

Featherby Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118421
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	312933
Inspection date	17 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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	308
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Fautley
Headteacher	Jane Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2003
School address	Allington Road Gillingham ME8 6PD
Telephone number	01634 231072
Fax number	01634 263283

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects: the impact of improvements to Foundation Stage provision on children's progress; and how well improvements to information and communication technology (ICT) were contributing to teaching and learning.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work and school documentation. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Featherby Infant and Nursery School is much larger than average for its type. Most pupils are from a White British background. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language and pupils are fluent. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Featherby Infant and Nursery is a good school. Pupils achieve well because of the good start in the Nursery and good teaching across the school. Pupils' good personal development and well-being are good as a result of effective care, guidance and support. Since the last inspection, there have been considerable improvements to the Foundation Stage and to ICT.

Parents are very pleased with both the care and education provided for their children. The leadership of the school, the quality of teaching and care, and the progress children are making received particular praise. Typical comments from the parental questionnaires are, 'strong headteacher', 'the school is run very well', 'teaching and care for the children is fantastic' and 'I'm pleased with my child's progress'.

Leadership and management are successfully promoting good provision and this is leading to good outcomes for pupils. The headteacher provides strong educational direction for the school. She is well supported by other senior staff. Leadership roles are well developed and participation in the Primary Leadership Programme has contributed to this. Effective leadership and management of the Foundation Stage and of ICT are significant in the improvements made. The school has a positive atmosphere for pupils to learn and staff to work. Teamwork is strong among the staff and there is a commitment to continuous improvement. Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance. They are actively involved in providing good support and constructive challenge.

Teaching is good with elements of outstanding practice. Teachers have established clear expectations of behaviour and learning and pupils respond well to these. The purpose of the lessons is clear so pupils know what they are expected to learn. Pupils are gaining confidence in reviewing their own progress but this good practice is not consistent in all classes. Teachers' instructions, demonstrations and explanations promote learning well, for example in the teaching of letter sounds, which is highly effective. Teachers model good practice through speech and demonstrate the formation of letters and joins. The interactive whiteboards are used well by teachers and pupils in illustrating main learning points. Assessment information is used effectively to match activities to pupils' abilities and needs. As a result, pupils are challenged well, their interest is maintained and they make good gains in their learning. Lessons usually proceed at a good pace. Just occasionally, time is not maximised and learning declines. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning, particularly for those who need extra support.

Pupils make good progress from their below average starting points and standards are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Improvements to equipment and increased teacher expertise mean the pupils are progressing well in ICT and they attain expected standards. This represents a good improvement because at the time of the last inspection, standards were below average and ICT was not being used to support learning in other subjects. The curriculum promotes good progress for pupils and contributes well to their personal development. Good emphasis is placed on basic skills of language, literacy and numeracy. ICT is used well to support teaching and learning in a range of areas. The school's impressive 31-station computer suite and the computers in the classrooms are all well used. In Year 1, pupils enter instructions to control a programmable toy; they create attractive pictures using a paint programme. Word processing is widely used for pupils to draft and edit their writing. Teachers have been successful in choosing topics which appeal to boys and inspire them to write. Pupils gain an appreciation of the works of Picasso, Lowry and Constable. They

create their own images and landscapes in their style. A good range of clubs, visits and visitors enriches pupils' learning. Healthy lifestyles and personal safety are promoted well across the curriculum and pupils respond accordingly.

Staff know the pupils well and take good care of them. They have forged good relationships with them and their parents. Effective procedures ensure that pupils are safe and secure at school. Systems to assess and track pupils' attainment and progress have been strengthened and are now good. Pupils have specific individual learning targets in reading, writing and mathematics so they know what to do to improve. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their keen participation in activities. The school works hard to promote good attendance but a significant minority of families have children with poor attendance. Attendance is satisfactory. Behaviour is good because of the clear expectations of staff and good relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and show a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercising regularly. Those on the school council take their responsibilities seriously and have contributed to improving playground equipment. Pupils' choir performances contribute to the local community and have recently appeared on local television. Pupils support those less well off by raising funds for local and national charities. At Featherby Infant and Nursery School, pupils are well prepared for their next school and future lives because they are making good progress in literacy, numeracy and ICT. In addition, their personal and social skills are well developed.

The school monitors and evaluates its performance effectively and uses the findings well to make necessary improvements. Improvements to assessment, the Foundation Stage and ICT demonstrate good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with knowledge and skills below those expected for their age. Language and numeracy skills are low. There have been good improvements to the Nursery accommodation, which has now been incorporated into the main school building. Through good leadership and planning, there have been significant improvements to assessment, teaching and to the curriculum in the Foundation Stage. Effective induction procedures enable pupils to settle quickly into routines and enjoy their learning. They make outstanding progress in their personal and social development. Good quality teaching and a stimulating curriculum enable all children to make good progress in all other areas of learning. The wide range of activities that are planned around topics such as celebrations, mini beasts and transport are interesting. Teachers and assistants provide an effective blend of adult-led tasks and opportunities for children to explore, be creative and work independently. However, outdoor learning activities in Reception are not linked well enough to the main theme and opportunities for creativity and physical development are missed. The most recent assessments show that standards in Reception are almost in line with those expected, except in elements of literacy and mathematical development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all lessons maintain a brisk pace and that the good practice of pupils reviewing their work is spread consistently throughout the school.
- Improve opportunities for creativity and physical development by ensuring that the outdoor learning activities in Reception are closely linked with the main topic being studied.

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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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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?	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 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 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Featherby Infant and Nursery School, Gillingham, ME8 6PD

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school and showing me your work. I enjoyed my visit and would like to tell you what I found. Yours is a good school. Since the last inspection there have been good improvements to the Nursery, Reception and to information and communication technology (ICT).

These are strengths of the school.

- Children in Nursery get off to a good start.
- You all thoroughly enjoy school.
- The school is a friendly and caring place to be.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- Teaching is good, which is why you are learning so well.
- You use ICT well to support your learning.
- A good range of learning activities is provided for you.
- You show a clear understanding of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe.
- The school is well led by your headteacher and she receives good support from other senior staff.
- Staff take good care of you and give you good support.
- Your parents give the school good support and are pleased with the care and education provided.

There are two areas that the school could work on to make it even better.

- Your teachers should ensure that lessons always move on at a good pace and involve you all in checking your own progress.
- There could be better outdoor activities in Reception, which are well linked to the children's learning and to the main topic being studied.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

With kind regards

Derek Watts

Lead inspector

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