

Ditchheat Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123642
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	292730
Inspection date	15 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Barron

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Alhquist
Headteacher	Beth Hopkin
Date of previous school inspection	15 April 2002
School address	Ditchheat Shepton Mallet BA4 6RB
Telephone number	01749 860329
Fax number	01749 860687

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average village primary school. Pupils come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Nearly all are from White British heritage and no pupils have a first language that is not English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. There have been several staff changes in the last year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The comment by one pupil was simply, 'The only thing I don't like about this school is that I have to leave it', but it said a lot about Ditcheat Primary School. This is a good school which provides a good education for its pupils. It is led by an energetic headteacher who has ensured that staff share her vision of raising standards through improving achievement and providing pupils with a stimulating curriculum.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with broadly average skills. They make satisfactory progress in the combined Reception and Year 1 class as a result of satisfactory teaching, and reach the expected standards in all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 2. The quality of teaching is good throughout the rest of the school and ensures that most pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, make good progress and that standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are above average. However, standards in science are lower than in mathematics or English throughout the school because pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to develop their experimental and investigative skills.

Pupils say that they really enjoy school. Their personal development and well-being are good. Parents appreciate the school's caring family atmosphere, whilst pupils say they feel well looked after. Pupils display responsible attitudes, have a good community spirit and make sensible and healthy choices. Their behaviour is good and they have positive feelings towards their work. Pupils are aware of the need to keep safe and say that they feel free from bullying. They learn respect for others and are prepared well for future life.

The curriculum is good and is enriched by a range of additional activities that further develop pupils' skills and their enjoyment of learning. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness and understanding of the multicultural nature of modern British society are limited. The level of care, guidance and support for pupils is good and contributes well to their sense of well-being and academic achievement.

Leadership and management are good. The governing body has led the school well through a period of change in teaching personnel. Governors and staff have been thorough in their analysis of what the school needs to do to improve and have ensured that the school has developed a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses. As a result, the school recognises the work it has to do to bring about further improvement and demonstrates a good capacity to achieve this.

What the school should do to improve further

- develop pupils' experimental and investigative skills in order to raise standards in science
- increase pupils' awareness and understanding of the multicultural nature of modern British society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is broadly average but varies slightly from year to year due to the small and fluctuating numbers of children entering the school.

Children make satisfactory progress both in the Foundation Stage and in Year 1 because of the satisfactory teaching. Pupils throughout the rest of the school make good overall progress as a result of good teaching so that by both Year 2 and Year 6, the standards they attain are above

the national average. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make the same good progress as other pupils because of the good support they receive.

Although recent ongoing initiatives to improve pupils' progress in mathematics and writing have been successful in raising achievement, pupils make less progress in developing their investigative and experimental skills in science because they are not provided with sufficient opportunities to take part in practical investigations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Attendance is above average and pupils are friendly, polite and well behaved. They say that they really enjoy school and feel they belong to one big family. They play sensibly together in the playground and display a good regard for the safety and well-being of others. They know there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem and say that they feel safe and that instances of unkind behaviour between pupils are dealt with quickly by adults.

Pupils make good progress in literacy and numeracy and are prepared well for the next stage of their education. They have good attitudes towards learning and talk enthusiastically about their favourite subjects, especially ICT, although they are less enthusiastic about science. Older pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities such as organising the school's healthy tuckshop and representing the school at village events.

Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of keeping fit and making healthy choices, especially about what they eat. They enjoy taking part in activities such as the after-school sports' clubs and talk enthusiastically about the school's good links with the community, especially the village cricket and rounders clubs.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good overall and pupils have developed a good understanding of right and wrong. Visits to places of interest, for example Brokerswood Country Park, help bring learning alive and provide pupils with experiences of life outside their village. However, during discussions, it became evident that pupils have yet to develop a realistic understanding of the diversity of life in Britain and especially the multicultural nature of modern British society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. However, in the Foundation Stage and Year 1, teaching is satisfactory and provides children with activities which blend independent learning with teacher-directed tasks. However, there are occasions when not all pupils are actively involved in learning and this affects their achievement and progress.

The quality of teaching throughout the rest of the school is consistently good. Teachers use a variety of approaches to make learning interesting and work well with teaching assistants to ensure pupils are provided with work which matches their individual needs. Lessons are well structured, well paced and have a clear purpose. Pupils work hard and make good progress. Older pupils comment that 'lessons are more interesting than they were last year' and say they enjoy learning.

Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress because of the good support they receive, especially from effective teaching assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs and interests of pupils well. There is a strong emphasis on the arts. Themed weeks involving, for example, local drama groups, help to develop pupils' skills and interests. Links with the local secondary school are used well to provide enrichment activities for pupils, such as learning French.

Provision in the Foundation Stage and Year 1 is satisfactory and contributes to children's enjoyment of learning and their developing independence. The curriculum is good throughout the rest of the school and has been adapted to fit the needs of mixed age-group classes well. Provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT is good. However, pupils are not provided with regular opportunities to develop their investigative skills in science or to broaden their understanding of the customs and traditions of people in Britain from different cultural backgrounds from their own.

Good planning and provision for personal, social and health education ensures that pupils are aware of the importance of fitness and well-being. A wide range of interesting visits and visitors to the school increases pupils' enjoyment of learning. Pupils also have regular opportunities to take part in a wide variety of well-supported out-of-school activities, including sports clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is good. The school promotes a family atmosphere which contributes to pupils' good progress, their enjoyment of learning and their sense of well-being. Parents comment favourably about the good level of care their children receive. Pupils say they feel safe and well looked after. They know there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. Induction and transfer arrangements are good and help pupils to settle quickly into new routines. Health and safety routines are good and risk assessments meet current government guidelines. Robust child protection procedures are understood and followed by all staff. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that pupils who have particular learning needs are well supported. However, although a number of gifted and talented pupils have been identified, the school is aware of the need to develop support for this group of pupils.

Procedures to track pupils' progress are thorough and used well to ensure that pupils make good progress. The quality of teachers' marking is good and pupils commented that it usually gave them a clear understanding of how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is a good leader who has ensured that the school has developed a successful approach to monitoring and evaluating its performance in order to raise achievement. She has emphasised that pupils' needs and equal opportunities have been placed at the heart of school life. There is good support from the school's governing

body, which fulfils its statutory duties well. Governors are involved in all major decisions and have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Both the headteacher and governors recognise that there is still a need to develop the subject leadership roles of teaching staff who are relatively new to the school.

The school works closely with parents, who appreciate the fact that their views are regularly sought and acted on. Links with external agencies, such as speech therapists, support pupils' learning well, particularly for those with learning difficulties or disabilities. Resources are good and the school has ensured that ICT resources, criticised by the previous inspection, are now good and used well to support learning.

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Annex A

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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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.

Annex A

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	2
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

15 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ditcheat Primary School, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 6RB

Thank you for making us feel very welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our day, even though it was raining. We especially enjoyed talking to some of you about what you like most about your school and seeing you work in lessons.

Here are some of the things we particularly like about your school:

- Ditcheat Primary School is a good school which makes sure you make good progress in learning
- your personal development is good; we could see how well you really enjoy being at school
- you are very friendly, behave well and play and work well together
- the quality of care and support you receive from the school is good
- the headteacher, staff and school governors work really hard and want to make sure that your school continues to improve in the future.

We believe your headteacher and teachers can do some things to make your school better. We have asked them to:

- improve how well you do in science by making lessons more interesting by including more experiments in them
- help you to gain a broader understanding about the customs and traditions of people living in this country who are from different cultural backgrounds. You can help your school to get even better by continuing to work hard.

We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Barron (Lead inspector)