

Inspection of Ditton Infant School

Pear Tree Avenue, Ditton, Aylesford, Kent ME20 6EB

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 October 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this school because leaders have created a culture that promotes kindness and respect for each other. Pupils feel safe because staff take the time to listen and resolve their worries. Bullying or unkindness are extremely rare, but staff deal with these well so friendships can quickly resume. The 'Golden Rules' are well understood by all pupils. Everyone tries to be their very best so they are recognised in the 'Golden Book' for demonstrating the school values.

Pupils know that staff have very high expectations of what they can achieve and do. Pupils strive to demonstrate the behaviours of being a 'Persevering Parrot' by trying their very best in lessons. Learning ventures outside the classroom in the forest school where staff help pupils develop their leadership and problem-solving skills. Leaders prioritise pupils' safety by teaching important skills such as how to cross a road safely and to be aware of strangers. Pupils leave school well equipped with the life skills they need as they grow up.

Pupils are eager to learn. Learning is interesting because it reflects pupils' interests as well covering the important knowledge that they might need in the future. Teachers shape this learning into lessons that inspire and motivate pupils to want to know more.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have created a well-ordered curriculum that allows pupils in all years to develop a secure foundation of knowledge. Subject leaders demonstrate their expertise in the way that they shape the curriculum. Regular opportunities are identified so pupils can practise important skills like spelling 'tricky words' or remembering their times tables. As a result, pupils can apply what they know to new learning confidently. Pupils talk knowledgeably about past learning. Their books indicate that they develop a secure understanding in the different subjects they learn.

Most pupils achieve well in reading. This is because all staff have the expertise to teach phonics well. Daily phonics lessons help pupils learn how to blend the sounds to form words. Pupils who find reading more difficult have additional phonics practise. Additional speech and language support also helps pupils who find it difficult to say the new sounds that they hear. However, leaders know not all pupils read books with enough regularity to be fluent readers. This means that some pupils struggle to read words in full sentences. Although time has been provided each week for identified pupils to read to an adult, leaders recognise the need to increase these opportunities in the very near future.

Leaders quickly identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) as soon as they join the school. Staff are provided with training that helps them to understand the different needs of the pupils they teach and ways to support

them. However, leaders are aware that not all pupils with SEND achieve as well as they should. Plans on what additional support should be provided are not always specific enough. Staff are therefore unsure of how to break learning down. This means the work set for pupils with SEND can be too easy or not lead to the same outcomes as those achieved by their peers. This puts them at risk of not achieving their full potential.

Leaders plan learning which enables pupils to become active and inquisitive learners. In Reception, children use the well-resourced outside area to develop teamwork, building impressive tanks and castles. They use their imagination to act out stories they have read with their teacher. Staff also use 'worry monsters' to help children recognise and manage their feelings. Like the rest of the school, the behaviour of children in Reception is exemplary.

It is important to all staff and leaders that pupils learn to be safe, happy and healthy. Pupils learn how to take care of their mental health. They are also very clear that everyone should be treated with respect. Clubs and trips provide opportunities for pupils to share many experiences with their friends. Pupils are proud of the different skills they learn, such as tending to the plants they grow in the school garden.

Leaders have high ambition for all pupils to attend well and are taking appropriate actions to realise this. They communicate effectively with parents when their child's attendance starts to slip and offer effective support when needed, to get them back on track.

Governors and leaders are clear in their vision for the school. Governors make use of a range of information to make sure all leaders focus on the right priorities. Passionate staff speak so highly of the leadership and family feel of the school. They told inspectors it is 'teamwork that makes the dream work'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that there is a robust culture of safeguarding across the school. They provide all staff with the training they need to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Staff follow clearly communicated processes for reporting concerns. Leaders ensure that accurate records reflect the actions they take to address concerns. They are tenacious when seeking further support from professional agencies when pupils and their families need it.

Leaders make sure that they complete appropriate checks when recruiting new staff. Governors have effective processes in place for checking that leaders are taking the right actions to keep pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff are not always clear on the specific support pupils with SEND need to achieve well. This means these pupils do not always learn the knowledge they need to help them keep up with the curriculum and become independent learners. Leaders must ensure that all staff have the knowledge and expertise required to help all pupils with SEND achieve well.
- Leaders know that pupils who find reading more difficult are not provided with enough opportunities to read to a well-trained adult. These pupils do not rapidly develop the confidence to become fluent readers, and gaps in phonics knowledge go unaddressed. Leaders must realise their plans to provide additional targeted support so these pupils catch up and keep up with the planned reading curriculum.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	118858
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10228880
Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	James Milligan
Headteacher	Claire Lewer
Website	www.ditton-inf.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2008

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to examine records and actions. This included sampling a range of safeguarding

documentation. The lead inspector also reviewed checks on the safer recruitment of staff.

- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school improvement plan and self-evaluation form, policies, curriculum documents and minutes of governing body meetings.
- The lead inspector met with governors, including the chair. They also had a telephone conversation with the school improvement officer from the local authority.
- The views of staff and parents were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Michelle Lower, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kirstine Boon

Ofsted Inspector

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