

Delce Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118330
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	358317
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Smoothy
Headteacher	Ann Morris
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 14 lessons taught by nine teachers. Meetings were held with parents and carers, members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including teachers' planning, assessment information, safeguarding policies and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors analysed 61 questionnaires from parents and carers and 20 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How well are the children developing early literacy skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage?
- How successfully is the school closing the gap between boys' and girls' attainment in English?
- How well do pupils take responsibility and develop cultural awareness?
- How well does the school engage with parents and carers and encourage their involvement in their children's education?

Information about the school

Most pupils come to this larger than average sized infant school from the local community. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. An above average number of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most, but not all, of these pupils have moderate learning or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school is admitting more pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds than it did in the past. A small number of these pupils are in the early stages of learning English, with Bengali being the most common home language. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in three Reception classes and a Nursery.

The school has several awards, including Healthy School accreditation and an International School award.

The new Children's Centre which shares the school site opened in August 2010 and was not inspected.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pupils flourish both socially and academically at this good school. Pupils are very happy, learn good values and behave well. They grow enormously in confidence and develop very positive attitudes towards learning.

Pupils' achievement is good. Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and continue to do well in the rest of the school, with attainment rising to broadly average levels by the end of Year 2. There are many contributory factors to the good progress made by pupils. They are taught well and the quality of care and support given to pupils is outstanding. This ensures that they feel extremely safe at school. The school's excellent partnership with others also contributes enormously to its success as it ensures that pupils are given a wide breadth of experiences and high quality support at all times. The school has already developed strong links with the newly opened Children's Centre.

In English, pupils make slightly faster progress in reading than in writing. Pupils read regularly at school and there is a clear structure to the teaching of letter sounds. Pupils write with great enthusiasm but basic skills in punctuation and grammar are not introduced systematically enough. Occasionally, in literacy lessons, work is not pitched at the right level for all and this slows the pace at which writing skills improve. The school has worked successfully to ensure that boys make the same good overall progress as girls in English, and there is a good focus on providing boy-friendly reading material.

Pupils are a credit to the school. They keenly take responsibility and make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The school council gives pupils good opportunities to have their views heard. The Healthy School accreditation is reflected in the pupils' outstanding understanding of the importance of eating a balanced diet and exercising regularly. Rates of attendance are broadly average but most pupils thoroughly enjoy school. Most absences are due to illness and the school is working successfully with a small group of families so that they understand the importance of ensuring that their children do not miss school unnecessarily.

This is a school that is not standing still; leaders are determined to do the best for the pupils. Together, leaders have created an ethos in which all members of the school community are valued and respected. Teamwork is strong and there is a good drive for further improvement based on thorough systems for school self-evaluation. There has been some good recent work on developing pupils' understanding of how to improve their work, but this is not yet consistently strong across the school and has rightly been identified by subject leaders as a priority for improvement. The school has built on its strengths from the last inspection and attainment is rising, demonstrating that there is good capacity for further improvement.

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The school engages well with parents and carers. Leaders are successfully breaking down barriers between home and school by providing opportunities for parents and carers to work alongside their children. Consequently, parents and carers are becoming increasingly comfortable about supporting their children's learning at home.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Close the gap between pupils' attainment in reading and writing by:
 - ensuring that teachers always pitch work in literacy lessons at the right level for all pupils
 - ensuring that punctuation and grammar are introduced to pupils in a structured way
 - making more use of displays to celebrate pupils' writing and to help them appreciate its importance.
- Share good practice in target-setting and the marking of work so that all pupils are clear about the next steps in their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

When they start school in the Nursery or Reception classes, very few children are working at the levels expected for their age. From these starting points, pupils' achievement is good, ensuring that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils' thorough enjoyment of school and their good behaviour contribute well to the good and occasionally outstanding learning that is seen in most lessons. In a numeracy lesson, pupils made excellent progress as they sorted objects and numbers. They showed great interest and were keen to do well because work was interesting and purposeful. In a good literacy lesson, pupils extended their reading skills quickly because a 'treasure chest' was used very imaginatively to encourage them to have a go at reading new words. On the few occasions when progress in lessons is satisfactory, the pace of learning is not quick enough. For example, when pupils were writing poems in a literacy lesson, some became fidgety because the teacher talked for too long at the start of the lesson.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities learn quickly. They are keen to learn and work hard, and they make good progress in improving basic skills. Pupils with English as an additional language make the same good progress as others in lessons, quickly improving their skills and achieving well by the end of Year 2. Pupils become responsible young citizens. They are sociable and articulate and work hard. They develop a good sense of right and wrong and happily take responsibility. Work such as the 'Our Medway' project helps pupils to develop a good awareness of other cultures. The school's good work in this area is reflected in its International School award.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Adults devote much time to ensuring that school is a very happy and very safe place to be. The school works very closely with outside agencies to support pupils who are struggling with their work or are finding home or school life difficult. This has a very positive effect on their learning. Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulty are given good support and respond well to the help they are given. Good use is being made of links with the new Children's Centre to access a wider range of services, including health visitors and parenting classes.

