

Dowson Primary School

Marlborough Road, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 5HU

Inspection dates	25–26 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and managers have been successful in securing improvements in teaching. They have introduced a wide range of effective ways to teach, particularly in reading and writing. As a result, standards are rising.
- Leaders have established accurate assessment systems. They focus relentlessly on checking the progress of all pupils from the time they start school. If progress dips, effective support is provided quickly to ensure that pupils do not fall behind.
- The governing body knows the school well because it evaluates leaders' work thoroughly. Governors set high standards and challenge leaders to meet them. Governors provide strong support that helps the school to improve.
- Parents and pupils are very positive about the quality of education that the school provides, particularly the care, guidance and support given to pupils and the stimulating range of opportunities for pupils to learn in different ways.
- Pupils behave well. They listen attentively to their teachers and are keen to do their best. Their achievements are celebrated in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- The pastoral support that pupils receive is excellent and contributes very strongly to removing barriers to learning and to their exceptional personal development and well-being.
- Systems in place to keep pupils safe are very secure and understood by all.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although changes in the early years have resulted in some improvements in provision, achievement is not yet consistently good for all pupils. The range of resources, displays and activities, does not always reflect the needs of current children.
- Teachers' questioning sometimes does not allow pupils to develop understanding or challenge their thinking.
- In a few classes, teachers do not always direct the work of teaching assistants carefully enough to ensure that they help pupils effectively.
- Although there are many opportunities for pupils to develop a wide range of skills, leadership in some subjects is not as strong as that seen in English and mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the current consistently good teaching to outstanding, by:
 - ensuring that teachers and their assistants detect more quickly pupils who are not working well or those who need help
 - supporting teachers to further develop their questioning skills to help all pupils deepen their understanding and challenge their thinking.

- Strengthen the early years further, by:
 - ensuring that the gap between the achievement of boys and girls closes even more, particularly in mathematics
 - fully evaluating the new initiatives that have been introduced for helping pupils know when they have completed a task successfully to make sure that they are having the impact expected
 - making sure that the range of resources, displays and activities is carefully planned to suit the needs of current pupils.

