



# The Discovery School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number 134057  
LEA Kent

Inspection number 274809  
Inspection dates 21 - 22 June 2005  
Reporting inspector Mr David G Collard

Inspection deemed to have been carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 according to section 12(3) of the same act.

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Type of School	Primary school	School address	Discovery Drive
School category	Community		Kings Hill
Age range of pupils	4 - 11		West Malling
			Kent
			ME19 4GJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	(01732) 847 000
Number on roll	176	Fax number	(01732) 847 111
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Eric Spicer
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs Alison Farrall

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Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 - 11	July 2005	274809

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## Introduction

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of The Discovery School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

The Discovery School opened in September 2003 with 88 pupils but now has 176 on roll, as new pupils have been starting each week throughout the year. The school was built as part of a very rapidly expanding and prestigious mixed housing development on the outskirts of West Malling in Kent but only 40 per cent of the pupils come from this estate. There is a wide social mix but pupils come from generally advantaged backgrounds and have the standards expected when they start in the Reception class. Twenty-two per cent of pupils are 'fresh start'\* and may not have thrived at their previous schools. A quarter of pupils are on the special needs register, and this is slightly higher than average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than in most schools and there are very few who speak English as an additional language.

The first two phases of the building are now complete but further developments are planned over the next few years to improve the accommodation, the range of classrooms, specialist areas and the road access.

## Key for inspection grades

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

\* - Children or families who might have had difficulties at their previous school and are being provided with an opportunity to make a new start.

## Overall effectiveness of the school

Even though it has only been open for two years, this is already an effective and rapidly developing school, providing good value for money. The school's own view is rather more conservative because it would still like to have achieved more. The inevitable challenges caused by a constantly rising roll, sometimes doubling the numbers in each class, and the work to ensure that the educational provision is cohesive, have been undertaken with professional rigour and realism. The varying standards of learners, the building of a staff team and the difficulties with accommodation have been prioritised carefully to ensure that all are dealt with effectively. Teaching is good overall, relying on a shared aim of providing a creative and exciting curriculum that enables pupils to make good academic and personal progress. The strong lead provided by the headteacher, deputy and senior management team has had a substantial impact, enabling the school to build a good reputation in the locality.

The school recognises its many strengths but knows that there is still a lot more to do now that there are so many more children in the school. Standards by the end of the Foundation Stage, Year 2 and Year 6 are average. Achievement is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage, because until recently, the teaching was not so strong. Progress is good in all other years. The identification of pupils' individual needs has been particularly difficult because information has had to be exchanged between many schools. It is only recently that there has been enough data available to gauge overall performance. The school has identified weaknesses associated with reading, writing and the achievement of the most able pupils, which are presently being addressed. The school improvement plan has been revised a number of times and priorities changed as the circumstances have altered. All this has been done sensitively to ensure that no undue stress has been placed on staff or pupils. As a result, pupils hugely enjoy their learning and are proud of their new school. Parents are equally pleased with their children's progress. There is a good capacity to continue with the necessary changes to drive up standards.

### Grade: 2

#### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of the more able pupils.
- Implement the planned developments to raise pupils' progress in the Foundation Stage to that of the rest of the school.
- Effectively manage the increasing numbers on roll and the building programme to meet the needs of all pupils.

## **Achievement and standards**

Standards reached by learners are in line with those expected for their ages, and this confirms the school's view. There is clear evidence in the school's assessment information and from pupils' books that they have learnt what is expected and that they can use this knowledge to increase their understanding. Progress through each year is good overall although it is more rapid as pupils move through the school, from a slower start in the Foundation Stage. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with average ability make particularly good progress because their needs are very quickly identified. More data have been analysed and used effectively to ensure the more able pupils make faster progress. The revised and challenging targets for the next three years suggest convincingly that the number of pupils expected to exceed the levels expected nationally in both Years 2 and 6 will be on a steep upward curve.

Soon after the school opened, an analysis of pupils' performance raised concerns about their attainment in reading. A successful series of initiatives has improved the provision so that more pupils are reaching the higher levels. The same intensive support is now being given to writing and, although there are signs of improvement, this has not yet been fully translated into higher standards. Standards in mathematics and science have continued to improve from those last year. The creative and integrated approach to other subjects has meant that learners are progressing well in other subjects. Pupils use their basic literacy, numeracy and technological skills well. In a very well presented pamphlet completed on the computer, for example, pupils compared different churches following a number of visits. This activity cleverly linked work in English, history, religious education and information and communication technology (ICT).

