

Thames Ditton Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124967
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315102
Inspection dates	10–11 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Coussins

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	358
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Bronach Hughes
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2003
School address	Mercer Close Thames Ditton KT7 0BS
Telephone number	020 8398 3039
Fax number	020 8398 4919

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Thames Ditton is a large junior school. It serves an area of mainly private housing with the majority of pupils coming from favourable backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. The percentage from minority ethnic groups and those who have English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is lower than found nationally although the proportion with statements of special educational need is higher. This is because the school has a Specialist Centre currently supporting 11 pupils with moderate learning difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Pupils are cared for well, develop good personal skills and are well equipped for later life. Good pastoral care and guidance enables pupils to feel safe and to trust teachers and other adults. They enjoy their learning when challenged appropriately and when given opportunities to use their initiative and investigative skills. Inspectors agreed with pupils who said that some of their lessons do not provide them with that challenge. The quality of provision in the Specialist Centre is good and is a strength of the school.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. When pupils start at the school their skill levels are well above expectations for their age. Progress is generally satisfactory and, by the time they leave at the end of Year 6, standards are above average. However, not all higher attaining pupils reach the levels they should. The school is aware of this issue and has introduced a system of tracking pupils' progress and is providing enrichment sessions that are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Too little use is made of assessment information to plan work and set goals for the learning of these higher ability pupils' and the school is rightly tackling this as a matter of priority. Otherwise, data from assessment, is now mostly used well, but has not been analysed with sufficient rigour or frequency in previous years so that it has not always been possible to detect underachievement.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is carefully and accurately checked by senior leaders and has improved over the last year as a result. However, aspects of teaching vary across the school. Teachers do not always plan appropriate challenges for pupils of different abilities in lessons. This mostly affects some higher attaining pupils, who receive the same work as those of average ability and is one reason why some of these pupils do not reach the levels of which they are capable. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not often provide pupils with suggestions as to how they can improve it.

There is clear evaluation of the work of the school by senior leaders and challenging targets have been set for further improvement. The headteacher gives good, strong leadership and is supported well by the deputy. As a team they have driven a range of initiatives in a relatively short amount of time. Some of the developments have been controversial with some of the parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire. However, the positive impact of changes is already seen in the improvement in some areas, for example standards in English. One parent wrote, 'The new head has made some bold, strategic changes which I believe have improved and will continue to improve the teaching and performance at the school.' New leaders are receiving ongoing training in their roles and responsibilities and although it is too early to judge their impact on raising standards, a good start has been made, as seen in the improvements in planning the curriculum. Effective improvements have been made since the last inspection and the school has a satisfactory capacity to make further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement, particularly for more able pupils, by ensuring that work planned offers more challenge.
- Ensure pupils know how they can improve their work through consistent marking and target setting.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching to ensure greater consistency in all classes.

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

Achievement is satisfactory. Although standards are above average, the school acknowledges they could be higher, particularly in writing and mathematics, to reflect the pupils' starting points. Achievement in English improved significantly in 2007 because of the school's focus on the subject. Nevertheless, the school missed its 2007 targets as some pupils did not achieve to their full potential. The headteacher very carefully analysed the results of the end of year assessments to identify pupils who were at risk of underachieving and a new tracking system is now being used well to monitor ongoing progress. The action taken to raise standards in English, especially in writing, and in mathematics has had some positive results. Lower attaining pupils are generally making sound progress but the progress of more able pupils is not yet consistent, affecting both boys and girls. Due to weaknesses in assessment and target setting, more able pupils are still not always stretched enough to reach the higher standards that they are capable of in some lessons. They respond well when additional provision is made for them and are challenged by the enrichment sessions. Pupils with learning difficulties make similar progress to their classmates. The pupils in the Specialist Centre achieve well because of consistently good teaching.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal skills are good. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils are well behaved, know how to keep safe and are confident to approach adults in school if they have any problems or worries. They have a good awareness of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle. One child said, 'Eating chocolate occasionally is not going to harm you but eating it all the time will not give you a balanced diet.' Pupils develop independence and happily take on the responsibilities they are given such as house captains, buddies and mentors. Their initiative is sometimes not given enough opportunity to flourish in lessons where they are given too much direction and too few opportunities to solve problems, collaborate and negotiate. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils participate well in sports and other events and make a good contribution to the wider community. The school council is active and its views are valued. Pupils' good basic skills as well as their personal skills stand them in good stead for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although there are variations in the quality, teaching is satisfactory overall. The headteacher and senior leaders have been successful in ensuring improvements in planning so that the purpose of each lesson is shared with pupils and they know what they will be learning. Pupils are keen to learn and have clear views on how they learn best. They participate with enthusiasm in class discussions and in paired and group work and this contributes well to their progress. They enjoy lessons that involve investigating ideas for themselves and those where there are

