

Delce Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118432
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	295411
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Patricia Davies

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	397
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	R King
Headteacher	P A Fisher
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2006
School address	The Tideway Rochester ME1 2NJ
Telephone number	01634 845242
Fax number	01634 845242

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Delce Junior is a large school. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. Most are from White British families. A few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a very small proportion of pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. Attainment on entry to Year 3 is generally a little below average, but varies from year to year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average and higher than this within individual year groups. Several senior staff and key leaders have taken up their roles and responsibilities during this school year.

When the school was last inspected it was found to be in need of significant improvement and given a notice to improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The hard work of staff and governors over the last twelve months has secured some essential areas of improvement. As a result, the overall effectiveness of Delce Junior, including pupils' academic achievement, is now satisfactory. Therefore, in accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Crucially, assessment practices are now much more robust. Pupils at risk of falling behind are identified quickly so that extra support is given. All pupils have learning goals that help them to understand what they must do to move to higher National Curriculum levels. Nevertheless, these targets are not always as helpful as they could be. This is because they are not broken down in to smaller steps, particularly to guide the learning of lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Here, too, there has been much improvement so that pupils often progress well during lessons. Teaching and learning are not yet consistently good because work is not always adapted sufficiently to meet the needs of pupils with different abilities, especially in English. There are signs that improvements to provision are gradually raising attainment. Standards remain below average by the end of Year 6 but they are higher than those reached in English and mathematics in last year's national tests, when results were significantly below average.

The school's satisfactory care, guidance and support are marked by good relationships between adults and pupils. The particular strengths of pupils' satisfactory personal development and well-being are good behaviour and attendance and interest and industry during lessons. The school is keen to extend pupils' enjoyment of learning. Opportunities for visits and visitors and for personal, social and health education are strong elements of the satisfactory curriculum. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The introduction of the school council has given pupils valuable opportunities to play a part in the school community.

Important developments have also sharpened the impact of the school's satisfactory leadership and management. Monitoring activities now give the school an accurate understanding of its effectiveness and a clear direction for the future. The school's commitment to improvement is shared by the governing body, which offers a good level of challenge and support. Under the headteacher's strong leadership, the effectiveness and influence of year group and subject leaders and new senior staff are steadily growing but they have still further to go before they are fully developed at all levels.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that lesson activities are always adapted to meet the needs of all ability groups, particularly in English, so that teaching and learning are consistently good.
- Break down learning targets in to smaller steps, especially for lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties.
- Fully develop the leadership roles of year group and subject leaders and new senior staff members. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, including pupils with learning difficulties and learning to speak English as an additional language. Although there is still some variation, pupils' satisfactory progress in the longer term is now well supported by the good progress pupils make in many lessons. Standards are below average at Year 6, but are higher than those reached in the 2006 national tests in English and, most especially, in mathematics. The results in 2006 also showed a small improvement on those of 2005.

The school is working hard to resolve the challenges presented by its academic profile. Attainment on entry to the school is marked in some year groups by a large minority of pupils with attainment towards the lower end of the average range, or by few pupils reaching the higher levels. Standards are also affected by the sometimes substantial proportion of pupils with learning difficulties within individual year groups. Improved assessment is enabling the school to identify quickly those pupils in need of additional support and maintain a careful check on their progress. There is also greater attention paid to developing mathematical and scientific skills, alongside the teaching of knowledge and understanding. The use of drama has been extended to improve the quality of pupils' writing. These approaches are proving to be successful for pupils of all abilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' enjoyment of learning is illustrated well in pupils' attentiveness, hard work and good behaviour during lessons. Pupils swell with pride when they receive merit awards for a wide range of achievements. A minority of parents and pupils expressed some concerns about behaviour. Nevertheless, pupils say that new playground equipment has done much to improve behaviour at break times. Inspection evidence supports this view. Pupils mix sensibly at this time and take charge of playground games. The many older pupils who play football are mindful of the needs and safety of others. Attendance is above average.

The introduction of the school council has been a major step forward. Pupils take this work very seriously and try to consider every idea they receive. This innovation has successfully set the scene for extending pupils' responsibilities within the school community, whilst also developing social skills that pupils can use in adult life. The recycling projects led by pupils' 'eco' teams have drawn them closer to local and global environmental concerns. Pupils have a clear understanding of which foods make for healthy eating, but do not yet select these options as their preferred break time snacks. They enjoy keeping fit, however, through their many sporting activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils now make at least satisfactory, and often good, progress during lessons. Planning is clear and well organised, with specific learning objectives. The frequent reference to what they must do to move on to higher National Curriculum levels makes clear to pupils what they need to do to get there. The use of 'talking partners' is a common feature of all lessons. These

frequent opportunities to share and discuss ideas produce thoughtful and perceptive comment. All these factors ensure pupils are interested, engaged and industrious.

