

# Ditton Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118854
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	313121
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 April 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kevin Hodge

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	199
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Graeme Proud
<b>Headteacher</b>	Robert Holder
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	New Road Ditton Aylesford ME20 6AE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01732 843446
<b>Fax number</b>	01732 873410

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

In this small school, an above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils' level of attainment when they join the school has risen in recent years and is often better than average. The school has a number of external awards, reflecting its commitment to raising pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles and their environmental responsibility.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Ditton Juniors is a satisfactory school. Following a dip in recent results, it is successfully tackling those academic aspects that need improving to match its success in fostering good levels of pupils' personal development and care. Parents are enthusiastic about the school's approach and appreciate that 'the school often goes the extra mile to ensure children get the best'.

Pupils reach average standards and achieve satisfactorily. Following a period where results rose significantly, the national test results dipped last year, particularly in English and science, to broadly average levels. Pupils' achievement slowed because checks on their progress were not rigorous enough to spot those needing an extra boost to their learning. Pupils made least progress in science. Although pupils have a sound grasp of key scientific facts, they generally lack confidence in investigating scientific problems. English and mathematics reflect an improving picture and the school's closer checks on pupils' progress indicate they are on track to meet their targets and reach above average standards this year. Pupils achieve particularly well in their information and communication technology (ICT) work, physical education and artistic activities. This is due to the good additional activities that supplement class based work.

Comments from pupils, such as 'I love my school' and 'we like helping the school to get better' reflect the school's success in promoting the pupils' social and moral development. As a result, the pupils behave really well around the school at playtimes. In lessons, pupils also behave well and enjoy their work. Teachers are good at promoting positive relationships among pupils, but not all are successful at stretching pupils' thinking or in developing their ability to work independently. The academic guidance pupils receive is regular, but not always effective, as they are not always clear what their targets are or how these can help them improve. Pupils confirm that they feel very safe and enjoy school.

The school has improved several areas since its last inspection, having initially boosted pupils' academic levels and increased resources for ICT. The senior staff and governors have a realistic picture of the school's strengths and weaker areas. However, their checks into what further steps will move it forward more quickly, particularly in raising the quality of pupils' learning, are not always probing or regular enough. The school's past successes reflect its satisfactory and developing capacity to improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' confidence in using and applying their science skills to solve practical problems.
- Ensure the checks on lessons and pupils' work are more regular and focus more sharply on assessing pupils' quality of learning to guide improvements in teaching.
- Ensure that the targets set for pupils are brief, simple and clear so pupils have a greater understanding of how to use them for improvement.

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 achieve satisfactorily and reach average standards. The school was disappointed that results dropped to below average last year in English and science and the school admits it

should have spotted this more quickly. The focus on developing pupils' writing has helped them to be more confident, creative and accurate in their work. Pupils' current science work indicates improvement, but it is still the weakest subject, as their investigational and problem-solving skills are not extended sufficiently. Pupils are confident in using calculation and problem-solving skills in mathematics. The school's checks on pupils' progress indicate their achievement is improving at a good rate as they are back on track to meet their targets and reach higher than average standards this year. Pupils' ICT skills have improved significantly since the last inspection and their artistic and sporting skills also develop well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in line with classmates, as their needs are addressed skilfully and their progress monitored closely.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' really enjoy school. They feel safe, have very good relationships with each other and adults, because their spiritual, moral and social development is good. Their cultural development is only satisfactory, as their knowledge of other children's beliefs and backgrounds are not well developed. Children care for classmates so all can enjoy school. As one said, 'We think it's better to be caring than clever'. Behaviour is good, particularly within lessons and this helps pupils to work willingly. Pupils play together very well at playtimes, aided by additional play equipment to stimulate their interests. As a result of their enjoyment of school, pupils attend regularly. The school council exerts influence on improving aspects of the school such as running the tuck shop and helping organise the 'Fitness challenge'. Other pupils enjoy promoting environmental awareness through their 'ECO' group. Pupils understand and try to adopt healthy lifestyles, aided by taking part in a varied range of physical activities during playtimes and in after school clubs. These raise their exercise levels effectively. Pupils' current level of basic academic skills, abilities to work well together and good awareness of local community issues, prepare them appropriately for the next stage of their education and later life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teachers foster good relationships between pupils. This helps ensure they work together well and are willing to learn. Teachers sometimes spend too much time explaining or directing work, so that pupils' attention occasionally wanders and they do not have sufficient opportunities to work independently. In science, activities are often too prescribed. Work in ICT has improved since the last inspection and, along with good activities in physical education, reflects good teaching. Teaching assistants provide good additional support, especially for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers assess pupils regularly, but their marking of pupils' work varies in quality between classes. Not all marking refers to the pupils' success or otherwise in understanding the aims of the lesson.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

