

Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114500
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	338381
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Carole Skinner

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Forman
Headteacher	David Simon
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2007
School address	Lewes Road Ditchling East Sussex BN6 8TU
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed eight lessons and six teachers. Meetings were held with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and the school council. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at assessment information and the school's records of individual pupils' progress, the school improvement plan, a sample of pupils' workbooks, safeguarding records and evidence of monitoring. Inspectors scrutinised the questionnaire responses received from 38 parents and carers, as well as those from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement of pupils at Key Stage 1 to determine whether teaching enables all pupils to make the best possible progress
- the achievement of the more-able and gifted and talented pupils throughout the school to determine whether teaching and the curriculum provide sufficient challenge to promote rapid progress
- the urgency with which leaders, managers and governors are driving improvement, particularly in the quality of teaching, in order to raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress.

Information about the school

This small school draws its pupils from Ditchling and the neighbouring towns and villages. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and very few are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is low. A larger than usual intake in September 2009 triggered an extra class so that there are currently three separate classes for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. In previous years these pupils have been taught in mixed-age classes, as are pupils currently in Key Stage 2. The deputy headteacher has recently returned to her post after a term's secondment to another school.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

The school provides pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. It is successful in nurturing pupils' personal development and helps them to grow into well-rounded, confident young people who are well equipped for the next phase of education. Pupils have excellent attitudes towards keeping fit and healthy and take part with enthusiasm in the wide range of sporting activities on offer. They say that they feel very safe and well cared for and parents and carers wholeheartedly agree. Pupils are very proud of their school and play a key role in helping it to improve, for example through the class and school councils and their outstanding contribution to its daily routines. The vast majority of parents are pleased with their child's experience at school. One parent praised the school's 'positive ethos to learning' while another commented on its 'warm and welcoming environment'.

By the time they leave, pupils' attainment is above average in English, mathematics and science. Their achievement is satisfactory because learning and progress are inconsistent between key stages. Children get off to a good start in Reception and make good progress in all areas of learning. Then progress slows to satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 because teachers' expectations are not always high enough, especially for some pupils who are capable of achieving better than average levels of attainment. Progress picks up again in Key Stage 2 due to stronger teaching, although it is not consistently good in all lessons. Pupils do well in reading but there is scope for more of them to reach above-average levels of attainment in all subjects.

Pupils' enjoyment of learning has increased as the curriculum has become more interesting. The school has successfully moved away from its former reliance on published schemes of work for separate subjects. Teachers now integrate subjects and key skills more creatively within overriding themes that are carefully designed to meet the changing needs of the mixed-age classes. However, they do not always adapt plans successfully to provide additional challenge for the more-able pupils. Senior leaders have introduced more rigorous systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. They set challenging targets for pupils to reach in Year 6, which are usually met. Leaders have focused their work mainly on improving learning and progress at Key Stage 2 and have not given sufficient attention to ensuring that all groups of pupils achieve their full potential in Years 1 and 2. Staff and governors play their part in identifying priorities for development, but are not involved enough in monitoring the school's performance. The school improvement plan focuses appropriately on improving teaching and learning but does not link proposed actions to measurable targets. This makes it difficult for governors to evaluate how well the school is doing or to provide challenge to senior leaders. Despite these shortcomings, improvements in assessment, the curriculum and

