



Drake Infant School and Nursery

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120995
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 291944
Inspection dates 21–22 September 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Sandra Tweddell

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Fairfields
School category	Community		Croxton Road, Croxton Road
Age range of pupils	3–7		Thetford, Norfolk IP24 1JW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01842 762055
Number on roll (school)	150	Fax number	01842 752844
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs. Joy Potter
		Headteacher	Mrs. Mary Bartrop
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2000		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Children enter the school from a range of backgrounds, including US Forces and from many minority ethnic groups. Many children enter and leave at different times of the school year and 10% of children are at early stages of learning English. There is a higher proportion of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and more with a statement of special educational need than in most schools. The school has extended hours provision and 'Investors in People' status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that is on its way to becoming outstanding because of the drive and vision of the headteacher who is an excellent leader. Value for money is good. The views of parents, governors and pupils are sought and taken on board. Parents hold the school in very high regard. The provision for equal opportunities is a major strength. Attainment on entry is broadly average but in some years, only half of the children who enter the school stay until the end of Year 2. This is because of factors outside the school's control, such as Forces' children entering and leaving. Many of the children who come into the school after the normal point of entry have learning difficulties and disabilities. It is a tribute to the staff that results over the past few years have been above average in reading and mathematics, and broadly average in writing. Pupils' achievement is good. The good provision for more able pupils ensures that their achievement is good and sometimes very good. Children for whom English is a new language do very well, because the school is quick to seek external advice when needed and to act upon the guidance that is given. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good and often very good progress. Standards in other subjects are sometimes not as high as in English and mathematics, for example, results for science in 2006 were slightly below the other subjects. Subject leaders are working purposefully on this in the coming year. Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is good and standards at the end of the reception classes are broadly average. A contributory factor to the good progress is pupils' personal development, which is good. Pupils really enjoy school, so are motivated to learn. Their behaviour is good and often very good. From the nursery into Year 2, children are encouraged to develop their independence which enables them to achieve well. Attendance is satisfactory but a few parents do not see the importance of a high level of pupil attendance. The school draws very effectively upon resources of the community to support learning, such as the police and health services. Plans are well established for the building of a Children's Centre, run by the school for the local community. The accommodation supports children's learning very well, especially the outdoor ship, 'The Drake' that leads onto a model fort. Children of all ages love working with this resource. Teaching and learning are good because of rigorous planning that ensures that pupils are taught according to their needs. Teaching assistants are well trained and support teaching and learning effectively. Assessment in English and mathematics is used well. Rigorous assessment and monitoring of subjects other than English and mathematics are appropriate priorities for the school as assessment of some of these subjects is only satisfactory. The curriculum is good. The 'Every Child Matters' principles are at the heart of the school's work. One example of this is the planning for future economic well-being which includes pupils' involvement in 'Young Enterprise' schemes. Pupils' effectively lead healthy lives and are exceptionally aware of how to stay safe because of guidance given by staff. The care for children is very good and they receive good academic guidance through targets which begin in the reception classes with pictures and develop into written targets by Year 2. Pupils are very considerate to others. Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher has very high and clear expectations of her staff so the quality time they receive for managing their