Work is matched appropriately to pupils' different abilities and teaching assistants are used well to support lower attaining pupils and those learning to speak English as an additional language. In mathematics, activities are often carefully adapted to meet the needs of different abilities even within classes where pupils have already been 'set' according to their attainment. The school has yet to be quite as successful in English, where pupils are too often given the same tasks with limited modification. Marking and feedback have improved. Whilst some inconsistencies still remain, pupils are now receiving more advice on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The strength of the curriculum is its good range of additional activities, including a valuable focus on sport and the opportunity to learn to speak French. The comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education explores important issues like bullying. All these experiences do much to nurture pupils' social, moral and cultural understanding, although the school does not always make the most of assemblies for encouraging spiritual development.

Work has started to inject more excitement into the curriculum. The use of drama in lessons does just that, whilst a visiting theatre group made Macbeth come alive for Year 6 pupils. Indeed, careful preparation for written tasks is a consistent strength of the English curriculum. The school has begun to create links between subjects but this work is at an early stage. It is, however, developing well in relation to information and communication technology (ICT), so that ICT provision is now satisfactory. Good links outside school offer important opportunities to those pupils with particular gifts and talents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The good relationships between staff and pupils are an important feature of the school's committed care and support, and pupils are quick to praise the attention and help given to them by their teachers. There are robust systems for safeguarding pupils, risk assessment and child protection. Play times are well staffed. Older pupils act as playground 'buddies', but this system is not yet operating fully. The home-school support worker provides invaluable guidance and help to parents and to pupils experiencing difficulties. This work has been particularly successful in relation to the few who do not attend school regularly.

Improvements to assessment practices have been significant. Importantly, all teachers now hold a joint accountability for monitoring pupils' progress. National Curriculum levels and learning targets are shared with pupils and their parents. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to use their target cards to find out how to improve. Lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties find this more difficult, however, because their targets are often too broad and do not mark out what they should learn in small enough steps.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The driving force behind improvements has been the good leadership of the headteacher. Her strong sense of purpose is matched in the enthusiastic leadership of those managing year group teams and subjects. The careful monitoring of lessons by senior staff has led to much improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and, in turn, to early signs that standards are picking up. Some senior and key members of staff are new to their responsibilities but are already developing their roles alongside others with leadership positions. They have all started to monitor provision and performance, including visits to lessons. The school is aware that these checks do not yet have enough focus on pupils' learning for them to be fully effective. Nevertheless, taken together, the school's leadership shows satisfactory and increasing capacity for future improvement and recent positive developments underline how effective the school's responses have already been.

The governing body has worked with equal determination and much success to extend its effectiveness and contribution. Governors have a good knowledge of the school and its priorities. Their open and constructive approach gives the school a valuable sounding board and considerable support.

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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

10 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Delce Junior School, Rochester, Kent ME1 2NJ

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed our visit and this letter is to tell you something of what we found out while we were with you. When your school was last inspected it was found to be in need of a lot of improvement. Since then all the staff have worked really hard to make it better and we were pleased to hear that you recognised that. As a result of all their hard work, your school is now doing a satisfactory job. It was good to see so many of you getting awards in assembly for a wide range of achievements, and to see how proud you were to receive them.

- Here are some other important things about you and your school.
- Because teaching has improved, you now make satisfactory progress and, often, you make good progress during lessons.
- You all work hard in class and take a real interest in your lessons.
- A few of your parents, and some of you as well, were a bit concerned about behaviour, but we found you all to be well behaved in lessons and on the playground, where you were playing together sensibly and safely.
- You have lots of extra interesting activities, like theatre groups, learning to speak French, sporting activities, and visits out of school.
- You get on well with your teachers and appreciate how much they listen to you and help you when you get stuck.
- Staff now keep a very careful eye on how well you are doing, particularly so that they can help those of you who need extra support.
- This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better.
- Make sure that lesson activities are changed a bit more to meet your different needs, particularly in English, so that teaching is always good and you all achieve your very best.
- Break down the learning targets in to smaller steps for those of you who find work that bit more difficult than others.
- Make sure all of the staff who look after subjects and year groups are doing all they can to improve the school even more.

With our very best wishes for the future,

Patricia Davies Lead inspector