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Personal development and well-being**

Pupils really enjoy coming to school, are keen and eager to learn and have excellent attitudes to their work. This is reflected in the attendance figures, which are above the national average. Pupils are friendly, polite and helpful. These fine attitudes contribute well to their good achievement. Pupils value the good support and guidance offered to them by teachers and other adults. One pupil said, 'You can go to anyone in this school for help'. Confidence continually grows so that by Year 6, pupils demonstrate mature attitudes to work and other aspects of school life.

Pupils show a good appreciation of their own and others' values, beliefs and cultures. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is well developed. They know right from wrong and are fully aware of the school rules. This is reflected in their positive relationships with one another and in the good behaviour in lessons and around the school.

Pupils are willing to take responsibility within the school and are given plenty of opportunities to do so. Participation in the school council, for example, has enabled pupils to bring about improvements at breaktimes through the purchase of playground equipment and football posts. Consequently, pupils make an effective contribution to the school community as well as to the wider community through, for example, their support for charities.

The school effectively helps pupils to understand and adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils develop an awareness of safety when using tools and equipment in science, design and technology and in physical education. They show a good understanding of healthy eating and the need for physical exercise. By the time they leave, their good communication, technological and social skills, together with competence in literacy and numeracy, have prepared them well for future economic success.

## **Grade: 2**

### **Quality of provision**

#### **Teaching and learning**

The overall quality of teaching is good. The basic skills in literacy, numeracy and science are taught particularly effectively. Nonetheless, the quality varies a little, improving as pupils move through the school. As a result, their learning also improves and their rates of progress pick up as they get older. In Year 6, an outstanding lesson in science helped to illustrate this point. The teacher's excellent questioning got precisely to the heart of what pupils needed to learn, which is what separated this lesson from other teaching that is nearly as good. Marking effectively provides encouragement and helps pupils to feel good about themselves but does not always contain simple messages about how they can improve. This said, good adaptations of plans and schemes ensure that pupils of different capabilities learn effectively. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress, mainly because teaching assistants are involved well in helping them to follow instructions and to understand tasks that are set. On one occasion, the make-believe theft of an ancient artefact was staged and many of these pupils were so engaged that their level of

concentration noticeably increased and they wrote extensively, sustaining high quality work.

Procedures for assessing pupils' work are good. The information gathered is recorded carefully and used to track progress, to adapt planning and to set future targets. It is generally used well but the school is rightly working on ways to provide much higher levels of challenge for the more able pupils.

## **Grade: 2**

### **Curriculum and other activities**

The curriculum meets pupils' needs and external requirements well and, with the better teaching quality, has improved considerably in the Foundation Stage. It takes good account of pupils' interests and experiences. Pupils themselves describe the curriculum as 'exciting'. They particularly like the themed approach to some subjects, such as between art and design, science and design and technology or between history and physical education. Pupils in Year 5 and 6, for example, particularly liked learning a Tudor dance when studying this period in history. The good links across subjects help pupils to make real connections between different aspects of their work. They are particularly effective in motivating pupils who make a 'fresh start' at this school. Teachers have adopted the national strategies for literacy and numeracy well, and this is successful in helping pupils to achieve well in English and mathematics. A practical approach to science helps pupils to make good progress, particularly in the skills of scientific enquiry. All subjects make good use of ICT.

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' ability to stay safe and healthy. A good range of extra-curricular activities, as well as visits, contribute to pupils' enjoyment and achievement. Good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and for those who speak English as an additional language ensures that their needs are met well.

## **Grade: 2**

### **Care, guidance and support**

Pupils are very willing to explain that they feel valued and well looked after by their teachers. Inspectors agree with their views. Records of each child's particular needs are kept and considerable care is taken to meet these needs. Their well-being is fostered well, and this holds true for their academic as well as their personal development. The vice-chair of governors has accepted the strategic role of ensuring that procedures for child protection are sufficiently

robust to meet all local requirements. Staff training in these, and other related matters, is carried out regularly and effectively. Pupils with learning difficulties, disabilities or emotional needs are treated sensitively. Records indicate that many of these pupils have made remarkable strides in improved behaviour, literacy and numeracy.