subjects is used well. Management systems are very good and are based upon reflective and thoughtful practices. One example is the cycle of school evaluation and the resulting school improvement plan. As a result, school self evaluation is highly accurate and ensures the school is able to support all pupils well. The school improvement plan covers one year so does not plan for the longer term. Governance is good. Governors are ably led and hold the school to account despite the difficulty of appointing governors and the resulting changes in the governing body. Given the strength of the provision, the dynamic and thoughtful leadership and the very strong team spirit, the school has excellent capacity to meet its aim of becoming an outstanding school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Draw up a long term strategic plan to prepare for the imminent and significant changes to the school's character. - Ensure that standards are equally high in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children in the nursery and reception classes make good progress and most reach the standards that are expected of them. Inspection evidence and results in national tests at the end of Year 2 over the past five years have been above average with little difference between boys and girls. Standards in reading and mathematics are higher than in writing and science. Achievement across the school for all groups of pupils is good and for some pupils, such as the most and least able, is very good. Standards in other subjects have appropriately been identified as a priority by the school but have improved significantly since the last inspections when standards in many subjects were a cause for concern.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good with some outstanding areas. Pupils show excellent enjoyment of school, behave well and understand how to live safely and healthily. Attendance is satisfactory and is improving because of rigorous action by staff. Pupils develop good skills for later life. Opportunities to share their views in class and to play a significant part in the School Council in are plentiful. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good and spiritual development has improved since the last inspection. Two magical moments during the inspection were children in a reception class waiting with eager anticipation to pick a song from the song tin and entranced and attentive Year 1 pupils looking for patterns in the hall in a music lesson. Pupils are taught well about their own cultures but less well about the cultures of others. Pupils are fully involved with the local community. The school's ethos of good citizenship is summed up in the school song which children sing joyfully.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching, learning and assessment are good. All adults manage the behaviour of pupils very well so that the learning environment is good. Teaching in the nursery and reception classes is good. One of the reasons is that planning covers all the areas of learning very well and work is matched carefully to the needs of different children. This is also true in Years 1 and 2 although there is the odd occasion when it does not. Teachers assess and track pupils' progress in English and mathematics regularly so their learning develops well. Teaching is confident and knowledgeable and ensures good challenge, for example, through well chosen questions. Support staff help pupils to learn well and make good progress. Pupils quickly gain self confidence and independence as they are encouraged to think about what they doing and their contributions are valued highly. Pupils love assessing how well they are doing and this helps them to achieve well and make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and is being reviewed to make it more relevant and exciting for pupils. The guidance for teaching that is developing ensures rigour in progression of learning in all subjects. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, mainly for Year 2 pupils and a good range of enrichment activities. Children are taught to be good citizens through the personal, social, health and citizenship programme. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, for the more able and for those who are new to English is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good with some outstanding areas. The provision for all aspects of pupils' safety and well-being are extremely thorough and well maintained. Children with particular needs, such as those new to learning English, the more able and those with learning difficulties or disabilities are looked after very well. An example of this is the learning of Portuguese by a number of teaching assistants so they could communicate with pupils. There are good systems in place for helping pupils know how well they are doing and an emphasis on responsibility for their own actions and learning. This needs further work so that pupils are able to improve specific areas such as writing. Systems for ensuring that pupils behave well and attend regularly are very good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good with very good features in some of the management systems. The headteacher is an excellent leader who has established a strong ethos of team work and developed the leadership qualities of key staff. The school's leadership works incredibly hard to ensure that discrimination is tackled and this ensures that most pupils achieve well. Governors work hard to support the school and the chair of the governing body has a strategic view of the role of the governing body that she supports through in-service training. Subject leadership is good seen in the quality of action plans to further improve subjects. The school improvement plan is a detailed and well-argued document but currently only covers one year and does not allow the school to plan sufficiently for the future.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 September 2006 Dear Children Drake Infant and Nursery School, Fairfields, Croxton Road, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 1JW You will remember we visited your school for two days to see how well you are doing. Thank you for helping us to find our way around the school and for answering our questions. Many things about your school are good and some things are excellent. You told us that you really enjoy your work and are well cared for and you are certainly right. Most of you work hard, so your work is good. We were impressed by your behaviour especially the way you look after one another. We enjoyed your singing of the school song. You all sang really well and looked happy and proud of your school. Mrs Bartrop is an excellent headteacher and all the grown-ups in your school work hard to make your schooldays interesting and happy. You are lucky to have the ship and fort in the grounds to work on. We could see how much you all enjoy using it. We have asked your teachers to do two things to make your school an even better place to work in. The first is to make sure that your work in subjects such as science is as good as it is in English and mathematics. The second is to write down all the teachers' good ideas for the future of the school so that they will not be forgotten. Thank you very much for looking after us so well. Good luck for the future. Sandra Tweddell Lead inspector