

Ditton Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118858
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326912
Inspection date	25 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Patricia Davies

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	Infant
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	5–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	138
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	Ian Hardie
Headteacher	Elizabeth Webster
Date of previous school inspection	31 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Pear Tree Avenue Ditton Aylesford ME20 6EB
Telephone number	01732 844107
Fax number	01732 873793

Age group	5–7
Inspection date	25 September 2008
Inspection number	326912

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

how successfully the use of practical activity and discussion has increased pupils' performance, particularly in reading and mathematics and especially to engage and motivate boys

the extent to which staff other than senior leaders evaluate and influence key areas of the school and develop leadership skills for the future

the impact of work to improve attendance and increase pupils' experience of cultures and traditions other than their own.

Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, assessment information, pupils' work, school documentation, questionnaires returned by parents and discussion with staff, pupils, the chair of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Most of the pupils attending Ditton Infants are from White British families. The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds speak English well. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) into Reception either at the start of the school year in September, or in the following January. Numbers at the school have begun to rise and this means that a second Reception class is now formed to accommodate the January intake. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and a wide range of needs is represented within this small group. Two new class teachers have joined the school recently, one during last school year and one at the start of this term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Ditton Infants is an outstanding school. A good start in Reception and rapid rates of progress thereafter enable pupils to reach high standards by Year 2, most particularly in writing. Behind the school's success is the quiet and unassuming leadership of senior managers, who are constantly seeking to make things even better than they are already. High aspiration is a matter of course and applied equally to all groups of pupils. Consequently, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as rapidly as other pupils, as do relatively lower attaining year groups. Targets for future attainment are unfailingly challenging and progress is monitored very closely to check that all pupils are on course to reach these demanding goals.

Pupils' outstanding personal qualities make a powerful contribution to their excellent achievement. A recurring theme among written comments from parents was children's enthusiasm for school and excitement about learning. 'My children really enjoy going to school,' one parent commented, 'and come home with a smile'. It is clear from what pupils say that they enjoy virtually everything the school has to offer, and that work in lessons is just as popular as playtime or having their lunch. Many attend the school's wide range of extra-curricular clubs, which have opportunities for everyone, including those in Reception. Parents praise the school's friendly, happy atmosphere and approachable staff. These strengths are particular features of the extremely caring and robust support for pupils' pastoral needs, safety and welfare. Pupils' mature and sensible awareness of safety, their very good relationships with each other and excellent behaviour reflect the school's success in this area of its work. Action taken in partnership with other local schools increased attendance last year from previously below average to broadly average levels. Over the first few weeks of this term, it has been higher still and above average.

Pupils' achievement is boosted by the cumulative effect of good teaching. A very small minority of parents expressed some concerns about the level of challenge, particularly in reading, but the school's readiness to adapt teaching strategies and planning to the needs of its pupils means that there is a good level of demand during lessons. Indeed, this high degree of flexibility marks out the curriculum's greatest strength. Much more use of practical activities, for instance, was intended to enhance achievement in mathematics and increase boys' attainment, but has proved to be equally effective with girls and boys. Indeed, pupils are always busy and productive during lessons, and keen to be involved. The use of computerised whiteboards is especially popular, and exciting topics and imaginative ways to present their work mean there is no reluctance among pupils to write! New initiatives, that allow for greater discussion and for pupils to evaluate their work, are becoming increasingly effective, but are at a relatively early stage, as is work to sharpen the use of marking and feedback. Additional support programmes for lower attaining pupils, the focused teaching of letter sounds and particular attention to more sophisticated reading skills – especially those that enable pupils to explore and examine texts – have proved to be successful. Acting on parents' comments, there is now a greater number and more varied choice of books going home, with guidance for parents on reading with their children and notebooks to record comments. Knowing that pupils needed a wider experience of communities beyond their own, the school has already established links in Europe and with a school locally that has pupils from a range of ethnic backgrounds.

The school has a clear agenda for improvement that comes from a detailed scrutiny of its academic information and the quality of provision. Its high level of self-evaluation and academic success demonstrate outstanding capacity for further improvement. Senior leaders are unfailing

in their quest for excellence, if somewhat modest and cautious in their judgements of the school's effectiveness. They carry many of the school's major areas of responsibility and have taken on more very recently as a result of changes to staff. This means that other members of staff do not have all the opportunities they should to share in the leadership of important areas of the school's work, monitor the impact of improvements or develop key leadership and management skills for the future. Governors provide the school with invaluable support as 'critical friends'. They are extremely well informed about the school's work and performance and ensure that funds are directed towards improvements that are to the full benefit of the children.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Although there is some variation between each year group, attainment on entry to Reception is broadly as expected. Good progress during this first year results in above average standards on entry to Year 1 and means that children are already well on their way to reaching the high standards achieved at Year 2. There is considerable attention to children's well-being. This high level of commitment is illustrated in extremely happy, confident children. Although they have only very recently started school, children are already working happily with others and responding positively during class discussions. Despite the concerns of a few parents about communication between home and school, liaison with parents at this stage is crucially strong. Parents very much appreciate the opportunity to spend time with their child in school and share information with staff. These visits are followed up with a further opportunity to review how things are going a little further down the line.

Children thoroughly enjoy the many imaginative activities. Independent tasks are balanced carefully with direct teaching and adult support. Early assessments pinpoint those children in need of additional support and staff are constantly drawing assessment information from direct observation. Good leadership is reflected in the close support given to new staff. Improvement to children's outdoor learning is a school priority, with money set aside to develop the facilities further. Much of the grassed and garden areas, for example, are in need of some care and maintenance and there is no covered area to allow for the use of this outside space in all weathers. The school already has the development of a covered area in hand and is awaiting the planning permission necessary to make a start.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all members of staff share in the leadership of important areas of the school's work, monitor the impact of improvements and develop key leadership and management skills for the future.
- Develop and maintain facilities for outdoor education in the EYFS to a high standard so that children can make full use of this resource throughout the year to extend their learning.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
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	1

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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

26 September 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Ditton Infant School, Aylesford, Kent ME20 6EB

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We very much enjoyed our visit and this letter is to tell you some important things we found out while we were with you. Your school does an excellent job. As a result, you all achieve extremely well and leave the school knowing lots of important things to help you learn in the future. Staff and governors are always checking how good the school is and looking for ways to make it even better than it is now.

Here are some other important things about you and your school

- You like lots of things about your school – singing, mathematics and cooking were just a few – but importantly you enjoy what you do in lessons, especially when activities are practical and good fun.
- Your excellent behaviour and hard work help you to progress as quickly as you do.
- The school has high expectations of you all and checks very carefully how you are getting on.
- All the adults take extremely good care of you to make sure that you are safe and happy at school and attend regularly.

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better

- Make sure that all the staff have the chance to check how well the school is doing and take responsibility for making improvements to important areas of the school's work.
- Improve the outdoor learning area for those of you in Reception so that you make good use of every bit of it right through the year.

With best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Patricia Davies Lead inspector