

Danetree Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124960
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315100
Inspection dates	9–10 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	465
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Humphrey Reynolds
Headteacher	Mrs Dorte Neess-Cardie
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2004
School address	Danetree Road West Ewell Epsom KT19 9SE
Telephone number	020 8393 6406
Fax number	020 8786 8154

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Danetree Junior School is a large primary school. Most of the pupils are from White British heritages. A few pupils come from Indian, Bangladeshi and Black African or mixed heritages. An increasing proportion of pupils are joining the school from Eastern European backgrounds. A very small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has a higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, although in some year groups the proportion is closer to average. The school has several national awards including: Investors in People; the Green Flag Eco award; Artsmark; the Football Association Charter Mark and, the International School Award. It is working to gain the Healthy School Award. A new headteacher took up post in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Danetree Junior School is a welcoming school that has a new and energetic headteacher and caring and committed staff. However, although standards are average, pupils' achievement and progress are inadequate. The school has not improved standards enough since the last inspection. Therefore, in accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement.

Staff and governors are keen to move forward and have the capacity to improve. Almost all parents have confidence in school leadership. Inspectors agree with comment made by parents when saying, 'The headteacher is bringing about changes which will only benefit the school'. When the headteacher joined the school in September 2007, she found that staff and governors were unaware that achievement and progress were inadequate.

When pupils join the school, their skills are above average overall. The school had been focusing on getting pupils to an average level in their work by the end of Year 6. As a result, for the last three years, too many pupils have not been making the progress of which they are capable. This was especially the case for higher ability pupils. Until recently, leaders and staff had not used assessment information effectively to identify where pupils were underperforming.

Although pupils with learning difficulties often do better than is usual for this group in developing English and mathematics skills, they do less well in science because support in science lessons is too variable. Nonetheless, this group of pupils make better overall progress than others in the school because of focused and well planned support in English and mathematics. Most pupils with learning difficulties have moderate learning difficulties. The next largest group have speech and language difficulties. A few have either dyslexia or behavioural, social and emotional difficulties.

The headteacher is leading the school well, as evident in the way she brought in urgent actions to address pupils' inadequate achievement. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher and other staff. She has empowered all leaders to develop their roles. Changes are already beginning to happen, which demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity to improve. For example, pupils are being better challenged in mathematics and the focus on writing is helping to lift achievement in that subject. In science, however, not enough has been done, as this was not the school's first priority.

Leaders quickly introduced a new system to track pupils' progress, which is robust. Tracking data shows that pupils achieved satisfactorily in the last term in English, but in mathematics, there is still too much underachievement. In science, the lack of helpful assessment information and limited challenges for higher attaining pupils slows their progress. Overall, pupils are not always sure of how to improve quickly.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving steadily, with better planning and pupils grouped by ability in some lessons, but there is more to do to ensure consistency between classes. Pupils are now being given more opportunities to share their ideas and widen their understanding through discussion work, although this is also inconsistent. Although teaching and learning are now satisfactory, there is not enough good teaching and learning to lift progress rapidly.

Pastoral care is good and reflects the good relationships and the staff's genuine concern that pupils should be happy at school. Some aspects of pupils' personal development are good. As a result, pupils gain important social skills, care for others and adopt safe and healthy lifestyles. Pupils mostly behave well but a few misbehave, which hampers progress in a few lessons. Overall, pupils make a positive contribution to the community, show positive attitudes and respect for others.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable pupils to make faster progress in mathematics and science, especially the most able learners.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning to at least good, ensuring that pupils know how to improve their learning to best effect and have more opportunities to increase their understanding through discussion work.
- Develop assessment still further, so that it more widely informs teachers about pupils' progress and helps them always to provide challenging learning activities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement is beginning to improve. This is most evident in English, where progress in lessons and from samples of work show that pupils are beginning to do much better in writing. New resources for English are more effectively meeting the interests of boys and they are making better progress. Initiatives such as more real life problem solving in mathematics are beginning to aid improvement, but overall, achievement is too variable between different year and ability groups. In science, in particular, higher ability pupils are insufficiently challenged.

Standards have not improved enough since the last inspection when they were found to be above average in English and science and average in mathematics. Standards fell to below average in 2005 and since then have risen to be broadly average but this is not high enough considering the pupils' starting points and abilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy school and greatly appreciate extra activities and visits. Events such as a visit from an Olympic athlete enhance fitness and fun and these features are maintained well through good sporting provision and the walking bus scheme. Pupils relish responsibility. For example, they lead an eco team, act as park rangers and school councillors and they enjoy singing in the choir and raising funds for charities. These activities demonstrate pupils' good social skills, teamwork and care for others and the wider world. Pupils show good respect for different cultures and religious beliefs. Almost all pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. However, where teachers do not sufficiently match learning to pupils' needs or interests and do not have sufficient skills in managing pupil's behaviour, a small minority of pupils misbehave in lessons. Parents also commented on this. Pupils' achievement in basic skills, especially in mathematics, science and in the presentation of their work is not yet good enough for their future economic well-being and information and communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

