



# Dale Community Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 112720  
**Local Authority** City of Derby  
**Inspection number** 294554  
**Inspection dates** 26–27 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Kenneth Thomas

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Porter Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Derby
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		DE23 6NL
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01332 760070
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	536	<b>Fax number</b>	01332 272491
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs L Sullivan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 December 2005		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Dale Primary School is larger than most primary schools. It serves the most deprived area in the city of Derby and 20% of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils coming from homes where English is not the first language is in the top 2% nationally. Attainment on entry is well below average. About one quarter of the pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities, which is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who join the school after the start of statutory schooling is above average. At the last inspection the school was given a Notice to Improve because significant improvement was needed in standards and achievement and the quality of teaching. A new headteacher took up her post in January 2006. A separate child care provision inspection took place at the same time as this inspection.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This much improved school provides a satisfactory quality of education and gives satisfactory value for money. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Central to the improvement seen in the school are the dynamic leadership provided by the headteacher and well focused management by an effective leadership team. The key issues identified in the last inspection report are being tackled successfully. Because the evaluation of performance is accurate, the school knows where more work needs to be done to continue to improve. While governors are supportive they are over-reliant on reports from senior staff on school performance because very few are linked with curriculum areas.

Although standards are well below average at the end of the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, pupils achieve and make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Progress is impeded, in particular, by weak writing skills. The school has devised well considered strategies to improve these skills but they are not being implemented consistently in all curriculum areas. In Year 6, the 2006 national test results in English, mathematics and science rose to be close to average as a result of good target setting and individual support. However, while the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, the school is aware that the quality of teaching must improve, if pupils' achievement and standards are to rise more rapidly throughout the school. In some lessons pupils spend too much time listening to their teachers, while in others, expectations are too low and pupils are not stretched enough to enable them to make better progress. Much good and some outstanding teaching at the upper end of Key Stage 2 is having a huge impact on pupils' progress and achievement this year.

Curriculum provision is satisfactory and is enriched by a number of innovative projects that foster pupils' creative potential and a good range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is particularly well planned to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and those with English as an additional language. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage, although satisfactory, is too rigid. Time is not always used to best effect and the curriculum does not provide an appropriate balance of learning activities.

Pupils feel safe and secure because of the good quality support and guidance the school provides. Pupils enjoy their education and their behaviour is good. They understand the value of healthy lifestyles and make good contributions to the school community. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Parents' views of the school are very positive. As one parent wrote, 'The school promotes a healthy, positive and welcoming environment for all pupils, regardless of their background or culture.'

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by ensuring greater consistency in the development of pupils' writing skills across the curriculum.

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that expectations are consistently high, learning activities are appropriately challenging and that time is used effectively.
- Improve the Foundation Stage curriculum so that it better meets the needs of individual children.
- Strengthen links between governors and curriculum areas so that they are able to be more directly involved in supporting the drive for school improvement.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' achievement, including that of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities, is satisfactory. When children enter school their overall attainment is well below average. They progress satisfactorily through the Reception and Key Stage 1 classes, although standards remain well below average at the end of Key Stage 1. At the time of the last inspection, achievement in Key Stage 2 was inadequate, particularly that of pupils whose attainment had been average in Key Stage 1. The school is successfully tackling this weakness. Because of better teaching, progress and standards have improved and are now satisfactory. Good individual support in Year 6 had a marked effect on the 2006 national test results in English, mathematics and science, which rose to be close to average. The school exceeded the quite challenging targets set for both Level 4 and Level 5 in English and mathematics. Particularly effective teaching in Year 6 is now maintaining this improvement. Nevertheless, pupils' diverse linguistic and learning needs continue to have an adverse effect on progress and in particular on the development of writing skills.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. As pupils progress through the school they learn to show care and concern for one another. This, together with good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is at the heart of this safe, friendly and very supportive culturally diverse community. Behaviour is good and pupils enjoy school, one saying that 'being out of school was boring' by comparison. The school has robust systems to monitor and minimise absence, though the attendance figures remain about average largely because of extended holidays taken in term time. Because the school promotes healthy lifestyles well, pupils develop a good level of understanding of how to stay healthy. Through the elected school council and participation in the 'Creative Partnership' scheme, pupils make meaningful contributions to school life and gain skills that form the basis of responsible citizenship.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and have improved since the last inspection. This is because perceptive school leadership has identified strengths and is tackling weaknesses with pinpoint accuracy. The benefits of this are seen in the good and occasionally outstanding lessons. These lessons are very lively: learning tasks are challenging and pupils are enthusiastically engaged in lots of individual and small group work. Pupils in Year 6 are making particularly good progress because most teaching is of this quality. They respond well in these lessons because they find them interesting. One pupil said, for example, 'I like the challenge.' There remains, however, too much inconsistency in the quality of lessons. In many satisfactory lessons, progress is slowed because pupils spend too much time listening to the teacher. In the few unsatisfactory lessons, expectations are too low and learning tasks do not provide enough challenge. Effective support from teaching assistants and bilingual staff ensures that pupils who are at the early stages of learning English and those with learning difficulties or disabilities can participate fully in lessons.

