key Stage 1, standards are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The unvalidated 2008 end of Year 2 assessments showed pupils exceeded the national expectation in reading, writing and mathematics but were below average at the higher level. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards are average in English and the 2008 provisional national test results for Year 6 pupils showed an improvement in this subject. A focus on developing pupils' writing skills contributed significantly to this and continues to make a positive impact throughout Key Stage 2. Pupils are showing a sound understanding of how to write for a range of purposes. In Year 6, standards in mathematics were below average in 2007 and, despite some improvement, in 2008. Currently, pupils in Years 5 and 6 are working at broadly average levels. This is because teaching is now focusing on progression in key number skills and is starting to address the gaps many pupils have. However, progress in mathematics across Key Stage 2 is not consistent in all classes and some pupils still are not achieving sufficiently well in this subject. Achievement for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. The support given by the learning mentors and teaching assistants makes a valuable contribution to their progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral and social development, is good overall. Their awareness of cultures other than their own is satisfactory. Behaviour is good in and around the school. Positive behaviour at lunchtimes is encouraged by an invitation to dine at the Captain's Table. Pupils are friendly, warm, open and welcoming. They have positive attitudes, are well motivated and enjoy learning. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils appreciate

the benefits of adopting healthy lifestyles and enjoy the food from the Diamond Dinner Salad Bar. As one young pupil explained, 'Potato skins have vitamins in and keep you healthy.' Most pupils say they feel safe, 'because teachers look after us', but some of the younger pupils feel there is some bullying. However, they said they knew who to turn to and were confident it would be dealt with. Pupils described how they wore 'funky shoes' during Anti-Bullying Week so that they could 'stamp out bullying'. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously and make decisions through, for example, the school council and the healthy action team. They raise money for a range of charities and visit a local residential home to sing for the residents and listen to their war-time memories. Pupils are suitably prepared for the next stage of education by their satisfactory acquisition of the basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Satisfactory teaching and learning mean that relationships are positive and pupils develop attitudes to learning that help them to concentrate and behave well in lessons. A programme of staff training in mathematics and literacy is helping teachers to develop their skills. Teachers and teaching assistants are working in teams to plan for pupils' learning. The most effective teaching is characterised by a lively pace that engages pupils with lessons organised to provide a range of activity. There is good use of talking partners, where pupils have to explain their thinking to their classmates. This is particularly effective in helping pupils to understand what they have learnt. In other lessons, there is not enough challenge and work is not sufficiently well matched to the abilities and needs of all pupils, particularly the most able. In some lessons pupils are unclear what they need to do to succeed. In some year groups, marking is good and helps pupils to understand what they need to do to improve, but overall it is inconsistent and does not provide them with enough guidance.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum enables pupils to achieve satisfactorily and promotes their personal development well. The timetable enables pupils to develop their key skills in literacy and numeracy adequately, although the concentration of some pupils flags during the long after-break time sessions in the morning. Pupils enjoy learning through information and communication technology (ICT) and this has a positive impact on their skills in this area. A good programme of health education develops pupils' understanding of staying fit and healthy. Pupils have opportunities to engage in practical activities and first-hand experiences which make learning more relevant and exciting for them. Special themed events, such as Eco Week, successfully link subjects such as literacy, art and environmental issues, drawing on the specialist talents of a visiting artist and a wood carver. Pupils are encouraged to care for the environment as they, for instance, plant trees and pick up litter. The curriculum is further enriched by a good range of well attended out-of-school clubs, visits to local museums and opportunities to sing to large audiences. This effectively extends their learning experiences and contributes significantly to their personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Although the pastoral care provided for pupils is good, the overall quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory because the academic guidance is less strong. Pupils are well cared for in a secure, friendly environment. Relationships are good and pupils say they feel safe and well looked after. Instances of bullying are rare and quickly dealt with when they occur. Pupils can express their concerns and know there is always an adult to help them. The systems to safeguard pupils' health, safety and well-being meet current requirements. The learning mentors provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the more vulnerable pupils and their families. This helps pupils to feel valued, builds their self-esteem and enables them to make the same, satisfactory, progress as their classmates. Parents very much appreciate the work of the Breakfast and All Stars After-School Club. The tracking and measuring of pupils' progress as they move through the school is not rigorous enough and marking systems are used inconsistently. Although there are some good comments to show pupils what they have done well, they are given too little guidance on how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides a clear direction for the work to promote pupils' good personal development and is strongly committed to their welfare. She has managed the school through a significant building programme, which has resulted in an effective Foundation Stage unit. Governors are active in the school and proud of what it does well. Underachievement at Key Stage 2 is now being tackled effectively and the rate of pupils' progress is quickening. However, the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of any actions is not robust enough. Although the school has set sufficiently challenging targets to raise standards, the improvement plan takes little account of them. Planning for improvement is not sharp enough and includes too few measurable outcomes against which progress can be judged. The assistant headteachers and subject leaders are making a useful contribution to improve teaching methods and raise achievement. Equality of opportunity and the understanding of diversity are promoted in a satisfactory way. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. Examples of this include increasing pupils' awareness of other cultures through links with schools in Africa and Brazil and numerous projects within the local community. The school has developed a range of extended services that it is justifiably proud of and which parents and carers value. There is efficient management of the budget and in the deployment of resources, including staffing. Facilities for ICT are used well in helping pupils to acquire key skills. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Dowson Primary School, Hyde, SK14 5HU

The other inspectors and I enjoyed our visit to Dowson Primary School. You all made us feel very welcome. Thank you for contributing to the inspection by being eager to talk to us and tell us about your school.

We found that your school is providing you with a satisfactory education. You tell us that you feel safe in school. We know that you attend regularly and we saw that your behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress in their learning. We also found that you work hard in your lessons. The standards you reach are improving in some ways, for example in writing, but we have asked the teachers to help you raise your standards in mathematics because by the end of Year 6 they are below average. The teachers and other adults take good care of you and, overall, the teaching and learning you receive is satisfactory. It is good that your teachers give you chances to work with a talking partner. This helps you to enjoy your learning and make better progress. Sometimes, the marking of your work tells you how you can do better but there is not enough of this so we have asked your teachers to improve the written guidance they give you. We would also like school leaders to improve how they check on the progress you make so they can use the information when writing and carrying out plans to help you to learn even more.

You told us that you enjoy going on school visits and that you have the Healthy Schools Award and know the importance of exercise to keep healthy. You also did well to achieve the Tameside Inclusion Award and we certainly saw that you work and play well together. You enjoyed the Eco Week activities and we were as excited as you to see the owls being carved in the tree!

We hope you will play your part in helping to achieve the improvements. You can do this by continuing to work hard, especially at your mathematics, and by trying to reach the targets your teachers set for you.