

Delce Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118330
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	312891
Inspection dates	17–18 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Taylor

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Latta
Headteacher	Ann Morris
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2002
School address	Fleet Road Rochester ME1 2QA
Telephone number	01634 844127
Fax number	01634 810059

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

There is a wide spread of attainment among children on entry to school but overall standards are below those expected for their age, and well below in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. A fifth of children come from minority ethnic backgrounds, and the remainder are White British. The proportion of children at the early stages of learning English has risen since the last inspection and is average. An above average proportion of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The percentage known to be entitled to free school meals is below average. A major rebuilding programme has just been completed. This has improved the the accommodation considerably, and enabled the school to open its own Nursery in April 2007. The school has gained Healthy Schools, Basic Skills and Investors in People awards.

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 with outstanding features. It has a good capacity to continue to improve. Parents support the school well and regard it highly. Typical comments from parents include: 'The skill and encouragement of the staff have transformed my child from a shy and reluctant pupil, to one who is confident, keen and happy'; and, 'We could not have chosen a better school for our daughter. Staff have been very supportive, and have included us as parents all through her schooling.'

Children settle quickly into the Nursery and Reception classes and start to make good progress because the provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Standards when children enter Year 1 are rising but remain a little below those expected in literacy and mathematical skills. Throughout the school, there have been many improvements to the curriculum, teaching and assessments so standards by the end of Year 2 have risen and are now broadly average. Staff have high expectations of themselves and the children. Their enthusiastic approach means they continually work to develop and share their expertise and capture children's interests. Teaching takes account of the full range of children's abilities, including children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or need help learning English. There are, however, relatively few short-term 'catch-up programmes' for other groups, such as those who just need an extra push to accelerate their progress. Therefore, there are missed opportunities to raise standards even further.

Children's personal development is outstanding because of the excellent care that they are given. Their behaviour, relationships, enjoyment of school and attitudes to learning are exemplary. As a result, children gain considerable confidence and are very safe and happy at school. Excellent gains in spiritual, moral, social and cultural development mean children have a clear understanding of right and wrong, appreciate differences, celebrate achievements, and show care and consideration for others. They and their parents are very well informed about how they are progressing.

Good leadership and the headteacher's vision and drive have enabled the school to move forward and overcome some challenges during a period of upheaval caused by the two-year rebuilding programme. Improved subject leadership and the establishment of a new senior leadership team have also helped the school to improve provision, which has started to impact on improving standards. Monitoring of teaching, learning and children's progress is now very regular. Although the school has lots of information about each child's attainment and progress, this information is not organised in a way that helps the school easily to track progress from entry to the time children leave. This also makes it difficult for the school to identify, analyse and explain trends in children's overall past performance, or to identify groups that might benefit from targeted additional support.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Fifteen children currently in Reception previously attended the school Nursery for a term, but most children in the Reception and Nursery classes joined the school for the first time in September. Contacts with families before children start school and good induction procedures help children to settle, to develop confidence and independence, and start learning quickly. Provision in both Nursery and Reception is good across all areas of learning, with particular strengths in personal and social development and communication, language and literacy. Good

teaching and staffing levels, combined with well planned activities and flexible use of groupings, ensure that children acquire basic skills well and learn well, both indoors and outside. Improvements to provision, including the setting up of the Nursery, have been well led and are contributing to improving children's attainment on entry to Year 1. The outcomes of the Foundation Stage assessments are not analysed accurately enough for teachers in Year 1 to have a sufficiently clear idea about how many children have reached the expected standard and how many need support to catch up.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the way that data relating to children's attainment and progress is organised and analysed, so as to identify any trends or underperformance and identify children in need of additional support.
- Extend the range of support programmes that are used to accelerate children's progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children in Nursery and Reception make good progress across all areas of learning so that standards on entry to Year 1 are rising. Standards in personal and social development, physical and creative development, and knowledge and understanding of the world are in line with those expected. Standards in communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development, although improving, remain below expectations on entry to Year 1. Standards at the end of Year 2 are rising. Teaching, the curriculum and subject leadership have focused closely on addressing the specific weaknesses in attainment, such as in children's skills in calculation, writing and speaking. At the end of Year 2 in 2007, reading, writing, mathematics and science standards improved and were in line with the national average. There was a significant improvement in the number of children reaching both the expected and higher levels of attainment. Current standards and progress seen in pupils' work show that the trend of improvement is being maintained, though some children in Years 1 and 2 still have some catching up to do to reach the expected standards. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in relation to their capabilities. Children new to learning English progress well and several parents wrote to inspectors praising the school's provision for this group of children.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's thorough enjoyment of school is reflected in their excellent attitudes and exemplary behaviour. The school has worked successfully to improve attendance, which rose to above average in the last school year. Children say bullying is not a problem. As one said, 'Everyone is a friend at this school.'