- Improve leadership and management further by ensuring that:
 - the attention to detail given to the teaching of English and mathematics is replicated for all subjects so that the curriculum is widened and deepened.
 - the good subject leadership provided for English and mathematics is extended to all curriculum areas.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The school's vision for what it wants pupils from Dowson to take with them 'in their rucksack' when they leave Year 6 has resulted in 'key drivers' which set a clear direction for leaders, staff and pupils.
- There is a strong sense of purpose and a culture of high expectations across the team. As a result, the quality of teaching, pupils' outcomes and attendance have improved convincingly since the last inspection.
- The headteacher and governors have skilfully appointed key staff in strategic leadership positions to ensure that they can drive improvement in the areas that the school needs it most. As a result, several areas have improved, including the provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability, assessment, and the leadership of English and mathematics. However, a delay in the appointment of the early years leader has meant that the rate of improvement in this area of the school has not been as rapid as elsewhere.
- Support for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is especially strong.
- Although there has been a period of transition due to staff changes and maternity leave, the leadership team has maintained close scrutiny of its ambitious plans for improvement. Senior leaders make regular checks on how well pupils are doing and ensure that individuals in danger of falling behind are identified quickly and receive appropriate additional support.
- Senior leaders develop teaching rigorously and systematically. This is a high priority. A wide range of strategies have been introduced to encourage positive attitudes to learning and provide consistency in the quality of teaching and behaviour management. An example is the 'challenge by choice' approach where pupils select the level of difficulty in their work. Pupils are encouraged to take risks and push themselves further.
- Senior leaders have developed robust systems to support the development of staff, including coaching and training. The performance management of staff is carried out correctly and efficiently. Consequently, the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.
- English and mathematics leaders have a clear vision for where the school needs to go next because they are fully involved in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects. They have developed effective ways to check on the progress that pupils make, monitor the quality of teaching and support curriculum delivery. For example, they regularly establish training through a 'triad' process where teachers work under their guidance to plan lessons and then observe each other teaching. Afterwards, constructive feedback helps to establish what worked well. A scrutiny of pupils' books provided evidence of the impact of effective teaching in these areas.
- Leadership in some subjects is not as strong as in English and mathematics because these leaders have not yet developed their skills to carefully analyse and measure the impact of their actions in raising pupils' achievement.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range of learning experiences that the school offers, including enrichment activities such as 'Forest School', and after-school clubs such as chess, knitting and crochet.
- The school spends its pupil premium funding thoughtfully, evaluating its impact carefully. Pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding achieve well from their starting points.
- The primary physical education and sport funding premium is used well to provide regular lessons and activities with specialist coaches who also ensure that staff gain new skills. Lunchtime and after-school sports clubs are provided and are very popular with pupils. Participation rates in these activities are high.
- The overwhelming majority of parents are very positive about the school's work. Parents comment favourably on the high levels of care and support given to pupils and families as well as the breadth of exciting opportunities pupils experience.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well through a relevant curriculum. Displays of pupils' work provide evidence of their learning of a range of world faiths. For example, the 'doorway of peace' at the entrance to the upper school hall is the product of a collaboration between Year 2 and Year 5 pupils when they studied and celebrated Asian culture and religions.
- Pupils have a good understanding of British values such as mutual respect and tolerance. These values are linked to the school's ethos and the 'Dowson promise' which is displayed on classroom doors throughout the school.
- The local authority has provided good support since the previous inspection. Leaders have used this effectively. For example, it has given the school advice and support to help develop middle leaders.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors have a very accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This is because they have a firm grasp of the detailed information gathered, not only from the leadership team but also from their own analysis. Reports provided by middle leaders enable the governors to make informed judgements about the standards in the school and consequently make strategic decisions about how best to allocate resources.
- Governors hold leaders to account by challenging the information they receive. They benchmark results for pupils' progress and attainment, and value for money of the school's spending, against national performance criteria.
- Governors are highly skilled and provide very strong support for the work of the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective because school staff know, understand and follow the procedures for keeping pupils safe from harm. The safeguarding leaders work with teachers to ensure that the school's most vulnerable pupils and parents get the support that they need. Staff have received appropriate training and know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's safety or welfare. Governors and leaders have taken expert advice about managing the site and completed risk assessments to ensure that pupils are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching and learning across the school is good. This has improved strongly since the last inspection. Pupils now make good progress from their different starting points.
- The use of feedback to help pupils improve their work has improved over time and is consistent throughout the school. Pupils reflect on their teachers' comments and are given time to edit or add to their work in line with the school's assessment policy. Evidence in mathematics, English and topic books shows that this is supporting improvement in the quality of their work.
- The strong emphasis that the school has placed on developing pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation skills, as well as improving the presentation in their books, is paying off. Improving pride and standards of work are evident in pupils' books across a range of subjects.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge contributes well to the progress that pupils make. An example of this was seen in a Year 2 mathematics lesson when the teacher's analysis of different ways to solve number sentences, including strategies to use when stuck, helped to deepen understanding for pupils.
- Pupils who need extra help are supported with specifically focused interventions to enable them to catch up quickly.
- In subjects other than English and mathematics, teaching is effective, but it sometimes lacks the same breadth and depth. For example, in a science lesson pupils were not always encouraged to use appropriate technical vocabulary. In an art lesson, more artistically able pupils were not challenged to achieve more and outcomes were very similar for all.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to ensure that they know what is expected of them so that they are able, in most classes, to support pupils' learning. Those teaching assistants supporting pupils with special educational needs or disability contribute significantly to the good progress that this group of pupils make. However, in a very small number of classes, when teaching assistants do not have a clearly defined role, their contribution is less effective.
- There is a consistent approach to behaviour management which promotes a positive climate for learning.
- Teachers use assessment information well to build on what pupils already know.
- Pupils are supported to take increasing responsibility for their own learning. From Year 1 upward, pupils are able to share ideas with each other and explain their thoughts confidently. These skills are further developed as they progress through the school. Pupils can collaborate actively and accurately assess each other's work. These strategies are reinforcing a positive learning ethos throughout the school.
- In a small number of classes, teachers' questioning does not always support pupils to deepen their understanding. This happens when, for example, the teacher states that pupils are no longer allowed to ask questions or when the teacher asks a question but does not give the pupils the opportunity to reflect before answering the question herself.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Staff in school have nurtured an ethos of respect and consideration. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were articulate in expressing their view that they enjoy school and feel safe.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. Their attitude to learning in lessons is consistently positive.
- Pupils take pride in their work and they are confident about sharing it with others. They understand what good presentation is because teachers work hard to make sure that pupils know what is expected of them.
- Pupils say that their work is never too easy because they are routinely given extra challenges. Parents confirmed this and have welcomed the opportunity to share the 'weekly challenge cards' as homework activities with their children.
- Leaders place a high importance on the emotional well-being of pupils. Inspectors saw evidence of this in the uplifting achievement assembly where success was celebrated in a warm atmosphere of mutual respect. The teachers' celebratory dance, performed for the pupils who have 100% attendance, delighted both pupils and parents.
- Pupils have a good awareness of different types of bullying and say that it is rare. School records show that any incidents are dealt with firmly and promptly.
- Pupils value the extra responsibilities they are given, for example, as head boy, head girl and team captains. This helps pupils to develop maturity and confidence.
- A broad range of topics is carefully planned and delivered during shared time, such as 'breaking bad habits' and 'healthy relationships', which has a positive impact on pupils' personal development.

