

Ditton Lodge First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110624
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
Inspection number	310369
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Ruth Frith

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Joy Edwards
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Finn
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	St John's Avenue Newmarket Suffolk CB8 8BL
Telephone number	01638 613001
Fax number	01638 613004

Age group	4–9
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2007
Inspection number	310369

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average size school situated on the outskirts of Newmarket. A much lower than average percentage of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals. Typically, children enter school with attainment that is below that seen nationally for four-year-olds. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A few pupils speak English fluently as an additional language. The Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark has been renewed and awarded to the school for the second time.

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 where staff work hard to ensure that pupils are happy and do well. The warm and friendly atmosphere encourages pupils to really enjoy their learning and, as a result, attendance is high. Parents' comments confirm this. For example, one wrote, 'Ditton Lodge is a fantastic school with excellent staff and headteacher. My children always love going every morning and come out happy at the end of the day'. Good teaching helps the pupils to achieve well so that, by the time they leave school, standards are above average. The headteacher's excellent leadership, the commitment of staff and governors and support from parents, indicate that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

The quality of teaching is consistently good because expectations are high and interesting and challenging work motivates pupils well. Teachers and teaching assistants have a clear understanding of what they want pupils to learn next and share this with them. The good curriculum is innovative and stimulating and developments, such as the 'Theme Weeks,' have had a significant impact on motivating pupils. Several initiatives in Reception and Years 1 and 2 are clearly beginning to enhance pupils' progress and raise standards. This is ensuring that Year 2 national assessment results are improving. Pupils in Year 3 and 4 continue to build on previous learning and achieve well. They are reaching above average, but not exceptionally high standards; this is because, in the past, they started from a lower base when entering Key Stage 2. Good, recent developments that are used to track pupils' progress more effectively are giving staff a range of information and this helps them to see how they can improve the rate of progress even further. This work is not fully established, especially in Years 3 and 4, and therefore is not yet having full impact on pupils' learning.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding because staff provide excellent care, guidance and support. The successful personal, social and health education programme ensures that the pupils know how to keep safe and healthy and learn to get on with others. They respect ways of living that are different from their own and this helps to create a harmonious atmosphere in school. Behaviour is good; pupils readily make friends and develop a caring attitude towards others. These aspects, combined with pupils' good progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), help to prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Leadership is of high quality and management and governance are good. The headteacher gives excellent direction for school improvement and involves all in the decision-making process. Consequently, staff feel valued and morale is high. Good self-evaluation procedures reflect the consistent drive for improvement and help the school community to reflect on how well it is doing and what needs to be improved. In a few cases, judgements of the school's effectiveness are rather modest but, generally, they reflect the inspection's findings.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children's learning and development are exceptional. Through observations of them at work and play, staff gain a particularly good understanding of the children's needs and very effective support is provided. Exceptionally good assessment and recording systems enable staff to monitor children's progress and extend their skills and understanding very well. Appropriate levels of praise result in children quickly gaining confidence and feeling they can succeed. Staff

place a high priority on developing children's personal, social and emotional skills, so they settle quickly, behave well and thoroughly enjoy learning. They learn how to listen to others and share resources well. Staff are also successful in developing children's learning in other areas, such as early reading, writing and number so that by the time they enter Year 1 they exceed the levels typically expected for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Fully establish the work already started on improving pupils' learning, particularly from Year 2 to Year 4, and monitor to ensure that pupils always attain the highest standards possible.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities achieve well and make at least good progress. Children leave Reception particularly well prepared for Year 1 and because they continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 they reach above average standards in national tests. Sometimes they are higher, as in 2007, when results were above average in reading and exceptionally high in writing and mathematics. These results show how recent improvements to teaching, assessment and the curriculum are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement and standards. Staff have addressed the relatively lower reading standards by improving the way they teach reading and by purchasing a wider range of books, which maintains the interest of boys as well as girls. Pupils reach the realistic but challenging targets. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 continue to achieve well and reach above average standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is excellent. Provision in these areas promotes a strong school ethos. Staff have high expectations and routines are clear so pupils quickly understand what is expected of them. A few pupils find it difficult to meet these high expectations without additional support. Mentors help others at playtimes by encouraging games and ensuring that pupils feel cared for. The key values of respect and valuing others are encouraged; pupils understand the impact of their actions on other pupils and staff. They have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lives and this is beginning to influence their actions. Because procedures are clear and relationships good, they feel safe and know who to turn to if they have a problem. They know their concerns will be taken seriously and feel that they are treated fairly. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school community and beyond through the school council, work with other schools and involvement in local events. Pupils also act as reading partners and playground 'buddies'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Tasks are matched well to pupils' abilities and generate excitement and enjoyment in learning. This was exemplified when, acting as journalists, pupils created a newspaper advertisement for a firework display. Staff assess learning well so they quickly identify what pupils need to do next to ensure good progress. They make this clear to pupils, who respond well to the challenges set, and feel confident in their abilities to succeed. Teachers use praise well to create a very