There is an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills, particularly in English and mathematics. Science work is often not imaginative enough to motivate pupils' enthusiasm for problem solving, particularly in the older age groups. Pupils' writing skills now develop well

and are effectively used within other subjects. Good emphasis on promoting pupils' well-being helps pupils develop mature attitudes. Special activities to develop emotional understanding result in pupils behaving well and cooperating very willingly. To help make lessons more engaging, the school is beginning to combine subjects into topics, but this is at an early stage. Topics based on the Second World war for example, help develop pupils' writing skills as well as their historical knowledge. The school's approach to widening the curriculum with better ICT activities, a modern foreign language and many sports, succeeds in widening pupils' skills and interests, but although pupils enjoy lessons, few say they are really excited by what they cover. The curriculum is enriched by special events, such as themed weeks, many clubs, and trips away from school.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Consistently good care, guidance and support underpin pupils' good personal development. Parents readily voice praise about this aspect of the school's work. The school works closely with outside agencies to ensure that pupils make increasingly good progress, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children make a smooth start to school as there are good links with the adjacent infant school. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are clear and effective. Pupils are confident they can turn to any member of staff for help. There are effective arrangements to help older pupils make a confident start to their secondary education and links developed with the local sports college aide the process. Although teachers regularly set academic targets for pupils, there are rather too many of them and they are often over complicated. As a result, not all pupils are clear about how they can use them to guide their own learning. This reduces the effectiveness of pupils' academic guidance. Some parents would also like more guidance about helping their child's learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The senior leaders set a welcoming and caring tone to the school. The good team ethos has aided the quick response to the dip in last year's results. The clear whole-school focus on improving pupils' writing is increasing their progress this year and ICT work has also improved significantly since the last inspection. Senior staff monitor teaching and pupils' work to help guide subject improvement, but their observations are not always probing enough to identify less obvious weaknesses. This reduces the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation. As a result, the aspects of teaching that need improving most are not always clearly identified. Better checks on pupils' overall progress are helping staff to pinpoint those who need that extra push or support. Governors have helped steer the development of the school and provide a good sounding board for ideas and concerns. Their routines to check on the school's work are not always systematic, making it harder to gather information to gauge its performance. However, governors are keen to seek improvement, and the management of finances and resources, particularly for ICT, is an area that they have guided well.

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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?	3
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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?	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	2
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	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?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	3
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

30 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ditton CE Junior, Aylesford, ME20 6AE

Thank you for making us feel welcome at your school when we visited it recently. Yours is a satisfactory school, which is trying to be even better. It has some good things about it.

Here are some of the things we found out.

- You make satisfactory progress in your work and most of you reach the expected levels; your problem solving work in science is not quite as good as your mathematics, ICT, music and PE work.
- All the staff make sure that you feel safe; you said you 'like the caring atmosphere' and we noticed it too.
- Teachers plan some activities well, but could give you more investigative work in science and let you work on your own more.
- Those of you on the school council and ECO committee enjoy your responsibilities and like helping the school to get better.
- You know about keeping fit and active and you are trying to eat sensibly.
- You behave well at playtimes and you make friends easily; the school helps you become sensible and mature.
- The staff and governors are working hard to make sure that the school runs smoothly.

We have asked the school to do three things.

- Give you more exciting problem-solving activities in your science work.
- Make sure that when they visit your lessons, school leaders look especially closely at how well you are learning so they can give the teachers more ideas about how to make it even better.
- Make your class and individual targets simpler to understand so they can really help you to learn even better.

You can help too by continuing to be well behaved and giving the school more good ideas about improving further.

Best wishes

Kevin Hodge Lead inspector

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Lead inspector