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the continuing above-average attainment demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 so that it is consistently good by December 2010 by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve each year
 - setting challenging targets for each pupil and checking their progress regularly throughout the year.
- Eliminate inconsistencies in the quality of teaching throughout the school so that it is consistently good or better in each class by:
 - utilising the good links with other schools to provide opportunities for teachers to observe good and outstanding practice
 - ensuring that teachers make more rigorous use of assessment information to plan work that builds successfully on pupils' previous learning
 - always providing suitably challenging tasks for higher-ability pupils
 - making more effective use of marking and pupils' targets to move learning forward and engage pupils in assessing their own progress.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leaders, managers and governors by:
 - sharply focusing on improving teaching, learning and progress at Key Stage 1
 - intensifying the rigour and frequency with which leaders and managers evaluate learning and progress through lesson observations, scrutiny of teachers' planning and analysis of pupils' work
 - including measurable criteria in the school improvement plan against which governors can evaluate the school's success in order to provide greater challenge to senior leaders.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils are keen to learn and behave well in lessons and around the school. They discuss ideas sensibly with 'talk partners' and cooperate well when working in groups. Pupils generally concentrate well and work hard, but some become restless when whole-class teaching goes on for too long. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching lead to variations in pupils' rates of progress in lessons. Where progress is good, all groups of pupils are challenged to extend their thinking, as in a mathematics lesson for the oldest pupils where they investigated patterns and relationships between numbers. This challenged their thinking and promoted good discussion and explanations. On other occasions pupils find tasks relatively easy and do not move on rapidly enough to the next stage in learning. Pupils are capable readers by the time they leave the school and their writing skills are showing promising signs of improvement in response to new teaching strategies. Too few pupils reach above-average levels of attainment in writing,

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mathematics and science. The well-focused support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities helps them to overcome learning difficulties so that many are removed from the register of concern and go on to achieve national expectations by Year 6.

Pupils eagerly assume responsibilities, for example as play leaders and organising and running lunchtime clubs. They are caring and considerate towards each other. In the words of one pupil, 'We're a small school so we are close friends with everyone.' Excellent links with the local community help to prepare pupils well for the future, as when pupils worked in partnership with Ditchling Museum on a development project. In assemblies and through the curriculum pupils reflect on fundamental spiritual and moral issues. The recent 'Life and Death' topic for older pupils provoked insightful discussions and consideration of sensitive issues. Pupils engage with enthusiasm in arts, music, drama and sporting activities but their appreciation of the cultural diversity of British society is less well developed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Well-planned topics and themes engage pupils' interest and provide them with a wide variety of experiences that promote active learning in real-life contexts. Older pupils learned about Ancient Egypt from an expert and through handling artefacts, while younger pupils visited a local college to find out more about healthy eating. Pupils' experiences are broadened by special events such as an enrichment day in music and an 'International Week'. The latter gave pupils insights into different cultures through dance, music and food tasting as well as teaching them about African games and Japanese culture. Good partnerships with secondary schools and local colleges provide exciting additional opportunities for the most-able pupils to extend their learning in mathematics and science.

Teachers do not always fully exploit the possibilities offered by the new curriculum for cross-curricular learning. Some rely too heavily on prepared worksheets which limit opportunities to practise and develop pupils' writing skills through a range of subjects, especially for the more-able pupils. Inconsistencies in learning relate mainly to teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Where teaching is good, assessment information is used well to plan tasks that build on each group's previous learning. The pace of learning is brisk and teachers pose challenging questions that extend pupils' thinking. In the satisfactory lessons, pupils sometimes spend too little time working independently or in a group. In these lessons, pupils are not fully challenged in order to extend their learning. Although pupils have individual targets, these are not used well enough to involve them in reviewing their own progress. At its best, teachers' marking shows pupils how to improve their work, but this is not consistent. Older pupils say they are given time to read and respond to the teacher's comments which they find helpful. Adults know pupils very well as individuals and provide good pastoral care and support. Initiatives to reward good attendance have been successful in reducing the number of holidays taken in term time. Pupils say adults take prompt action to tackle bullying when it occurs, though incidences are few and far between. Parents' and pupils' questionnaire responses indicate that the school is not fully successful in communicating how it deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Good links with the local pre-school and secondary schools ensure a smooth transition from one phase of education to the next. The breakfast club offers a nutritious start to the day in a relaxed social atmosphere.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