More effective use is being made of assessment to set learning targets and to help pupils to understand how to improve. This is contributing to the better progress pupils are now making in Key Stage 2. However, there is some inconsistency in the use of assessment in the earlier years.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Successful themed events such as 'Knowing Me, Knowing You' enable pupils to explore issues more deeply and the 'Creative Partnership' project, which has received national recognition, offers pupils innovative ways to develop their imaginative and inventive skills. There is an appropriate emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. This helps pupils to prepare for their future economic well-being. The school has recognised correctly the need for greater consistency between subjects in the development of pupils' writing skills. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties, those learning English as an additional language, and those who are from minority ethnic backgrounds are carefully considered. This is contributing to the better progress pupils are now making. The school provides a good range of activities outside lessons. These, together with residential experiences and visits to other places of interest, extend the curriculum well.

The Foundation Stage curriculum, although satisfactory, does not provide an appropriate balance of adult supported and independent activities, and time is not always used effectively.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of pupils are good. The school provides a very supportive environment for learning in which pupils feel safe. Arrangements for child protection are working well and meet government requirements. Careful attention is paid to health and safety. Staff know pupils well and provide them with good personal support. Behaviour is good and effective strategies are in place to offer positive direction to pupils. The learning mentor scheme, for example, is very effective. As one pupil commented, 'It helped me a lot.' Support is particularly good for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, for vulnerable pupils, and for those in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The school has plans to enhance the support for gifted and talented pupils. The school has done much to enhance support and guidance for pupils' academic development. Pupils' academic progress is now closely monitored and this is contributing to the better progress pupils are making. The school works closely with parents, carers and a range of external agencies to maximise pupils' learning at school.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, supported very ably by her two assistant headteachers, has had a huge impact on the recent rapid improvement in the school. More rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school are underpinning a determined drive to raise standards through a more focused approach to improvement planning. This gives the school good capacity for further improvement. The overall quality of subject coordination is satisfactory and there are examples of very effective coordination of literacy and of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school is working hard to ensure that coordination in all areas is equally effective. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive and fulfill their statutory obligations. However, because few governors are linked with curriculum areas they do not have first hand knowledge of pupils' progress and achievement. Learning resources and finances are managed well. The school works well in partnership with others and holds Activemark together with the Healthy Schools and Investor in People awards.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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	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**

28 February 2007

Dear Pupils

Dale Community Primary School, Porter Road, Derby, DE23 6NL

As you know, we recently inspected your school and this letter is to tell you about our findings. However, first, I would like to thank you all for the help you gave us during our visit. Your friendly smiles and cheerful greetings made it a pleasure to be in your school and we greatly appreciated your comments and opinions.

You told us how much you enjoy being at Dale and we were very impressed with your enthusiasm and your behaviour in lessons and around the school. These good features help your teachers because they can concentrate on helping you to learn. Your teachers are trying hard to help you improve your writing skills and we have asked them to do this in all of your subjects. We have also asked your teachers to make sure that you do not spend too long listening to teachers giving explanations and to stretch those of you who find work easy a bit further. The school provides good care and support and this is particularly true for those of you who may be experiencing difficulties. Your headteacher and her staff work hard to make Dale a fun place to learn and we know that you are aware of this. In order to make it even better, we have asked the school to provide a better balance of activities in Reception and for the governors to be more closely linked with the work you are doing.

You are also key players in the school's success. Your good behaviour, hard work and the care you show each other, together with willingness to take on responsibility, all help to make Dale such a happy and friendly community. Your headteacher, the staff and governors all want the school to carry on getting better and better. Having met you we know you will all want to continue to play your part as well.

With best wishes for your future success.

Dr Kenneth C Thomas

Lead inspector