



Ditton Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118858
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280411
Inspection dates 31 October 2005 to 31 October 2005
Reporting inspector Carole Skinner RISP

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Pear Tree Avenue
School category	Foundation		Ditton
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		Aylesford, Kent ME20 6EB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01732 844107
Number on roll	122	Fax number	01732 873 793
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Ian Hardie
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Webster

Age group 4 to 7	Inspection dates 31 October 2005 - 31 October 2005	Inspection number 280411
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Ditton Infant School is situated on a large housing estate in a village just outside Maidstone. Pupils come from a broad range of social and economic backgrounds and their attainment on entry to the school is typical of that seen in most schools. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is similar to the national average but varies from year to year. There is one pupil who is at an early stage of learning English and very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school recently reduced from six classes to five as a result of a falling roll.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ditton Infant School is a good school which provides good value for money. These judgements agree with the school's view of its own effectiveness. Parents have very positive views of the school and pupils enjoy being there. Pupils are cared for very well and receive effective support and guidance which enrich their personal development.

Pupils achieve well throughout the school and reach high standards because teachers have high expectations of them and give them work that challenges them and extends their learning. Standards in writing are exceptionally high. Although above average, standards in reading and mathematics are not as high as those in writing and the school has begun to implement strategies to raise them to the same levels. Teaching is mostly good, but teachers' questioning does not always allow pupils enough opportunity to think for themselves. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and their positive attitudes to learning boost their progress. The curriculum is well planned and enriched by a very good range of clubs, visits and visitors. Good provision for children in the Foundation Stage helps them to make good progress and achieve high standards.

Good leadership and management ensure that there is an equally strong emphasis on high achievement and pupils' personal development. The headteacher gives clear direction to the school's work and keeps a close check on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. She is supported well by the governors, deputy headteacher and other staff with management responsibilities. Effective teamwork ensures the school is well placed to sustain the substantial pace of improvement that has been established since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement the strategies already identified in the school improvement plan to raise standards in reading and mathematics still further
- Refine teachers' questioning skills in order to develop pupils' ability to think for themselves and to apply their existing knowledge in new situations.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good, as pupils progress from broadly average standards to above average by the time they leave the school. Standards in reading and mathematics are above average, whilst those in writing are exceptionally high. Standards in writing and mathematics have improved considerably since the last inspection. Very effective strategies for teaching writing are being implemented consistently in all classes, and regular target-setting and assessments contribute to pupils' very good progress. The school now aims to achieve excellence in reading and mathematics, and a recent emphasis on problem-solving in mathematics has already resulted in an improvement

in standards in 2005. Teachers are now concentrating on helping pupils to infer and deduce information from a text in order to raise standards further in reading.

All groups of pupils make good progress and some make very good progress, including pupils with learning difficulties. Teachers set challenging targets for all pupils and check their progress very carefully throughout each year. This is a key factor in pupils' very good achievement in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They are well-mannered, showing respect for adults and for each other. They greatly enjoy their work and life in school. Their positive attitudes, good attendance and the good teaching they receive mean that behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Any challenging behaviour is tackled by consistently applied strategies. Pupils' spiritual and moral sense is developed effectively in assemblies and in lessons. Good relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and adults contribute significantly to the atmosphere in the school, which is both friendly and purposeful.

Pupils gain a growing understanding of other faiths and cultures. They are encouraged to take on responsibility and to make a contribution to the life of the school, particularly through their involvement in the school council. Pupils also become involved in the wider community, for example when they deliver harvest parcels in the village. They express their views confidently and these are taken into account by staff. Pupils stay healthy by eating fresh fruit snacks and taking part in many sporting activities, whilst class and school rules help them to stay safe. Good teaching of basic skills prepares pupils well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are mostly good. Good teaching in the Foundation Stage ensures that children make good progress in acquiring basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, while also learning through practical activities, such as investigation and play. The teaching of writing is particularly effective throughout the school because teachers have been well trained to implement the school's agreed strategies and do so consistently. The school rightly identified the need to improve the teaching of problem-solving in mathematics, and this has already brought about some improvement in pupils' achievement. It has also recognised the need to improve other aspects of teaching. For example, teachers are developing their questioning skills so that pupils have more opportunities to think creatively, to work things out for themselves and to apply existing knowledge in new situations. They are also focusing on improving the pupils' ability to draw out meaning from a text in order to raise standards further in reading.

Very good target-setting and assessment procedures further underpin pupils' very good achievement in writing. The school recognises the need to ensure that procedures are equally effective in reading and mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils' good achievement is founded on an interesting and stimulating curriculum which is enriched by a very good range of additional activities. There is good provision for teaching the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). The curriculum provides the right level of challenge for all pupils, ranging from those with learning difficulties to those capable of high attainment. The Foundation Stage curriculum is well planned, with a good balance between activities selected by the children and those directed by the teachers.

An extensive number of clubs include opportunities for pupils to participate in music, sport and drama, and a large proportion of pupils from all year groups enjoy taking part. There are many visits that enrich pupils' learning across a number of subjects. Planning is good and has recently incorporated more opportunities for creativity. The good opportunities provided for pupils to learn about healthy lifestyles are reflected by the recent Healthy Schools Award. Opportunities for pupils to use computers have improved significantly since the last inspection.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Teachers and assistants provide exceptionally good role-models and support pupils very well.

All adults are alert to pupils' educational and welfare needs and respond well through a range of actions, including good communication with parents. Pupils' academic and personal development is very carefully monitored and this enables their individual needs to be well met. In the Foundation Stage, children are carefully introduced to the routines of school life and the welcoming, secure and stimulating environment contributes significantly to the success of their early learning and independence. There are very good procedures for ensuring the protection, health and safety of all pupils. Appropriate training has been provided and staff know what actions are to be taken and by whom. Well-planned activities in personal, social and health education, circle time and assemblies support and promote pupils' personal and emotional development very well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides good leadership for the school and is well supported by the deputy headteacher and other teachers with management responsibilities. All share a clear vision for the school and are committed to achieving high standards. As a result

of strong leadership and effective teamwork, the school has made significant improvements in many areas of its work since the last inspection and is well placed to continue in its quest for overall excellence. This is particularly evident in the outstanding improvement in writing, achieved because teachers attended training, implemented new strategies and assessment procedures and closely monitored the impact of their work.

The school has acknowledged the need to extend the work of some subject leaders by enabling them to monitor how well their subjects are being taught. It plans to involve teachers more effectively in scrutinising pupils' work in subjects other than English and mathematics. Governors provide critical support to the school and are confident enough in this role to ask challenging questions. They are well informed because the headteacher provides them with comprehensive reports which are discussed at each meeting. There are rigorous procedures for reviewing and evaluating all aspects of the school's work which involve staff and governors and take account of the views of parents and pupils. Inspectors agree with the priorities for improvement that have already been identified as a result of the school's review of its own effectiveness.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

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

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so helpful and welcoming to the inspectors who visited your school. We really enjoyed looking at your work and coming to your lessons. Thank you for talking to us and telling us about your school.

What we like most about your school:

- You all work hard and do well in reading and mathematics. We think your writing is particularly good.
- Most of you behave well in lessons and around the school, enjoy learning and are polite to each other and to the grown-ups.
- Your teachers know you well and plan work that is interesting and helps you to make good progress.
- Mrs Webster is always looking for ways to make your school better and all the staff and governors are helping to make sure this happens.

What we have asked your headteacher, the staff and the school's governors to think about next:

- To help you to do as well in reading and mathematics as you do in writing.
- To ask you questions in lessons that help you to work things out for yourselves and make you think hard.