As one parent said, 'The teaching staff are very passionate and enthusiastic about the school and the children.' Inspectors agree. Teachers often have good knowledge of their subjects and lesson planning has improved well since September 2007. As a result, lessons are usually interesting and challenging although this is not consistent. The reorganisation of pupils into ability groups for teaching in mathematics is a positive move, which is having a significant impact on pupils' progress, especially in Year 6. In the school overall, however, there are missed opportunities for teachers to demonstrate how to set out their problem solving methods in mathematics. Staff are beginning to ask probing questions that make pupils think, explain their ideas and, help teachers to assess pupils' learning but there is more to do on this to lift achievement. Pupils are being encouraged to share their ideas with other pupils and adults but opportunities to do this are often too limited. Worksheets hamper pupils from recording their own ideas, extending their knowledge and writing down their own thinking.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and helps pupils to improve their self-esteem and develop healthy and safe lifestyles. Leaders are correctly focusing on improving basic skills to help pupils to be better prepared for their future lives. Learning is more exciting in some classes than in others. Links between different subjects are steadily improving. There are still missed opportunities to enliven learning. Teachers are beginning to make effective use of new ICT to aid learning, but this is underdeveloped. Special themed weeks, extra activities and visits help to make learning more fun. The school has suitably modified the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties, so that they make satisfactory progress. Provision for pupils learning English as an additional language has been modified well. As yet, these changes are too new to have impacted significantly on pupils' progress. The curriculum is not always well planned for higher ability pupils as is evident in science.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff know pupils well and pupils feel safe and well cared for. As a result, they grow in confidence and feel able to talk about any worries they may have. Child protection and health and safety matters are given high priority. Good use is made of outside agencies to enhance support. Teaching assistants provide satisfactory support to pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils report that bullying is rare and say, 'Teachers help you sort it out and you've always got friends to look out for you'. Parents agree. As one said, 'Problems are dealt with swiftly and effectively'.

Care, guidance and support are not yet good because pupils are not given clear enough academic guidance on what exactly they need to do to improve their work. Although they are given targets, these are not reviewed regularly enough and are not always written in child-friendly language. Not all teachers check precisely if pupils have grasped new things fully in lessons. Assessment through questioning and marking of pupils' work remains an important area for further development.

Since September 2007, leaders have taken clear action to provide suitable focused support for pupils learning English as an additional language. This was because they had not been doing as well as the national average for this group. However, a lack of suitable assessments for checking their progress in speaking means that leaders cannot evaluate the progress of this group of learners well enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

There is a clear direction for improvement, which is due to the good leadership and rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by the new headteacher. Former weaknesses in management systems have been addressed well, so that all staff are taking greater responsibility and share a common vision for improving.

Although achievement is beginning to improve, it remains inadequate and the school is not yet providing value for money. Opportunities are not yet equal for all pupils to make progress. Staff and governors recognise this because their evaluation of the school is accurate. Governors, senior and middle managers have been helped to become more aware about how to evaluate the school's performance compared with other schools. This is critical in helping them to plan important improvements. The school's improvement planning has come a long way in a short time and is now robust enough in mathematics and English, but is not yet good enough in science because the first priorities were to improve learning in English and mathematics. Clear and suitably challenging targets for improvement have been set for 2008. Governors take a keen interest in the school and they are beginning to ask more challenging questions about pupils' progress.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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?	3
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	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	4

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?	3

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?	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	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

01 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Danetree Junior School, Epsom, KT19 9SE

You may remember that three inspectors came to your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly. I am writing to let you know our findings.

Your school is a happy and welcoming school. We agree with you that you are well cared for and mostly enjoy learning. Your new headteacher and all of the adults are keen to make the school better for you. We agree that this is important, as it is not yet as good as it should be. We have asked them to make significant improvements for you. This is because some of you could be helped to make better progress, especially those of you who find learning easy. Although many of you reach a level in your work that is similar to most schools, not enough of you get to the highest level in mathematics and science. Teachers are working hard to make learning more suitable for you and they are doing well with new improvements but there is still more to do. In particular, we like the improvements in English, so well done for working hard on this. Also, well done for beginning to talk more about how to solve mathematical problems, keep this up! You enjoy the many exciting visits and extra activities that adults provide. Well done for being polite and respectful of others. We are impressed by your eco work in particular and the way that you help your community. Most of you behave very well, but a few of you need to try as hard as possible to behave well in lessons.

We have asked your headteacher and all of the adults in your school to do the following things:

- help you to make faster progress between Years 3 and 6
- make more lessons good and ensure that you know how to improve your learning and have plenty of opportunities to talk about your ideas
- find more ways to check your progress so that teachers can make sure that you move on quickly and do activities that are not too easy or too hard but are just right for you.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Simmons

Lead Inspector