Teachers make learning interesting and successfully link subjects together to make learning purposeful. They use resources such as interactive whiteboards to bring subjects alive. Teachers have good systems for assessing pupils' learning. They generally make good use of this information to plan what to teach next, although there are occasions when work in literacy lessons is not pitched at the right level for every pupil.

The curriculum supports pupils' personal development well. There is a good range of clubs and visits, which are greatly enjoyed by pupils, with one commenting 'that every day is fun'. Pupils produce high quality work in design and technology, such as the superb chair models on display in school. However, other displays, although of high quality, do not do enough to celebrate pupils' written work so that they learn to appreciate the importance of writing. Curriculum planning ensures that basic skills in reading and numeracy are

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introduced systematically, but the teaching of punctuation and grammar is not yet as structured, slowing pupils' learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders are strongly committed to school improvement and there is no complacency. Their drive for improvement and their ambitions are shared by all staff and members of the governing body and there is a good understanding of current strengths and weaknesses. This means that leaders know what needs improving, although written development planning does not always have sharp enough criteria to check whether targets have been reached. The governing body provides good challenge and support and is beginning to carry out more of their own monitoring so that they can contribute more strongly to strategic planning.

The school promotes equality successfully. Leaders carefully check data to ensure that all groups achieve well. There is no discrimination because pupils learn to respect different beliefs, reflecting the school's good contribution to community cohesion. Leaders are responsive to local needs and pupils develop a good understanding of life in other parts of the world through activities such as a recent multicultural week and links with South Africa.

The school has good safeguarding procedures. Adults give safety a high priority and are vigilant in responding to any potential dangers that pupils may encounter.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

A parent summed up some of the key strengths of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage when writing, 'I know that my child is safe and happy.' Children are taught well in the Nursery and the Reception classes and this means that they make good progress in all areas of learning, including quickly developing early literacy skills. Although attainment remains below average by the end of the Reception Year, this represents good progress from children's starting points. Adults take good account of differing needs. In the Nursery there is a particularly strong and effective focus on supporting children in the early stages of learning English. In the Nursery and Reception classes, adults plan exciting activities and topics are linked together well so that learning is made purposeful. For example, in the Nursery, children practised writing by making lists, painting, building models and counting as they worked on a theme of 'space'.

Adults make good use of the outdoor areas and give children good opportunities to think for themselves. For example, children were given high-quality support when sorting objects in the Reception Year, with the most-able being challenged to think of different ways to put items into groups. Children often select where they are going to work. This is most effective when they have talked about what they are going to do before they start work. When this does not happen, there are occasions when activities lack purpose because children are not sure why they are doing them.

Leaders monitor children's progress closely and set them clear targets for improvement. They have a good knowledge of strengths and weaknesses. They are doing the right things to close the gap between children's reading and writing skills by ensuring that there is a strong focus on writing throughout the school day.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Nearly all parents and carers are very pleased with the work of the school. Positive comments included, 'My daughter has been given the best possible start to her education' and 'the school has a strong leadership team and a dedicated teaching staff'. A very small number of parents and carers made comments about how well the school tackles unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team saw none and found that the school has good systems for tackling it on those rare occasions when it does occur.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Delce Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 241 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	85	8	13	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	70	16	26	1	2	1	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	43	70	17	28	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	70	17	28	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	43	70	16	26	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	70	17	28	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	74	14	23	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	41	67	13	21	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	66	19	31	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	43	25	41	2	3	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	48	25	41	0	0	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	39	64	21	34	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	77	13	21	0	0	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



10 December 2010

Dear Children,

Inspection of Delce Infant School, Rochester ME1 2QA

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for being so willing to talk to us. You were very polite and friendly and we enjoyed looking at your work. We agree with you that your school is good and that you learn new things quickly.

These are some of the things we found out about your school.

- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes settle well and make good progress.
- In Years 1 and 2, good teaching helps you to make good progress.
- You are very happy at school because adults make learning fun. There are some lovely displays, although there is very little that celebrates your writing.
- You feel very safe and take responsibility well. It is great that you are so knowledgeable about healthy lifestyles. ♦
- All of the adults in the school are very kind and they look after you very well. They give you good help when you are struggling with your work. ♦
- The school is well led and managed and all the adults are working very hard to make the school even better.
- Your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

This is what we have asked your school to do next:

- make sure that teachers always plan literacy work that is not too hard or too easy for you and make sure that basic writing skills are introduced carefully
- make sure that teachers use marking and targets so that you all know what you need to do to improve your work.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn. You can help your teachers by continuing to be so enthusiastic in lessons.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Capper

Lead Inspector

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