

The Discovery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134057
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	316234
Inspection date	12 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	283
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	30
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Hollyer
Headteacher	Alison Farrall
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Discovery Drive Kings Hill West Malling ME19 4GJ
Telephone number	01732 847000
Fax number	01732 847111

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the effectiveness of measures taken to support pupils' progress in writing and mathematics and the level of challenge for more able pupils; and the key elements of the curriculum, assessment, guidance and support which ensure pupils are helped to achieve their best. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, looking at pupils' work and school documents. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, the vice chair and other governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors 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

The school has rapidly expanded since it was opened in September 2003 and when it was last inspected in 2005. This has resulted in some mixed-age classes. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are of White British origin; a small number are from minority ethnic groups. In both classes the children start school aged four with levels typical for their age. These form part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision. The boy/girl ratio is skewed in some year groups with lots more boys than girls in Years 1 and 4. The school holds several awards in recognition of its work. A privately run company provides on-site after-school care, including holiday clubs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Key to the school's success is the strong leadership of the headteacher. She is exceptionally well supported by an innovative senior leadership team, and governors who challenge the school's decisions. The school constantly strives to refine its excellent provision and it is not afraid to try out new ideas. The unity of purpose is seen in the effective management of its rapid growth, and smooth organisational changes set against difficulties caused by a phased building programme. The excellent management views any challenge as an opportunity to succeed. Children and their needs are at the heart of its planning while ensuring the school's strong ethos and standards do not slip.

This is a happy, secure and stimulating environment in which all are valued as individuals. Pupils are encouraged to work together and this is seen in their outstanding personal development and well-being, care, guidance and support. Pupils' eagerness is shown in their high attendance, involvement and thorough enjoyment of learning. High expectations result in excellent relationships and behaviour. Pupils take their responsibilities very seriously as school councillors, playtime friends and monitors. The school council campaigned successfully for an activity trail and pond. They proudly talk about how they influence school development. The exciting creative curriculum with its themed weeks, topics, visits, visitors and displays of pupils' work clearly show why pupils are inspired. Basic skills are taught in real-life situations, such as writing persuasive letters to local businesses, and master classes challenge gifted and talented pupils very well. Sport is encouraged through physical education, a sports partnership, professional coaching and many extra-curricular clubs. Pupils fully understand the importance of leading healthy lives.

Teaching is consistently good and often outstanding. Typically, teaching has high expectations. Learning intentions, ways of judging success and outcomes are reinforced so pupils are clear about what they are learning. Work is well matched to pupils' differing learning needs in mixed-age classes so all achieve outstandingly well. Pupils say 'teachers make learning fun'; as one said, 'Today one of us dressed up as a milkman and we had to work out the milk deliveries. It makes it real so we learn better.' The school has developed rigorous self-evaluation and robust monitoring systems. Challenging targets are set and exceeded. Actions to bring about improvement, for example in accelerating the progress of more able pupils and improving pupils' writing and mathematical skills, raised standards and significantly improved pupils' achievement compared to last year. Senior leadership has had a significant impact upon developing the roles of subject leaders, supporting staff, demonstrating and constantly evaluating best practice. This has raised standards, sustained an upward trend and is reducing the gender gap in performance. Consequently, the school has an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Children enter the Reception class with skills that are typical for their age and pupils make excellent progress and achieve brilliantly. This means they leave Year 6 with above, and for some pupils significantly above, average standards in English and mathematics. The exceptionally high standards in science reflect teachers' expertise and pupils' enthusiasm for science. The value the school adds to pupils' learning puts it amongst the top four per cent of schools nationally. Pupils attain good standards in a range of subjects such as art, history, geography and information and communication technology (ICT) despite some limited ICT resources. A close eye is kept on pupils' progress and rigorous checking systems are used. The information is used effectively to pinpoint any likely underperformance in English, mathematics and science and triggers specific help and support for pupils identified. Skilled and trained teaching assistants

contribute significantly to pupils' learning. Pupils understand their targets and know what else they need to do to improve in these subjects. External expertise and excellent links with external agencies and local schools are used outstandingly well for the benefit of pupils and staff. One example is the successful achievement of the increasing number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who benefit from high quality support.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Not unsurprisingly, they show an excellent understanding of right from wrong, feel very safe from bullying and racist incidents and say the 'worry box' system really works. Pupils socialise very well. They appreciate wearing slippers in school: 'It makes us feel calm, at home and helps keep our school clean.' They show a great empathy to local and world crises and have funded the building of a house in Sri Lanka. The school's community cohesion is new and well underway. Links with communities abroad are strong but its links with communities within Britain are not yet outstanding. Pupils can talk confidently about different cultures and traditions in other countries but are relatively less aware of the multicultural diversity in Britain today. Good links within the local community are developing as the local community itself is being established. Parents appreciate the school's work and the high level of care and support their children receive. Parental comments were overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work. The school works extremely hard to involve parents in their children's learning and would welcome more support. As one parent commented, 'It's a fantastic place for children to learn.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress in the Reception class and join Year 1 with generally above average standards. The classroom is very stimulating and bright. Children really love learning because of the exciting range of activities provided. The balance of activities led by the teacher and those they can choose from is very good. Leadership, management and teaching are excellent and ensure the care and attention given to children's welfare is outstanding. Children are very happy, safe and secure. School checks on progress show that the EYFS children are working well towards achieving their targets. Children were thrilled to be invited to a birthday party on Friday. Rich language flowed from the learning activities as children busily set about writing acceptance cards, made birthday banners, jelly and a 'pin the tail on the donkey' game. They used their artistic skills well to decorate balloons and bookmarks as gifts. Whilst outside, children were engrossed in digging a 'real' hole, wore hard hats and put out cones and barriers to ensure all safety regulations were properly met to mirror what is found in 'real' life.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish links with the wider communities represented in the United Kingdom to raise pupils' awareness of today's multicultural society.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

12 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Discovery School, West Malling, ME19 4GJ

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We would particularly like to thank all those of you who took time to talk with us about all the things you like about your school.

Yours is an outstanding school. These are some of the things we have included in the report.

- You are all doing very well in English, mathematics, art, history, geography and ICT and you do exceptionally well in science.
- You know what your targets are and what you need to do to improve further.
- Your headteacher, governors and all those with responsibilities lead the school extremely well and are keen to make it even better.
- What an exciting curriculum with lots of extra activities you have.
- You take very seriously the importance of eating healthily and taking part in exercise and told us exactly why burgers and chips were not a healthy meal.
- Your behaviour is excellent, and you get on so well with each other.
- You are so keen and enthusiastic about learning and get involved.
- All the adults in school take such very good care of you.

We have asked your school to:

- Make links with a wider range of communities in the United Kingdom to help you to understand and appreciate the many different ethnic groups of people in our society today.

You can help your school improve even further by continuing to work as hard as you do to achieve the very best that you can.

Yours faithfully

Sheila Browning Lead inspector