Children contribute well to the school and local communities. They enjoy taking responsibility, for example, as playground friends, helping those without someone to play with. The school council is making an increasing contribution to school life and ensures pupils' views are represented. Through raising money for charities, children gain an appreciation of those less fortunate than themselves. Children's very good personal qualities, together with their acquisition of basic skills and their ability to work together, result in them being well prepared for their future education and working lives. Work related to gaining 'Healthy School' status gives pupils a good understanding of the need for safety, exercise and healthy eating.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good across the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. There are particular strengths in teachers' subject knowledge, questioning skills and high expectations of children's work and behaviour. All staff understand how young children learn best. They provide interesting, practical tasks for children to do, which are well linked to their everyday experiences. Consequently, children learn well and have many opportunities to share their ideas, work independently, in pairs and in groups. Teaching assistants are skilled and well trained and make a good contribution to children's learning. Teachers in all classes are quickly gaining confidence in using the recently installed interactive whiteboards, but there are too few opportunities for children to use computers and on a few occasions the pace of lessons is too slow. Teachers' assessments are now good as a result of effective action to improve their past accuracy. Marking, the setting of small learning targets, and feedback to children are all effective. Consequently, children know what they need to do to improve their work, and parents are kept informed about how they might help their children.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The accommodation in all year groups provides very good space indoors and outside for practical learning and hands-on experiences. The Foundation Stage provision includes a good balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities. The curriculum in Years 1 and 2 builds well on this, and also has a strong focus on the basic skills in mathematics, reading, writing, speaking and listening. The curriculum has been adapted to address the weaknesses identified in children's attainments and ensure it appeals to boys' and girls' interests. However, the number of intervention programmes provided to help boost some groups of children's attainments at an even faster rate is as yet fairly limited. Good use of themed events, the local community, visits and visitors helps to enrich the curriculum, promote enjoyment and develop children's understanding of the locality, the world around them, and their own and others' cultures.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Almost all parents are delighted with the high standards of pastoral care. Excellent relationships throughout the school mean children feel safe, valued, well cared for and confident to approach adults with any questions or problems. Child protection, risk assessments and health and safety procedures are robust and children are very well supervised at all times. Arrangements to help children settle into school, and to transfer to junior school, are very good, which helps children deal with new situations confidently. Academic guidance has led to improving standards and rates of progress. Personal support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very effective. The school has established strong links with external agencies to support children and families.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong and clear leadership so that the commitment to improvement and achieving the school's aims is a shared one. With good support from the governors, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders, the headteacher has created a very caring school, strong teamwork and high expectations of staff and children. The school has been led successfully through a major design and rebuilding programme, which has improved the facilities significantly. At the same time, there have been improvements to teaching, the curriculum, standards and achievement. Leadership of provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the Foundation Stage, English, mathematics and science are all strong. The school is currently developing the expertise of some of the less experienced subject leaders to play a full part in leading improvements within their curriculum teams.

Although the school's judgements about its effectiveness in some areas are rather modest, the school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development. The school development plan is detailed, well constructed and reflects the views of all associated with the school. As such, it is an effective tool to move the school forward. The school undertakes rigorous evaluations of all that it does. Whilst data from assessments has been put to good use in terms of raising children's performance, it is not well enough organised to make the drive for improvement even sharper and more effective. Governors play a full and effective part in the school, including strategic and financial planning. They are very supportive of the school and purposeful in their role as 'critical friends', challenging the senior leaders.

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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
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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

18 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Delce Infant School, Rochester, Kent ME1 2QA

I am writing to tell you what we found out when we visited your school. Thank you for making friends with us, talking to us and letting us look at your work. Your mums and dads think Delce Infants is a good school and we agree.

This is what the school does well:

- We think your new building is fantastic. It has lots of space inside and outside. It was designed especially for small children, so it has lots of interesting shapes and spaces, and windows and peepholes that you can all see through. We saw many of you cooking in your special children's kitchen. We know your teachers are now keen to get you involved in designing and developing the outside spaces and garden areas.
- You are really keen to come to school, behave extremely well, work hard and enjoy all the lovely activities that staff prepare for you.
- All the adults in the school make sure that you are very safe and happy, and that you are kind to each other and work and play well together.
- You make good progress and learn to do lots of things you could not do before.
- The staff teach you well. They make sure there are lots different and exciting activities for you to do indoors and outside. We saw how much you enjoyed learning to count, read and write, building houses, painting pictures, planting flowers and playing in the water.
- Your headteacher and the staff lead the school well and are always trying to make your school even better.
- We have asked the staff to improve some things:
 - We have asked them to set up special groups to help some of you make even faster progress.
 - We have asked the staff to get even better at checking how well you are all doing so that they can give some of you extra support in groups from time to time.

With very best wishes

Kathryn Taylor Lead Inspector

Annex B

18 October 2007

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With very best wishes

Kathryn Taylor
Lead Inspector