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Senior leaders and governors have high aspirations for the school and are clearly focused on improving teaching and learning. They set suitably challenging targets for pupils to achieve at Key Stage 2, but those set for pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not always high enough. Changes in the organisation of classes and deployment of teachers in these year groups have also hindered the development of consistent approaches and expectations. Senior leaders are not rigorous enough in evaluating how effectively teaching contributes to pupils' progress, for example by observing lessons and examining teachers' planning and pupils' work. As a result, some of the school's evaluations of its work are too generous. Subject leaders share their expertise with colleagues and provide training in new initiatives, but budget constraints have limited opportunities for them to be released from classes to monitor the quality of provision. Governors discharge their statutory responsibilities for keeping pupils safe, including appropriate procedures for vetting staff and volunteers. Through their new committee structure they are becoming increasingly involved in determining the school's strategic direction. They are not rigorous enough in challenging senior leaders to raise attainment. The school gives good attention to challenging stereotypes and promoting awareness of cultural diversity. Its success in ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils is partly compromised by the recent lack of focus on progress at Key Stage 1. The school is at the heart of the local community and has introduced a wide variety of initiatives to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of world cultures, both through the curriculum and enrichment activities. It is in the early stages of creating links with a contrasting locality in the United Kingdom to extend pupils' awareness of the diversity of British society.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Although attainment on entry to Reception varies due to the small numbers in each cohort, it is broadly in line with expectations for age. Children make good progress and, by the time they move into Year 1, have mastered early reading, writing and mathematical skills and are confident, independent learners. The curriculum is planned well around themes that encompass all areas of learning. Children greatly enjoy opportunities to learn through play, which is well structured and greatly enhances language development. Some wearing yellow jackets and hard hats were working on the 'building site' in the outdoor area, 'squishing the concrete down', while others worked in the 'fruit and vegetable market' in the classroom, buying and selling healthy foods. There is a good balance of activities chosen by children and those led by adults, as when the teacher discussed with a group the life cycle of a frog. The teacher and teaching assistants form a strong team and all interact with the children as they play and learn, asking pertinent questions to develop and assess their understanding. Assessment procedures are thorough and give an accurate picture of each child's progress throughout the year. The teacher is relatively new to the role of leading the development of the Early Years Foundation Stage, but has already had a good impact on improving the quality of provision. The outdoor area is small and currently restricted further by building works. Although the teacher makes the best possible use of the space and resources available, the outdoor area does not reflect all areas of learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents have positive views of the school and feel their children are safe and happy, and inspectors agree. Inspectors' views about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching are a little less positive than those of parents because of the inconsistencies between classes. A small minority of parents expressed concerns about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that teachers take appropriate steps to tackle such incidents and that pupils feel misbehaviour is dealt with well. However, the school is evidently not communicating these policies and procedures clearly enough to parents. Just over a quarter of those who responded feel

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that the school does not take sufficient account of their suggestions and concerns. The school maintains an 'open-door' policy, conducts surveys of parents' views and has introduced a parents' suggestion box. The headteacher is aware of the need to ensure that communication is improved with the small minority of parents who feel dissatisfied with current practices.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	47	19	50	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	58	16	42	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	12	32	23	61	3	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	37	21	55	2	5	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	16	42	20	53	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	34	22	58	3	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	37	21	55	1	3	2	5
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	11	29	20	53	1	3	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	39	19	50	3	8	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	26	17	45	8	21	3	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	29	16	42	9	24	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	14	37	17	45	6	16	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	45	19	50	1	3	1	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ditchling (St Margaret's) Primary School, Ditchling, BN6 8TU

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school and for telling us about all the interesting things that you do. We were very pleased to see that you have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and safe and that many of you take part in sports activities and clubs. You certainly seemed to be enjoying being part of the 'Joseph' production! Your school gives you a satisfactory education and has a number of good features. You behave sensibly and work hard and the teachers look after you very well. I was impressed by the work of the school and class councils and can see that you take your responsibilities seriously. The curriculum is improving too and gives you a wide variety of experiences, especially the good range of visits, visitors and special themed days and weeks. International Week sounded like great fun.

The main reason your school is judged satisfactory at the moment is this: although you reach above-average levels by the time you leave, those of you who are in Years 1 and 2 make slower progress than the older children. We have asked your teachers and the people who run the school to have a good look at why this is and to set some higher targets for you to reach. Some of you in every class are capable of reaching higher levels than you do at present, so we have asked the staff to make sure you are always given work that challenges you and makes you work even harder. We have also asked the headteacher and governors to check really carefully that all of this happens to make sure you all make the best possible progress during your time at Ditchling.

We would like to wish you every success in the future,

Yours sincerely

Carole Skinner

Lead inspector

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