Behaviour

- Behaviour is good. Pupils are courteous and polite to each other and conduct themselves sensibly when moving around school whether supervised or not. This was exemplified following the cancellation of sports day which resulted in an indoor playtime when pupils' behaviour was admirable. They took part fully in the wide range of activities on offer with maturity.
- In lessons, behaviour is consistently impressive. Pupils are attentive and respond well to teachers' instructions. When working with their peers, pupils listen with respect and value the opinions of others.
- Pupils know what to do if they do not like what they hear and say staff always deal with things quickly. The few historical incidents of derogatory name-calling and inappropriate language had been carefully logged and dealt with swiftly. However, pupils are not always aware of the impact of discriminatory or derogatory language on others.
- There are highly effective systems in place to promote good attendance and punctuality. These include rewards such as termly celebrations and being able to sit at the 'captain's table' at lunchtime. There is also a breakfast club, which is free for vulnerable pupils. This encourages these pupils to be punctual.
- Attendance for different groups of pupils is in line with other schools nationally and pupils arrive on time because they like being in school. Swift action is taken if attendance for an individual pupil dips and leaders work closely with parents and external agencies to overcome any barriers that stop pupils attending school regularly.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- The progress that pupils make has improved sharply since the previous inspection. In 2015, Year 6 pupils left school having made progress in reading and mathematics that was significantly above the national average and in line with all pupils nationally in writing. The standards that pupils reached overall for reading, writing and mathematics were in line with the national average in 2015.
- Pupils' phonics skills (the sounds that letters make) have improved year on year because leaders have taken action to improve the teaching of this aspect of the curriculum. Pupils now achieve the same standards as other pupils nationally.
- In the last two years, standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined at the end of key stage 1 have improved rapidly, although they remain below the national average. The most significant improvement is in writing because leaders have raised the expectations of what pupils can achieve.

- There is a gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their peers in the early years, but this narrows as pupils progress through the school because of good use of the extra funding received. By the time these pupils reach the end of Year 6, they have made progress which is better than that expected of all pupils nationally. The standards that they reach are still lower than the national average but this gap is narrowing year on year.
- Outcomes for pupils currently in the school are improving, and are now good. Pupils make good progress across all classes from their different starting points and the majority are working at the standard expected for their age. This is because of staff's increased expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils' work shows that they have responded positively to these increased expectations, as seen in the good standard and quality of work and presentation, particularly in writing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress. The careful assessment of their needs and frequent monitoring of their progress ensure that they receive effective support.
- Pupils who are most able generally make good progress. Improvement in the planning of tasks means that all pupils are provided with more challenge, especially in English and mathematics. However, there are occasions when expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve in other subjects could be higher.

Early years provision is good

- A large proportion of children start school in the Nursery with skills that are below those typical for their age. This is particularly the case in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has been below the national average for the last two years, but it is improving. The school's own information shows that an increasing number of children are expected to reach a good level of development this year. As a result, more children will be ready to start Year 1.
- The school's own assessment information shows that all groups of children make good progress across the Nursery and Reception. However, although closing over time, there is still a gap between the achievement of boys and girls, especially in mathematics.
- School leaders consider carefully which children may not be as ready for Year 1 as others when organising their classes, so appropriate provision can be made for them to catch up quickly.
- Children with special educational needs or disability are very well supported. Their needs are picked up quickly during close contact with parents prior to the children starting school. Activities are planned to give them appropriate support straight away. This means many children catch up quickly.
- Work to involve parents in their child's learning is successful. Parents are given many opportunities to visit school and participate in activities with their child, including joining in phonics sessions to hear how sounds are taught. Parents of pupils with special educational needs remain very involved, with half termly visits to observe their child in school.
- Children's behaviour in the early years is good. This is because adults have high expectations and there are clear and well-established routines. Children are supervised diligently by staff to ensure that they are safe in all areas of the early years provision. All welfare requirements are met in full.
- Children enjoy playing alongside each other, sharing resources and cooperating, for example, when bathing the dolls. Children are eager to learn. They know they have a number of jobs to do during the day and they want to earn their reward by the end of the week.
- Staffing changes have resulted in some improvement in provision in the early years. However, not all resources, models and images used to aid learning meet the needs of the current children. Some of them are very out of date.
- Some of the new initiatives that have been introduced, for example the 'passports' to help children know what tasks to complete, have not been fully evaluated. Many children cannot read them and do not always make the link between what they do and the 'passport'.
- Teachers and other adults use what they know about children's previous learning to plan lessons that meet the needs of most pupils. However, some activities do not always fully engage a small proportion of pupils so that they can make the progress of which they are capable in all lessons.
- Senior leaders have taken effective action to ensure that the provision continues to operate smoothly until the new early years leader takes up her post in September.

School details

Unique reference number	106198
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10012107

This inspection 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 of pupils on the school roll	475
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Houghton
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Rathburn
Telephone number	0161 366 0177
Website	www.dowson.tameside.sch.uk
Email address	admin@dowson.tameside.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 March 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils reported to have English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is lower than the national average.
- The school runs its own before-school breakfast club.
- The school meets the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- In 2015, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in most classes in the school, including joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of staff, three representatives of the governing body and one representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school improvement planning, assessment information and reports on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally during the school day and observed them during playtime, lunch and before school. They also met formally with two groups of pupils to talk with them about their learning and behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors heard a number of children read.
- Inspectors took note of displays around the school.
- A range of pupils' books was checked.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents at the sports day event. Inspectors took account of the 73 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and responses to the school's own parental feedback. Inspectors also took note of the 48 responses they received to the inspection questionnaire for school staff and the 40 responses they received to the inspection questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Mrs Catherine Parkinson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mr Adrian Martin	Ofsted Inspector
Mrs Liz Kelly	Ofsted Inspector

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