

Ellington Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118414
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339216
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Carole Skinner

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	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	253
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek Kirkaldie
Headteacher	Jan Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and held meetings with staff, the pupil council, the Chair of the Governing Body and the family liaison officer. They observed the school's work, and looked at samples of pupils' work in writing and mathematics, curricular planning, assessment and tracking information for each year group and the school's procedures for ensuring pupils' safety. Inspectors also considered 50 questionnaires that were received from parents and carers and 32 from staff.

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

- how effectively the school is sustaining recent improvements in attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics, especially for the more-able pupils.
- the success of recent initiatives to improve teaching, assessment and the curriculum in promoting good progress.
- the effectiveness of new systems and structures for subject leaders and governors in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance in order to drive improvement.
- whether the school is setting sufficiently challenging targets for pupils in Years 1 and 2.

Information about the school

Ellington is larger than the average infant school. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is above average. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A very small but growing minority of pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average. Many of these pupils have significant speech and language delay. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Active Mark and has also achieved Healthy Schools status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Ellington is a good school where pupils are happy, work hard and achieve well. Most parents are pleased with the school, especially with the excellent quality of care it provides for their children; as one commented, 'The staff really seem to care about the children and put so much into ensuring they are happy, stimulated and settled.' The school also gives outstanding support to all pupils, including those who find learning difficult and those who are vulnerable to underachievement. Pupils say they feel very safe and parents unanimously agree. The school has excellent procedures for protecting pupils from harm. Despite its most strenuous efforts to improve attendance, a very small minority of pupils are persistently absent and this has an adverse effect on their learning and progress.

Senior leaders and governors are passionate about providing the best possible education for every pupil and are constantly seeking ways to improve the already good teaching and curriculum. Pupils greatly enjoy school because lessons are fun and engage them in a wide variety of practical activities. Much of the learning is organised imaginatively around themes, such as 'O what a wonderful world!' This enables teachers to make creative links between different subjects and to make learning more meaningful and relevant to the pupils' own lives. Regular and rigorous tracking of each pupil's progress gives senior leaders a clear overview of those who need extra support or challenge. The school takes prompt action to tackle early signs of underachievement and to build in additional challenge for pupils capable of it.

Strong teamwork, thorough evaluations of the school's performance and sharply focused development plans are key elements of the school's success and fundamental to its good capacity for continuing improvement. The impact of this is clear to see in the upward trend in pupils' attainment. The school has implemented a number of successful initiatives to develop speaking, listening, reading and writing skills from Reception through to Year 2. As a result, attainment has risen from low to broadly average levels. More recently, a focus on improving pupils' mathematical skills is helping to extend their skills in calculation and problem-solving. Children get off to a good start in Reception because of a strong emphasis on developing their social skills, confidence and independence. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the high quality teaching and support they receive. The more-able pupils are given challenging targets to reach and achieve well.

Governance is strong, not least in the commitment to sustaining high staffing levels and ongoing professional development for all staff. Although governors and the school do much to promote community cohesion at a local level, they have yet to fully explore national and global dimensions and to evaluate the impact of the school's work.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent by working closely with their parents and carers to help them appreciate the impact of poor attendance on their children's learning and progress.
- Extend opportunities to promote community cohesion in national and global contexts and ensure that the impact of the school's work is fully evaluated.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well and thoroughly enjoy learning. Their enthusiasm is evident in every lesson. They listen attentively and are keen to answer questions. Pupils collaborate well in pairs and small groups, often discussing their ideas with a partner. Year 2 pupils came up with some very good questions to ask Mary and Joseph about their journey to Bethlehem and their feelings about having God's baby. Many phrased their questions carefully and thoughtfully, asking 'Do you feel confused?' and 'Why did you choose to go on a donkey?' In a Year 1 class assembly, pupils considered and discussed how to help and care for their families and friends and showed respect for other people's feelings.