positive atmosphere that also encourages pupils to do their best. Occasionally, the pace of learning slows a little when work is not closely directed by the teacher. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to ask questions that stimulate pupils' thinking and develop their understanding. Generally, the end of lessons is used well to assess pupils' progress and consolidate learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A key strength of the curriculum is the way in which it stimulates learning, meets the needs of all pupils and helps them to enjoy thoroughly their time in school. This is seen particularly clearly during 'Theme Weeks' when pupils work in depth on a specific focus, frequently working in mixed-age groups. During the inspection, the focus on writing supported the school's specific target for improvement well and the variety of tasks created excitement in pupils' learning. Previous work, such as that in ICT, has stimulated much interest, widened pupils' skills and enhanced their achievement. Staff have identified the importance of developing the curriculum further by making more links between subjects in their daily practice. Many initiatives are relatively new, such as the programme that helps pupils to understand the alphabet and learn letter sounds. Consequently, their positive impact is seen more directly in the work of the younger pupils. Popular clubs, visits, visitors and activities help pupils to develop new interests and extend skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding quality of care provided by the school helps pupils to develop into happy and confident learners. Staff use very effective assessment procedures to check how well pupils are learning and whether they need additional challenge or support. Targets and very good quality marking help pupils to build on their existing strengths and show them the next steps they need to take to improve their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with particularly good support so that they achieve well. Through the exceptionally good links with outside agencies, specific needs are identified quickly and addressed. Procedures for safeguarding pupils, child protection, reporting incidents and health and safety are all secure. The vast majority of parents and their children are rightly pleased with what the school offers and the support provided. Effective links with the Nursery ensure that children are familiar with the school before they start, and older pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education and beyond.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher shows a strong determination to further improve provision, set challenging targets and raise standards. As she indicated, 'I won't settle for second best'. This drive and vision is shared by the staff, who work with a keen sense of purpose and enthusiasm. Teachers are encouraged to be innovative and they are confident to try out different teaching styles and methods and adopt new initiatives. The work of subject leaders has improved so that they confidently analyse data that tracks pupils' progress and achievements. The monitoring and evaluation of many subjects are good. Procedures that monitor teaching through observing lessons are also developing. However, staff are not yet specific enough in the way they record

their findings and identify strengths and areas for improvement. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and give effective support and direction.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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?	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

8 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Ditton Lodge First School, Newmarket, CB8 8BL

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I recently visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you and was very pleased to see that you really enjoy school and are happy there. I agree with you and think Ditton Lodge is a good school. Here are some of the things I liked best.

- You work well and reach standards that are higher than I often see.
- You come to school regularly so do not miss important work. Well done!
- You behave well because you are interested in what you are doing.
- You get on well with each other, and older pupils really help the younger ones. The mentors do good work during playtimes and at lunchtime.
- You have a particularly good understanding of how to live healthy lives and I am pleased that this is encouraging you to eat more fruit and vegetables and to exercise more.
- All the staff work well together as a team and teaching is good.
- You have a very good understanding of how to improve, because staff set targets and mark your work very well.
- I was pleased to hear that you know what bullying is, and would talk to a member of staff if you had problems. You feel well cared for.

Mrs Finn works exceptionally well and staff and governors give her lots of help. They are all keen to improve the school so have agreed to help you make even better progress, particularly in Years 3 and 4. I know you will respond well.

I am sure your school will continue to improve and wish you all well. It was a pleasure to visit Ditton Lodge.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Frith

Additional Inspector