

# Dove Bank Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124089
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314803
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Doris Bell

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 category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	190
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Carol Reddish
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Alebon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 December 2002
<b>School address</b>	off Rutland Road Kidsgrove Stoke-on-Trent ST7 4AP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 296786
<b>Fax number</b>	01782 296789

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average sized primary school has had a high turnover of staff in the past two years, including at senior management level. Attainment on entry to the Nursery, which opened in 2005, is well below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This rapidly improving school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. In Year 6, standards have risen in the past two years and are now average. Since pupils start school with skills and abilities which are well below national expectations, this represents good achievement. The headteacher's good leadership has played a key role in raising standards by concentrating on improving pupils' literacy skills. The school's involvement in an Intensive Support Programme (ISP) has also been helpful. Teachers now track pupils' progress very closely and their consistently good marking is helping to accelerate it. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness as satisfactory rather than good was based on past rather than present data. The inspection judgement takes account of current data held by the school and evidence from the pupils' work. Teachers plan lessons well, make sure that pupils understand the key objectives for each lesson and work hard to bring the curriculum alive. Cross-curricular links are developing, but more remains to be done to develop writing fully in all subjects. Effective care, guidance and support, including for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, contribute greatly to the pupils' learning and their good personal development. Pupils enjoy learning and they behave well. They feel behaviour has improved considerably in the past two years and that they are, in the words of one pupil, 'more civilised now' because they are more respectful of each other's rights and feelings. Children make excellent progress in the Foundation Stage because of the exemplary provision there. The impact of this is very evident in Year 1, the first year group to experience the full two years in the Foundation Stage. Progress is good in Years 1 and 2. However, although standards in reading and writing are still below average in Year 2, they are improving. The school improvement plan sets a clear agenda for the coming year. Discussions with senior managers and staff show clearly that the school knows where it is going beyond this and what it needs to do to get there. However, this is not recorded in a written plan. Governors, many of whom are new, are not sufficiently involved in determining the overall direction of the school or in checking that it is on track to meet its priorities. Nevertheless, the recent improvements and the determination of all staff to help every pupil do as well as they can, give the school good capacity for further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

Many children arrive at school with considerably underdeveloped speech and language skills and limited experiences of learning. The superb range of innovative learning experiences provided for them, which they really enjoy, ensures that they develop and grow in a safe and stimulating environment. They become increasingly alert to the world around them and their place in it, successfully developing independence alongside learning to work with others. For example, Reception children were adept at discussing and agreeing responses with a partner before putting their hands up to answer the teacher. Leadership and management are excellent. Each child's progress is meticulously tracked. Photographs, captions and written records are used to great effect to do this. Children in need of support are identified at a very early stage and effective individual programmes are put in place for them. All children make rapid and sustained progress throughout the Foundation Stage. They reach, and a good number exceed, the standards expected for the end of Reception.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils in Year 2 every possible opportunity to practise and use their reading and writing skills to raise standards in those aspects of English even more quickly.
- Involve the whole school community in setting out a longer-term strategic plan that focuses on ways of continuing the good progress now evident throughout the school.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils start school with skills and abilities which are well below national expectations. Standards have risen significantly since 2005 and they are now similar to the national average in Year 6. This represents good achievement. The school has focussed successfully on improving pupils' literacy skills, especially writing, and particularly boys' writing. Through speaking, listening and role-play activities, pupils extend their vocabulary and gain a better understanding of the texts they read. This was seen, for example, in Year 6, where some pupils wrote as if they were a French soldier, describing what they saw, heard and felt. Progress is good and still improving in Years 1 and 2. Standards in reading and writing at the end of Year 2 have been well below average for a number of years but in the current Year 2, they are now much closer to average. The benefits of the Nursery and the two-year Foundation Stage are particularly evident in Year 1, where pupils are making good progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and are enthusiastic about learning because they feel safe, secure and well cared for. They are confident that teachers will always help them and that the few instances of bullying or misbehaviour that do occur are quickly and effectively resolved. While pupils behave well in and around the school, behaviour occasionally becomes more boisterous in the playground. Pupils explain healthy eating well and readily join in the wide range of sporting activities offered. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. They know the difference between right and wrong and have a good understanding of social responsibility. Their attendance is satisfactory. They care for and support each other and older pupils readily help younger ones. Pupils from different year groups contribute well to the community as school councillors and classroom helpers. In one class, they were eager to find out whose name was inside the balloon as the helper of the day because they really wanted to help manage their classroom. Their understanding of cultural diversity is promoted well through, for example, the school's multicultural week. Overall, the school prepares pupils well for the future.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teachers base their good planning on their in-depth knowledge of the progress of each pupil. This is gained from thorough assessments of pupils' learning and well-focused marking that leaves pupils in no doubt about what they need to do to improve. Teachers' planning also takes good account of the targets in the individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This, and the consistent approach to managing all pupils' behaviour, contributes greatly to the pupils' good progress. Pupils report that teachers teach 'in a fun

