

Ditton Lodge First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110624
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	356783
Inspection dates	17–18 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Judith Dawson

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Turner
Headteacher	Angela Finn
Date of previous school inspection	6 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed five teachers teaching eight lessons and held meetings with groups of pupils, governors, and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's policies and procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare, teachers' assessments and the tracking of pupils' progress, planning for learning and school development and the monitoring of teaching and learning. They also analysed 91 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How the provision for pupils' learning has evolved since the last inspection.
- How effectively the school is preparing to meet the needs of pupils up to the age of eleven.
- Whether the school has been successful in improving on the already good outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

This smaller than average first school will become a full primary school, taking pupils up to Year 6 from September 2012. Pupils now in Year 4 will remain in the school rather than transferring to the middle school and the building is in the process of being extended to accommodate them. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and none is in the early stages of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is smaller than in most other schools. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to other schools although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average. There is an independent nursery on the school site which is inspected separately. The school provides a breakfast club each morning. The school has Healthy Schools status, has gained the Sportsmark for the last two years and been awarded the silver Artmark. It also has been awarded three times the Basic Skills Quality Mark for its commitment to equality of opportunity.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is a friendly and highly effective school, providing pupils with the best possible preparation for their future lives. As a result, pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and attendance is high. The high quality provision and planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage has now permeated throughout the school so that, for each pupil, learning is an adventure. The rich, exciting and innovative curriculum, where pupils use the skills they are so effectively taught to respond to a 'commission', whereby pupils are given a task or challenge to pursue, makes learning thorough and meaningful. To quote a pupil, 'Teachers find the best way of learning for you and then we share our learning with others. There is always something new to achieve.' The latter statement sums up not only pupils' attitudes to their learning but also the whole school ethos of striving for the best. Leaders and staff are united in their commitment to providing the best possible education and care for the pupils. They have improved on the already good practice acknowledged at the time of the last inspection through astute monitoring and accurate evaluation of all aspects of the school's work and continuously evolving plans for development. An example of this is the way teachers who have already been appointed to teach Years 5 and 6 are planning the curriculum for the future with the existing teachers. Standards are high and pupils make rapid progress because of the school's high aspirations. The school is highly inclusive and everyone is respected, supported and valued. It has an outstanding capacity for continuous and sustained improvement.

Teachers are extremely effective in matching their lessons to pupils' needs and aspirations. They encourage pupils to question and experiment while ensuring that they acquire the basic skills they need. All adults have high expectations of the pupils' learning and attitudes, so behaviour is exemplary for all but a few pupils with specific emotional and behavioural challenges. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the high quality support they receive. However, the targets they are set in their individual education plans are long-term and too general. This makes it more difficult for them to see gains in their learning through short, clearly defined steps and to take responsibility for challenging themselves. Throughout the school, pupils know how to improve their learning and they often evaluate their own and each others' work, sharing their research with other classes in school. They have a wide range of responsibilities, which they carry out conscientiously, often generating their own fundraising in response to international disasters. Leaders and managers are rightly extending the already good engagement with parents and carers and are about to launch an interactive learning platform for families to access.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to take more responsibility for improving their learning, and to see their progress, by breaking down their targets into short-term and very specific steps.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills that are broadly in line with the expectations of their age, except for their communication, language and literacy skills, which are often below expectations. They make rapid progress throughout the school so that, by Year 2 their attainment is well above average. By the end of Year 4, attainment is high and because pupils make significantly more than the progress expected, of them, their overall achievement is outstanding.

