

Peak Dale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112656
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325655
Inspection dates	9–10 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Keith Edwards

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	67
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 Gillian Murphy
Headteacher	Ms Helen Stamp
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	School Road Peak Dale Buxton Derbyshire SK17 8AJ
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

This small primary school serves the isolated village of Peak Dale. It has gained the Sports Activemark award and the Healthy Schools standard award. All of the pupils are of White British heritage and all come from homes where English is the first language. The school has a very stable population. The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage Unit that caters for children who are over four years old. Children start in the Reception class with many of the skills expected of their age, but are often weaker in aspects of their personal development and language skills. There is a wide range of ability in each class. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Two pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is below average.

Since the retirement of its long-serving headteacher in April 2009, the school is being led by the deputy headteacher in the role of acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and has sound capacity to go further forward. The school is emerging from an unsettled period that has seen a significant change in staffing. However, in her short time in post, the acting headteacher has strengthened the links with parents, developed the quality of pastoral care and has successfully identified those areas that need attention to bring about a sustained improvement in standards. One appreciative parent, whose views are echoed by many others, commented, 'Peak Dale Primary is a great school and has the potential to be a fantastic school. The acting headteacher is doing a brilliant job and my child is very happy, Well done Peak Dale.'

Children consistently get a good start to learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the teaching in Years 1 and 2 enables pupils to build successfully on this. Consequently, standards at the age of seven are above average year-on-year. Achievement in Key Stage 2 has been less consistent because of a lack of formal assessment to gauge pupils' progress and weaknesses in the quality of teaching in Years 5 and 6. There has been insufficient emphasis on matching work to the needs of pupils of different ability and this has led to some underachievement, particularly for the higher-attaining pupils. However, because they are well supported, those pupils who find learning difficult make satisfactory gains in acquiring the basic skills. Current standards in English, mathematics and science in Year 6 are now broadly average, with encouraging signs of improvement, because teachers have introduced greater excitement into lessons.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils greatly enjoy coming to school and attendance rates are broadly average. Staff respect and value the pupils, who, consequently, develop self-confidence, self-esteem and self-discipline. Pupils' behaviour is good. They know how to keep themselves safe and respond well to the school's initiatives to encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles, particularly by taking part in sport and eating a balanced diet. They work hard and play well together.

The acting headteacher, ably supported by her colleagues and governors, has spent her first two months in post productively, particularly in building staff teamwork and nurturing a shared accountability for school performance. Although the staffing situation remains uncertain, with two key posts yet to be confirmed, there is a tangible sense of team spirit. The curriculum is satisfactory. The overall quality of teaching and learning is also satisfactory, with clear examples of good practice in each class. However, over time, teaching has lacked rigour and so groups of pupils have not been able to achieve their best. Assessment data has only been used sporadically to inform planning for different groups of pupils. These shortcomings have now been recognised and there is a strong impetus to ensure that pupils build successfully on their earlier learning. But the changes recommended in the previous inspection have only recently been introduced and their full impact is yet to be felt. Although the governors' view of the school's performance lacks a critical edge, governors provide satisfactory support.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Although standards on entry vary from year to year, most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of skills, knowledge and understanding that are expected for this

age. Staff form good relationships with families from the outset, enabling children to settle quickly. Parents appreciate the close liaison that encourages them to become fully involved in their children's learning. Teachers and teaching assistants show high levels of care, ensuring children flourish both academically and socially. Children make good progress through good teaching and start Year 1 with standards that are above those found nationally. The safety and welfare of children is at the heart of the school's work. Consequently, children's personal development is good. Children care very much about each other and clearly enjoy coming to school. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well, ensuring children understand the importance of staying active and fit. Staff work effectively as a team, organising a well-balanced range of learning opportunities in the classroom and, to a lesser extent, outdoors. The limitations of the building restrict children's freedom of choice to work indoors or outside. In spite of this, exciting activities engage children's interest and make learning enjoyable. For example, the current theme of 'Pirates' and the involvement of the puppet parrot, Vera, to reinforce language development, fully engages the interest of the children. The good ratio of adults to children ensures those who need extra support enjoy success through individual attention. Procedures to evaluate children's progress are good and much improved since the previous inspection. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well and there is a shared sense of commitment towards improvement. Children are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the use of assessment information when planning work for different groups of pupils, particularly to raise the achievement of the higher-attaining pupils.
- Take urgent steps to stabilise the staffing and improve the effectiveness and contribution of leadership at all levels.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be 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