Pupils explain clearly why some foods are healthier than others and thoroughly enjoy the excellent play equipment at break times. The pupil council meets regularly with the governors to give them some ideas for improving the school and other pupils enjoy taking responsibility for jobs in the class and around the school. Their involvement in wider community issues and their appreciation of the ethnic diversity of places further afield is less well developed.

Pupils make consistently good progress from low starting points in acquiring basic language, literacy and mathematical skills. Attainment in reading and writing has shown marked improvement over the past two years in response to new initiatives, particularly as a result of the major focus on developing pupils' speaking skills and understanding of sounds and letters. High quality specialist teaching of reading is accelerating many pupils' progress in each class. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit significantly from individual and small group support which contributes well to their good progress. Rigorous checks on pupils' progress revealed that slow progress in writing was often caused by poor pencil control. Focusing on this as a priority has done wonders for many pupils.

Attainment in mathematics is also improving but is slightly lower than that in reading and writing, especially in calculations and problem-solving. Pupils are often hampered by an inability to explain their reasoning using correct mathematical language. The school is currently focusing on improving this aspect of learning.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good teaching starts with effective, collaborative planning among the teachers in each year group. Teachers use their own extensive knowledge of the pupils to modify and adapt the curriculum to match pupils' needs and interests. They often make imaginative use of interactive whiteboards and the internet to engage and motivate pupils.

Consistent approaches to teaching reading and writing throughout the school are accelerating pupils' progress. Opportunities for speaking and listening, such as 'talk partners' and 'hot seating', enable pupils to think through their ideas, listen to others and formulate sentences before trying to write. As a result, they find writing easier because it follows on naturally and is often more imaginative as a result. Pupils' learning is enriched by visits to the park, the post-office, the local church and the synagogue. Enrichment afternoons give them opportunities to sample hockey, golf and yoga.

Firm and consistent systems for dealing with disruptive behaviour help all teachers to maintain a calm atmosphere in lessons that is conducive to good learning. All teachers have high expectations of both behaviour and academic achievement. They are well supported by a large team of skilled teaching assistants who make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, both in class and through small group, specialised support for pupils who need it. Occasionally, pupils spend too long sitting on the carpet listening to the teacher and too little time working independently.

Good systems for assessing pupils' progress from term to term enable teachers to pitch activities at the right level for different groups. On a day-to-day basis, assessment is slightly more variable, for example in teachers' different marking strategies. Some teachers involve pupils well in assessing their own and others' progress at the end of

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lessons but these systems are fairly new and still to be fully operational in some classes. As a result pupils are not always clear about the next steps in their learning.

The high ratio of adults to pupils is a key factor in the outstanding care, guidance and support that the school provides. This is greatly valued by parents. Excellent liaison with external agencies underpins the high quality care for vulnerable pupils. Speech and language therapy provides valuable support for pupils with severe language delay. A family liaison officer works closely with parents and carers, providing advice and support, organising workshops and arranging weekly coffee mornings. The officer works closely with education welfare staff to improve attendance and is proactive in finding new ways to tackle persistent absence. There are good arrangements for settling pupils in and easing the move to junior school at the end of Year 2. The popular breakfast club provides a safe, nutritious and sociable start to the day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Determined leadership by the headteacher and strong support from the governors give a firm steer to the school's continuing development. The whole staff team share their high aspirations for the pupils. Key subject leaders have been given a central role in monitoring the school's performance as well as coaching and mentoring colleagues to ensure their subjects are taught consistently well. The headteacher rigorously evaluates the quality of learning in lessons and makes clear judgements against agreed criteria. The subject leaders have yet to develop this aspect of their role. The deputy headteacher, a very experienced inclusion manager, plays a key role in ensuring equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils. The success of the school's strategies can be seen in the good progress made by all groups, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are learning to speak English. The school also employs an additional part-time teacher specifically to extend the learning of pupils with particular gifts and talents. The literacy leader provides excellent training and support for all staff in the teaching of reading.