Learning in lessons is rapid. Pupils take a pride in their achievements and are eager to participate in discussions. They approach their written tasks with enthusiasm and care and most respond well to their teachers' wise written advice in their books. They know their targets and most help to evaluate their progress towards them. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and for some, especially those with emotional or behavioural difficulties, progress is rapid. However, the specific targets for pupils with learning difficulties are less accessible to them so they have fewer opportunities to evaluate their performance towards them. All pupils collaborate extremely effectively, bouncing ideas off each other. They are kind, considerate and willing to share. They demonstrate high levels of empathy towards each other and the real or imaginary people they study. Pupils in Year 1, for example, responded with alacrity to the challenge from a giant to help improve his image in fairy tales. All pupils' deep understanding and practice of acceptable behaviour and attitudes, and their care for each other, are a tribute to the school's high quality guidance and support. Through their wide-ranging studies, pupils have high levels of understanding of how to stay safe and take care of themselves, including when using the internet. They are very clear about how to maintain healthy lifestyles through healthy eating and plenty of exercise. They have an excellent knowledge of their own and others' history and heritage. Pupils in Year 4, for example, made a huge book with high quality information about Anglo-Saxons for younger pupils, with an electronic commentary for each page accessed by pressing the relevant page number, as in a museum guide. Pupils are writing questions to ask their peers in a school in Ghana. This link was researched, in part, by the school council through the 'Global Gateway' programme. Above all, pupils feel very secure in school and thoroughly enjoy the opportunities on offer. Over 90% attend an extra curricular activity.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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?

The schools' thorough and accurate procedures for tracking pupils' progress and the high quality day-to-day assessments enable teachers to meet each pupil's needs extremely well. The staff are all aware that pupils learn in different ways. A recent perception that girls' achievements in mathematics was not as great as the boys, for example, resulted in a focus on encouraging the girls to take risks with their learning. As a result of this work, in each mathematics lesson observed during the inspection, girls were fully engaged and were confident mathematicians. Excellent relationships, very effective questioning and flexible planning ensures teachers respond to the learning in each lesson, adjusting their focus as the lesson progresses. There is a strong sense that they are thoroughly enjoying learning alongside their pupils. If there are any dips in the rate of individual pupil's learning, the school is swift to provide additional support and the most able pupils are encouraged to extend their learning as far as they can. Many pupils continue their studies at home, bringing the outcomes into school to share with their peers.

The school has extended the 'theme weeks', which enriched the curriculum in the past, to become part of the day-to-day provision. The arts, humanities and science are taught through enquiry or to meet a specific challenge. Teachers make sure that, within this approach, pupils acquire the knowledge and skills they need. Pupils have a great deal of input in the way the themes develop. Excellent use of external agencies, visits and visitors gives pupils additional knowledge to aid their studies. The many extra-curricular activities,

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strong provision for sports and the arts and the focus on healthy lifestyles are reflected in the school's awards. The well-planned and rigorous teaching of English and mathematics, including generating a love of books and reading, ensures that pupils have the skills they need to excel.

Pupils' welfare is at the heart of the school's work. Staff have up-to-date first aid qualifications and liaise very effectively with external agencies to support individual pupils' needs. The care and attention to ensuring pupils' safety during the building work is exemplary. The staff have established a good understanding with the builders so that all adults are working as a team to keep pupils safe. Adults are dedicated to the task of promoting pupils' welfare and self-esteem, enabling them to grow in self-confidence and, through the example of adults, to care for others.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The ambitious and highly inclusive leadership of the headteacher permeates throughout the school. Subject leaders are very knowledgeable and have high aspirations for the pupils. They are swift to act on any underachievement identified through teachers' assessments or observations. There is a constant appetite for making things even better, especially the curriculum. Good links with parents, carers and the local community, and evolving global links, broaden pupils' horizons. For example, pupils are members of the Newmarket Youth Council, helping to improve the environment. The school has robust plans to promote community cohesion further by establishing links with schools in contrasting communities across the United Kingdom. Procedures for ensuring pupils' safety fully meet statutory requirements, are deeply embedded, seamless and unobtrusive. Very effective links with other professionals, combined with a deep knowledge of individual needs, ensure the best possible care. For example, much thought is given to finding the best possible outcome for supporting pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties, including the impact on his or her peers. The school responds well to suggestions from parents and carers and has set up the breakfast club to ease the start of the day for some pupils. The governing body carries out its statutory duties efficiently. Governors are knowledgeable and support the headteacher well. They monitor aspects of pupils' learning and school improvement, providing useful feedback to the staff. Some governors are new to the role and are developing their skills, but most visit the school regularly, often contributing their expertise to support pupils' learning. Above all, the highly inclusive school generates ambitious pupils and adults who know they are valued. Several teaching assistants have successfully completed additional training. The building and resources have been adapted to meet the needs of any adult or pupil with disabilities. The school is