Pupils' health and safety is taken very seriously. For example, teachers encourage pupils to think about issues such as what they eat, being safe in the sun and even sitting sensibly in lessons to help their circulation and concentration.

**Grade: 2**

## **Leadership and management**

Leadership and management are good. The correct priorities have been established to promote provision of high quality. The school's main aim of providing pupils with high quality care and a curriculum that they will enjoy has largely been met already. The headteacher has a clear view about where the school is heading and has been able to convey these messages to the whole staff, ensuring a shared approach to developments.

As the school grew, the newly-reconstituted governing body put in place good structures to enable a seamless transition. Good management has already actioned much of what was planned. Statutory requirements are met effectively and strong procedures are developing to monitor and improve teaching and to track pupils' progress. Senior leaders, together with governors, evaluate provision realistically, for instance, in deciding that national test results were overstating the performance of pupils and that the internal assessments were a better gauge of where teaching improvements should be made. Provision for children in the Reception class, and reading and writing have been identified as areas for further work, and improvements are already apparent. Nevertheless, schemes, systems and changes are understandably not yet fully embedded in all of the school's practice, partly because not enough time has yet elapsed and partly because there is not a full range of assessment data. Senior managers are focused well on addressing these matters. All the evidence points to a strong capacity for further improvement and, because the views of all parties – staff, governors, pupils and parents alike - are taken into account, belief in the school is exceptionally high.

**Grade: 2**



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**INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS**

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.</b>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	<b>2</b>	
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	<b>2</b>	
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	<b>3</b>	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	<b>2</b>	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	<b>Yes</b>	
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	<b>N/A</b>	

**ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	<b>2</b>	
The <i>standards</i> reached by learners	<b>3</b>	
How well learners' make <i>progress</i> , taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	<b>2</b>	
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	<b>2</b>	

**PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING**

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	<b>2</b>	
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>2</b>	
The behaviour of learners	<b>2</b>	
How well learners enjoy their education	<b>1</b>	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	<b>2</b>	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	<b>2</b>	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community.	<b>2</b>	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	<b>2</b>	

**THE QUALITY OF PROVISION**

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

**LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	<b>2</b>	
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	<b>2</b>	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	<b>2</b>	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	<b>2</b>	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	<b>2</b>	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	<b>2</b>	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	<b>Yes</b>	

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily.	<b>Yes</b>
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise.	<b>Yes</b>
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse.	<b>Yes</b>
Learners are educated about sexual health.	<b>Yes</b>
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe.</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.	<b>Yes</b>
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place.	<b>Yes</b>
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism.	<b>Yes</b>
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them.	<b>Yes</b>
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships.	<b>Yes</b>
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them.	<b>Yes</b>
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	<b>Yes</b>
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills.	<b>Yes</b>
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams.	<b>Yes</b>
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in Key Stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form.	<b>N/A</b>
Education for all learners aged 14-19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy.	<b>N/A</b>

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27 June 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly during our visit to your school. All the inspectors had a lovely time, looking at your work and seeing your lessons. We especially enjoyed chatting with so many of you over the wonderful lunch we had together!

What we liked most about your school:

- We think this is a very happy school. We like how hard you work and how well you behave.
- You are kind and thoughtful to each other and are very proud of your lovely new school.
- There are lots of exciting activities for you to take part in with your friends.
- Your teachers and the adults take good care of you, and make sure that you feel safe and secure and get extra support if you find things difficult.

What we have asked your headteacher and her staff to think about:

- How to help those of you who are ready for even harder work. We have asked your teachers to make sure the work you have is a little more challenging.
- Your headteacher has had lots of extra work to make sure that you all settled in well and could find new friends, especially the younger children. We think that she now needs some time to plan with the other adults, even more ways to make sure that you are all able to do your best.

We hope that you will carry on helping your teachers and the adults in your school and would like to wish you success in your future education.

Yours sincerely,

David G Collard - Lead inspector