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 are consistently above average. This is because the quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 1 and pupils are motivated to do their best and their learning programmes are carefully structured. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Pupils continue to make good progress in lower Key Stage 2. However, over time there has been a pattern of slower progress in Years 5 and 6. Consequently, standards in English, mathematics and science have been broadly average year-on-year since the last inspection. Current standards reflect a similar picture. Over time mathematics has tended to be the strongest subject, but over the last academic year since the school has modified its approach to the teaching of reading and writing, there has been a marked improvement in English standards. Pupils who find learning more difficult benefit from a sensitive and well-structured approach to learning and they make satisfactory progress in acquiring the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. However, higher attaining pupils do not consistently reach their potential because much of the work set has lacked challenge. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are barely satisfactory as teachers miss opportunities for pupils to practise their skills across a range of subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well and are friendly and out-going. They report that incidents of poor behaviour are very rare and they trust staff to deal with any problems. They are mindful of each other and have a good understanding of how to stay safe. Attendance rates are in line with the national average and pupils arrive punctually. Pupils are polite and courteous and enthuse about the range of extra-curricular activities. Relationships are warm. Pupils develop a secure understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. They value the care shown to them and feel increasingly involved in making decisions. They make a meaningful contribution to the school community in regular meetings of the school council. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a good understanding of their own rural traditions and a growing awareness of cultural diversity in contemporary society. By the time they leave, most pupils have acquired secure social and academic skills to assist their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There is much strength in the teaching for pupils in the Reception class, Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2. Until the recent appointment of a new member of staff, there has been too little consistency in the quality of teaching in upper Key Stage 2 and this has limited pupils' progress. However, throughout the uncertainty of recent months the quality of relationships between teachers and pupils has been maintained. This has helped to promote enjoyment and positive attitudes to learning. Lesson planning is detailed with a good emphasis on practical activities designed to make pupils think. Pupils understand the purpose of their lessons. However, work set does not always challenge them well enough and not all teachers evaluate effectively what has been learned. This occasionally results in pupils, particularly the higher attainers, making less progress than they could. The school has developed a good system to assess the progress pupils are making. The quality of marking is variable and so this information is not yet used consistently to help pupils improve their skills. Teaching assistants provide valuable support, particularly for those pupils who find learning difficult.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is carefully structured to meet the needs of the pupils in the three mixed-age classes. For the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage it is good, as it enables them to settle quickly and make good gains in their communication and social skills. Throughout the school, there is good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. The staff provide good role models and strongly support and promote healthy eating and active lifestyles. While steps have been taken to improve the use of ICT in the delivery of the curriculum, the school recognises that there is further work needed to develop the subject through the school. Furthermore, some subjects, particularly the humanities, are not consistently explored, particularly in the class for the oldest pupils. Curriculum enrichment is good. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the range of visitors and visits which make learning more meaningful. For example, a presentation by a local theatre group was most effective in helping the older pupils to face transition to secondary education. There is a good take up for extra-curricular activities which include, sport, gardening and Scalextric.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral support for pupils is good. Parents and pupils appreciate the efforts made to ensure that all feel safe, secure and valued. Procedures for health and safety, risk assessments and child protection are secure and ensure that pupils are able to learn and play in a safe setting. Child protection procedures are known and followed by all staff. Pupils are happy in school and know there is always someone they can turn to if in difficulty. The school's assessment procedures are satisfactory. There are appropriate procedures to measure pupils' attainment and to track their progress. However, in their current format these procedures are unwieldy and this limits their usefulness. Consequently, the information is not yet used consistently to match work to pupils' differing abilities, particularly those of the more able. Furthermore, pupils do not have a clear idea of what they need to do to improve their work and this limits their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher is committed to improving the quality of education and has nurtured a team which has the welfare of the pupils at the heart of its work. Since her appointment, she has made a priority of evaluating school effectiveness more closely. The impact of greater rigour in the monitoring of pupils' progress is beginning to be felt as standards show signs of improvement. However, key appointments have yet to be made and this uncertainty imposes limitations on clear lines of accountability. Nevertheless, the school has implemented a range of strategies, particularly to improve literacy, and the benefits of these programmes are beginning to bear fruit. As part of its strategy for strengthening community links the school increasingly provides a key focus for community events. Furthermore, the school is developing good working partnerships with neighbouring schools to accelerate the rate of change and improvement. The full impact of these initiatives is yet to be felt. The governors' contribution is satisfactory as they are beginning to hold the school to account as well as providing valuable support. They recognise that greater rigour is required at all leadership levels in evaluating the pupils' learning experiences to raise expectations of their achievements year-on-year.

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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	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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 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**

13 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Peak Dale Primary School, Buxton SK17 8AJ

I really enjoyed my visit to your school this month because everybody was so helpful and friendly. You behave very well. I particularly enjoyed my discussions with you and hearing your views on Peak Dale School. It was also delightful to be able to work with you in your classrooms, meet the school council and watch you playing games outside. I can understand why you are proud of your school as there are many things that make it special. Here are some of them:

- class 1 provides you with a good start to your education
- the school provides you with a wide range of activities such as visits and clubs to keep you interested
- standards in your work at the end of Year 6 are beginning to improve after a period when they have been rather disappointing
- the school is mindful to keep you safe and happy
- your school has good ideas for helping the people of Peak Dale to pull together and make the village a better place to live
- all the staff are working hard to make sure your school gets better and better.

Your school provides a satisfactory standard of education. It is really important that you try your best with your work and make the most of the opportunities the school provides. To help you make even better progress, I am asking your teachers to make more use of the information the school has about your work. I also want the governors to work hard to settle the staff team so that all of the teachers can keep a more careful eye on what works well in school and to make sure that these things happen every day in each class.

I wish you all the very best for the summer holidays and for the future.

Yours faithfully

Keith Edwards

Lead inspector