

Diss Infants and Nursery Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120803
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	313744
Inspection date	24 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Ruth Frith

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	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Tony Billet
Headteacher	Mrs Marion Dawe
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2003
School address	Fitzwalter Road Diss Norfolk IP22 4PU
Telephone number	01379 642768
Fax number	01379 642768

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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 issues: the lower standards in mathematics in the 2007 national assessments compared with reading and writing, the effectiveness of the systems which assess pupils' work and track their progress, and the management roles and structures to support the transfer of headship and the school's continued capacity to improve. She gathered evidence from the school's self-evaluation form, lesson observations, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, information that the school keeps on how well pupils are doing, the school improvement plan and an analysis of the parents' questionnaire responses. 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, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is an average size infant and nursery school that serves the residential area of Diss although a few pupils come from outside the immediate catchment area. Pupils come from families representing a range of socio-economic backgrounds and the percentage receiving free school meals is below average. However, the current development of the Children's Centre on site reflects the need to support the wide range of need within the local community. Typically, pupils enter the nursery with knowledge and skills significantly below those usually seen in children of that age, particularly in relation to speech, language, number and social skills. Not all children who enter reception have attended the nursery. The percentage of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is high. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. A small number of pupils are at the early stages of learning English. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post for three weeks.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school's success results from excellent leadership and management that are clearly focussed on promoting pupils' personal development and well-being and raising standards. This results in exceptional care and personal development of pupils, a stimulating curriculum and outstanding achievement. The headteacher has a clear vision based on her high expectations and this is shared by the dedicated staff team. Staff morale is high and all work particularly well together to ensure they do the best they can for the children in their care. As one member of staff said, 'We don't settle for anything but the best for each child'. Teachers in charge of subjects provide excellent leadership. Because they regularly check how well children are doing in lessons and analyse test results, they are able to identify quickly areas for improvement and thereby maintain high quality teaching and learning. Governors are very knowledgeable about the school and this gives them the confidence to ask questions, for example, about national assessment results and how they can be improved. They are very confident about their recent headteacher appointment and value her skills and experience. Good systems are in place to support the transfer of headship and thereby maintain the school's excellent capacity to improve further.

A few parents are finding a recent change to the policy regarding parent helpers in classrooms difficult to accept but others think the new headteacher '.... has some excellent initiatives for parents learning alongside their child'. Almost all are fully supportive of what the staff do and how their children achieve. Most hold the school in high esteem as the following comments suggest. 'This is a lovely, friendly, happy school' 'Even though my daughter has only been in nursery for a couple of weeks she comes home every day excited about what she has done'.

Children make outstanding progress and achieve exceptionally well because teaching is excellent and they respond well to the challenges set. By the end of Year 2, standards are typically above average and sometimes exceptionally high, as in 2006. There is no complacency amongst staff, however, as they are constantly striving to improve their practice in order to raise standards further. The excellent systems to check how well children are doing and a thorough analysis of their work have highlighted lower standards in mathematics in 2007 compared with reading and writing. The staff's response to this has been to develop a clear plan of action and several new initiatives.

On entry to lessons, frequently there is a buzz of excitement as children become engaged in their learning. A key feature of the teaching is the consistency of approach adopted by staff. The planning of lessons is of a high standard. Teachers have a clear understanding of what they want children to learn and share this with them. Consequently, children are clear about what is expected of them and know what to do. Because tasks are set at an appropriately challenging level for the range of abilities within each class, children are confident enough to tackle the work and feel able to succeed. This feeling of success helps to develop their interest in school and learning.

Underpinning the children's excellent achievement and good results is the extremely effective work done by staff to help children develop socially and emotionally. This starts in nursery, when after only a few days, children confidently pick out their nametags and enthusiastically choose a book to take home. This early focus on developing independence and responsibility is developed systematically throughout the school so that by the time they leave, children are confident and well prepared for the next stage in their education. Staff have embraced the use of information and communication technology to improve their teaching and motivate children's

learning. As one child indicated, when talking about the use of interactive whiteboards, 'It makes it easier to learn like when learning to do joined up writing you can see it better'. Discussions with pupils indicate that they differentiate little between learning and play. For them learning is fun.

The children's place within the school community and beyond is also particularly well developed. They care about others and have an especially good understanding of people with different cultures and ways of life. This understanding helps them to realise the impact of their actions on others and results in a harmonious community and caring school ethos. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to school improvements by putting their ideas to the school council and taking part in practical activities, such as recycling waste. They have a particularly good understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives through, for example, plenty of energetic but safe exercise during playtimes.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children's learning and development in nursery and reception are impressive in relation to their starting points. Gains in learning are consistently at least good and often excellent. Through discussion with parents before children start nursery and regular observations, staff recognise the uniqueness of each child and quickly identify and support their learning needs. Children settle quickly and easily because expectations are clear and routines helpful. Staff focus very well on developing children's communication and social skills so they are confident when moving into reception. Here, high quality planning and organisation ensures that children thoroughly enjoy their learning and are suitably challenged by the activities provided. A particularly good balance is achieved between the time children work under the close direction of a member of staff and the time they develop their independent skills through working unaided. Because of this excellent provision, a significant number of children reach the levels expected for their age when they enter Year 1. Some reach levels below those expected because they have started from such a low baseline or have learning difficulties. Those in charge have exceptionally high aspirations and throughout, expectations of what children can do are high.

What the school should do to improve further

- Check regularly that the initiatives to raise the profile of aspects of mathematics such as time and measure and the use of whole-school mathematics targets are having the desired effect and are raising standards further.

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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?	1
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	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

26 September 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Diss Infants and Nursery Community School Fitzwalter Road, Diss, Norfolk IP22 3PU

You probably remember that I recently came to visit your school to see what you were learning. Thank you for making me feel so welcome. I really enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn and play. I think you go to an excellent school and have listed below some of the things I particularly like.

- You try hard and work very well so that by Year 2 you are doing work which is better than I sometimes see when I am visiting other schools.
- You thoroughly enjoy school and behave well because you are very interested in what you are doing.
- Nearly all of you go to school regularly so you do not miss lessons. This is very important. Well done!
- You get on well with each other and make good friends.
- You know such a lot about how to stay healthy and safe. You spend your play and lunchtimes very well by getting lots of exercise and keeping fit.
- You support the school and local community very well. I was also pleased to see how well you were sponsoring the little boy in Peru.
- All the staff are working very well together as a team and teaching is excellent.
- You feel safe in school. I was pleased to hear that you know what to do if anyone behaves badly, and also that you would talk to a member of staff if you have problems.

Mrs Dawe is very new to the school and has made a very good start. She has lots of ideas to improve your school further. Staff and governors have agreed that they will focus on helping you to improve how you do in your numeracy lessons, particularly when you work on time and measurement. I know you will respond well to their efforts and try as hard as you can.

I left your school confident that it will improve further and wish you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Frith Additional Inspector