way' that 'helps us remember' and that they always know the objectives for a lesson. In some classes, pupils have to write the objectives in their books and for slower writers this is not the best use of time. Additionally, an activity sometimes goes on a bit too long, pupils become restless and this slows their learning. Overall, however, teachers use time and resources, including their well-briefed teaching assistants, well.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

Throughout the school, the strong focus on making learning more interesting and meaningful through cross-curricular links contributes to the pupils' improved progress. This approach successfully promotes literacy and numeracy skills but more remains to be done for it to be fully effective, especially for writing. However, leaders and managers check and, where necessary, adapt the specific programmes for each year group to ensure that learning is continuous and challenging for all pupils. Thus the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and a new 'maths challenge' programme is providing additional challenge for more able pupils. Pupils receive a rich education in sport and the arts through the good range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular clubs and activities available to them. The curriculum is further enhanced by focus weeks such as those promoting healthy living and an awareness of cultural diversity. Teachers also use information and communication technology (ICT) well to stimulate pupils' interests and develop their ICT skills.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Teachers and other adults work hard to encourage pupils to do as well as they can personally and academically. The school tracks pupils' individual progress carefully in both areas. Pupils who falter for whatever reason receive well-focused support to get their learning back on track. This includes, where relevant, giving them access to specialised help. The school uses its teaching assistants and outside agencies well in this and it works very hard to involve parents in helping their children to learn. The vast majority of parents praise the school, describing it as a 'happy place' that their children enjoy attending. Pupils have well-focused learning targets, which they know and understand. Teachers' marking helps them see the small steps they need to take to reach their targets. Pupils appreciate this saying it helps them to reach their targets quicker. Safeguarding procedures are robust. As a result, pupils work and play in a wellstructured learning environment in which they feel cared for and valued. The confident, positive self-image this gives the pupils underpins their good progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher's determination to drive up standards is at the heart of the school's work. It has successfully focused the whole school on improving pupils' progress, and led to clear improvement in a short space of time. The school easily met its targets last year as pupils' progress rapidly accelerated and the work done through the ISP and the Primary Leadership Strategy began to bear fruit. It is rightly looking to raise the bar further with more challenging targets for 2008 and beyond. The school has used its good links with the local authority to confirm the accuracy of its own checks on teaching and learning. Governors are kept well informed through the headteacher's reports but they are not as involved in checking the school's

work or in determining its direction as they might be. The school improvement plan sets the right priorities and builds successfully on the review of the previous year's plan. However, there is no long-term strategic view for school improvement. The school is aware of this and a meeting has already been arranged to draw this up.

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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?	2
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### 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	2

### The quality of provision

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	2
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

- 18 October 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of Dove Bank Primary School, Kidsgrove, ST7 4AP  
Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school this week, and for talking to us about your work. You go to a good school where all staff have your best interests at heart and want you to do well. Here is a summary of what we found.
- You are taught well. As a result, all of you are making good progress. You are right when you say your teachers like to make learning fun for you. They make good links between subjects to enable this to happen.
- You behave well, although you are sometimes a bit over-excited in the playground, and you clearly care for each other. We saw this in the way you helped each other in class and older pupils helped younger ones at other times.
- You clearly understand the targets you have to support your learning and the additional help teachers give you when they mark your work that shows you how to reach your targets.
- The headteacher leads the school well. She makes sure that all staff know what is expected of them in helping you to learn faster. We have asked the school to do the following to help it keep up the good improvement that is evident in the past two years.
- Give pupils in Year 2 every possible opportunity to practise their reading and writing to help them reach higher standards at the end of the year.
- Involve everybody in looking at how much further the school might improve over the next few years to make sure that the good progress you are making now continues into the future. You can help in this by always trying hard to do your best. We wish you every success in the future and hope you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now. Yours faithfully  
Doris Bell Lead inspector

18 October 2007



Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Dove Bank Primary School, Kidsgrove, ST7 4AP**

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Yours faithfully

Doris Bell  
Lead inspector