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a harmonious society where the respect for individuals makes any intolerance or discrimination extremely rare.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a flying start to their education. The teacher and teaching assistant are highly skilled in ensuring children's pastoral and educational needs are met within a stimulating and challenging environment. During the inspection, the Reception class was accommodated in a demountable classroom due to the building work. This made the use of the outdoor learning environment extremely restricted. Nevertheless, groups of children were escorted outside with clipboards on a 'word hunt' to deepen their understanding of the links between letters and sounds. Activities are well-focused and there is an almost seamless blend of adult-directed and child-initiated learning. Children organise their costumes, dialogue and props to support their 'pantomime' challenge, for example, not forgetting the box office. With adult support, they did a school survey to establish the favourite pantomime to perform to the school. Children are confident, happy and eager to work and play together. Extremely efficient, wide ranging and flexible assessments of their whole development, backed up with samples of their achievements, enables adults to plan very precisely to extend children's learning. Close liaison with the Year 1 teacher eases the transition into Key Stage 1. The highly effective planning for learning, which enables children to make rapid progress, has permeated throughout the school.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

A much higher percentage of parents and carers than average responded to the questionnaire and the overwhelming majority of responses were positive about all aspects of the school's work. A very few parents and carers expressed a range of concerns about the behaviour of a few pupils. Others felt that their children's progress was not good enough and that their children's needs are not met. The inspection found that the school deals extremely well with pupils who find it difficult to maintain acceptable levels of behaviour and that almost all pupils make rapid progress. The school deals with individual needs extremely well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ditton Lodge First 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 91 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 141 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	68	25	27	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	62	68	26	29	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	43	47	42	46	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	47	41	45	6	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	55	60	35	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	53	58	36	40	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	57	37	41	2	2	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)	39	43	42	46	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	46	41	45	6	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	47	41	45	5	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	43	44	48	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	53	58	36	40	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	63	33	36	0	0	0	0

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



21 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ditton Lodge First School, Newmarket, CB8 8BL

Thank you all very much for your welcome and support when we visited your outstanding school recently. This letter is to tell you how much we enjoyed your visit and what a splendid job your school is doing to support you all. But first of all we want to say how impressed we were by your hard work, behaviour and the way you love to learn. Most of you make excellent progress through the school and, by the time you leave, your standards are high and you have learnt of lots of interesting things. This is because of the way you respond to your challenges by using your skills to experiment, research and make things to show what you have found out. We could see how well you all work together and share your knowledge and ideas. Well done. You should all be very proud of yourselves.

Your teachers are extremely skilled in making sure that you have interesting things to learn about and that each one of you has the support or challenge you need. They give you wise advice about how to make your work even better and targets for you to work towards. A few of you find some of your learning difficult. Your teachers give you targets as well but these are not always very clear or take too long to achieve. We have asked your teachers to make sure all of your targets are very clear and are broken down into small steps that you can achieve quickly. You can then see your progress and even begin to set your own targets.

Everyone in your school is well-cared for and valued. All adults have your welfare at the heart of all they do. This is why those in charge are always looking at ways to make your school even better. We know that there are already lots of plans for you as you move into Years 5 and 6. Above all, they make sure learning is fun and that you have plenty of responsibility for improving your work and the life of the school.

It was a privilege to be guests in your school and we wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Dawson

Lead inspector

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