Governors are exceptionally well informed about the school and know exactly what it needs to do to improve. Meticulous financial management has enabled them to fund major improvements to staffing and the accommodation. They are extremely conscientious in ensuring pupils' safety and health, both on the premises and when out on visits. The school is highly regarded in the local community as a warm and

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welcoming place to be. Staff and governors work hard to build on this relationship and engage well with parents. They work closely in partnership with other schools, for example to support sports development. Although senior leaders and governors have explored ways to promote community cohesion beyond the local context, they have yet to determine the best way forward and do not yet formally evaluate the impact of the school's work in this area.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are well prepared for school through visits to meet their new teachers. Parents and carers are involved from the outset and teachers maintain regular contact with them throughout their children's first year. Many children start school with poor social, language and communication skills. Teachers give children responsibility for choosing activities and resources, and help them to become more independent as the weeks go by. Effective teaching of sounds and letters and how to manipulate a pencil get children off to a good start with learning to read and write. Children learn about numbers and shapes through a variety of activities, some of which are led by the teacher while children choose others for themselves. In one lesson, children used a spinner to point to a number and then had to find a picture of a dog with that number of spots. Others sifted through sand to find hidden numbers. Language skills are developed well through storytelling and role-play activities, especially when adults participate with the children, asking them questions and prompting them to explain what they are learning.

Children enjoy healthy snacks and are keen to pedal vigorously around the road markings in the outdoor area. They wash their hands before eating and behave sensibly

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when moving freely between the classroom and the outdoor area. Teachers plan learning around themes after talking to the children about what interests them and try to achieve an effective balance between what the children want to learn and the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. They are still refining this process. The outdoor classroom is also developing but does not cater equally well for all areas of learning in a vibrant and exciting way. Teachers and assistants assess and record pupils' progress frequently. They use this information well to ensure that all children acquire the skills and knowledge expected as the year progresses. The headteacher is working closely with staff to develop their practice and ensure a consistent approach across all three classes. The school is making effective use of specialist support to improve the quality of provision.

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

Approximately a fifth of the parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. Almost all of these parents and carers are happy with their child's experience at the school. All are confident that the school keeps their children safe and feel that the teaching is good. Inspectors agree with the parents' and carers' positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ellington Infant 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.

The inspection team received 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 253 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	84	7	14	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	86	7	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	50	24	48	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	66	15	30	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	72	13	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	62	16	32	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	56	20	40	1	2	1	2
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)	28	56	16	32	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	62	15	30	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	64	16	32	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	56	16	32	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	36	72	12	24	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	86	6	12	1	2	0	0

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.



10 December 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Ellington Infant School, Ramsgate, CT11 0QH

Thank you for your warm and friendly welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing what you were learning. I am writing to tell you that all the inspectors agreed that Ellington is a good school. Here are some of the reasons why:

- You really enjoy your lessons because you learn lots of interesting things. I was very impressed with some of you in Year 2 when you were thinking of questions to ask Mary and Joseph about their journey to Bethlehem. What good ideas you came up with!
- The teachers plan lots of interesting activities that help you to learn well, such as using Google Earth to find out about Australia and examining different materials with a microscope.
- You all behave well, play happily together and take good care of each other.
- All of the adults look after you very well and keep you safe.
- You make good progress in learning sounds, letters and numbers in Reception and this helps you to do well in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2.
- The pupil council comes up with good ideas to improve the school. We were pleased to see that you meet with the governors to tell them your ideas and that they take notice of them.

All the adults work hard to keep finding ways to make your school even better.

We have asked the school to improve two things. A few of you have too much time out of school. This stops you learning as well as the children who come to school every day. We have asked your school to work closely with your families to make sure that you come to school every day. This will help you make even better progress. You can help by trying really hard not to have any time off. We have also asked the school to give you more opportunities to learn about people in other communities in England and around the world.

I am sure you will do your best to help your school to become even better.

Yours sincerely

Carole Skinner

Lead inspector

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