lots of practical activities. However, there are times when pupils do not have these opportunities and teaching does not capture their interest. This reduces their enjoyment of learning. Also marking does not always show pupils what they need to do to improve and, often, more able pupils are not guided towards their 'next steps'. Consequently, pupils are not sufficiently aware of how they can reach higher standards. Teaching assistants provide good support to ensure that all pupils have access to the full curriculum, including those with learning difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A detailed audit of the curriculum has resulted in improved curriculum planning. A start has been made on developing links between subjects to increase pupils' opportunities to use their skills more widely, though this work is at an early stage of development. Currently, opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills across the curriculum are limited, and this can hold back their achievements in writing. The curriculum is enriched very well with extra activities. There is a good range of clubs, which are well attended. Visits, special events and theme days deepen pupils' understanding of the topics they are studying. Residential visits for all year groups, including a five-day trip to France for pupils in Year 6, contribute well to pupils' social and cultural development. Pupils in the Specialist Centre are fully included in all activities. All pupils have the opportunity to learn French. The school website is being used well to provide extended, project-based homework.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school places considerable emphasis on caring for pupils. Any pupils who may be vulnerable are identified carefully, and good personal support is provided for them in school and through good liaison with outside agencies. Safety and safeguarding procedures are well managed. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well because effective systems are established. Academic guidance is less strong. The recent whole school focus on improving assessment is leading to more careful tracking of the progress pupils make. However, the vast majority of pupils do not have a clear idea of how well they are doing. The setting of targets to help them improve their work and make better progress is not yet effective in the school. Pupils in the Specialist Centre make good progress because they have work that interests and extends them. Their work and progress is carefully tracked and they receive very clear guidance and targets to help them improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has provided good leadership in the four terms since he joined the school. He quickly identified weaker areas to become priorities for improvement. Information from the assessment of pupils' progress is now used to track how well pupils are achieving. As a result the school has increasingly reliable data to identify where pupils are making satisfactory progress and where improvements are needed. Careful checks on the quality of teaching and learning have resulted in better teaching overall. The role of senior and middle managers has been clarified and extended. However, it is too early to see a significant impact on standards. Staff are supported by an active governing body, which challenges and questions the school's work. The headteacher, deputy and governors have sought the views of parents and pupils through

questionnaires and an 'open door' policy. However, communication is not always clear. For example, some pupils were not aware of the project between the school council and parents to enhance the playground facilities. Some parents raised concerns over issues including homework and progress and the school agrees that information needs to be clarified to ensure there is no confusion.

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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 ¹ reached by learners	2
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	3
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?	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	2
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

24 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thames Ditton Junior School, Thames Ditton, KT7 0BS

I am writing to let you know how much my colleagues and I enjoyed our visit to your school and what we found out. Thank you for making us welcome, for talking to us about your work and telling us what you think about your school.

We found out that yours is a satisfactory school. This means that there are good things about the school and some which could be better.

The good things are:

- you behave well in lessons and around the school
- you are confident and have good personal skills; by the time you leave Thames Ditton, you are well prepared to move on to your next school
- everyone in the school looks after you well
- the headteacher and deputy are doing a good job and have made sure that the school is improving.

These are the three main things that we think could be better.

- We have asked your teachers always to give you work which is at the right level for you so that it always provides you with challenges which many of you told us you enjoy. This will help you to achieve more, particularly in your mathematics and English.
- We think your teachers could help you even more if they give you targets or learning goals and let you know how you can improve your work. Sometimes this happens already, but not in every class.
- In some of your lessons, teaching is good, you enjoy your learning and make good progress. We have asked the school to make sure that all of your lessons are as good as the best ones.

Thank you again for all your help and for being so polite, friendly and interesting to talk to.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins

Lead Inspector