

Drake Infant School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120995
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	339825
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Ruth Frith

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

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	0–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Try
Headteacher	Mary Bartrop
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2006
School address	Fairfields Croxtan Road Thetford
Telephone number	01842 762055
Fax number	01842 752844
Email address	head@drake.norfolk.sch.uk

Age group	0–7
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2010
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Registered childcare provision	Little Pirates
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	171
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	Not previously inspected

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The majority of time was spent observing learning. Inspectors visited 19 lessons and observed 7 teachers and several Early Years Practitioners. They held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation which included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school's development plan and pupils' work. In addition, the questionnaire responses of 103 parents and carers and 18 staff were analysed and their comments taken into account.

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

- how teaching, assessment and the curriculum are supporting progress and helping to raise standards, particularly in mathematics and for more capable pupils
- what the school has done to improve attendance, and the impact of this on current levels of attendance and punctuality
- the features of the Early Years Foundation Stage which support the school's judgements of outstanding provision, outcomes, leadership and management.

Information about the school

This is a broadly average sized infant school with a Nursery that provides a three-hour morning and afternoon session each weekday. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with other pupils coming from a range of minority ethnic groups. A few pupils speak English as an additional language, and most of these are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils that have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and the proportion with a statement of special educational need is average. The school also provides for the children of services personnel, in particular from the United States air base. These families can be particularly mobile. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Primary Quality Mark, Investors in Families, Travel Plan, Sports Activemark and Healthy Schools Status.

The school offers extended provision which is managed by the governing body. This includes breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs.

In January 2008, the setting was extended with the opening of the phase two Children's Centre called Little Pirates, which is managed by the governing body. The Centre provides day care for 0-5 year olds and extended day care services for 5-11 year olds. Little Pirates is registered to care for 60 children at any one time. It provides a 12-place baby room (Tiddlers), a 24 place toddler room for 2-3 year olds (Friendly Fish) and a 24 place nursery room for 3-4 year olds (Crew), which operates as one with the school nursery during funded sessions.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school where the excellent care for each child lies at the heart of its work. Pupils flourish within this exciting, friendly and supportive environment in which memorable experiences and opportunities ensure they achieve exceptionally well. Staff are very successful in maintaining the very strong inclusive ethos where all are respected. Typical comments from parents such as, 'Education and fun go very well together which has a great effect on learning,' reflect this well.

The school's success stems from the ambitious and forward thinking senior managers and governors whose excellent leadership is clearly focused on promoting children's personal development and well-being and raising attainment. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and other staff show exceptional commitment to the pupils, their families and the local community. The opening of Little Pirates is a key example of how they seek the views of local families and successfully meet their needs. This provision is also outstanding. There are particularly good systems for checking how well the school is doing and identifying what it could do better. These reflect the school's consistent drive for improvement. Leaders and managers have exceptionally high aspirations, and staff are constantly trying to improve their practice. They work hard to encourage parents and carers to bring their children to school regularly but some pupils miss important learning opportunities because they take holidays during term-time. The school makes a good contribution to promoting community cohesion based on a clear understanding of its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context. However, there are gaps in the way this work is evaluated. Governors are very knowledgeable about the school and this gives them the confidence to ask questions and strive for improvement. Recent successful developments and outstanding provision ensure the school has excellent capacity for sustained improvement. Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils are outstanding and the school's resources are managed extremely well. Consequently, the school provides excellent value for money.

Recent successful initiatives in teaching, assessment and the curriculum are improving pupils' learning and progress and have had a very positive impact on their achievement. Results of the 2009 Year 2 national assessments show attainment significantly above average. Since the last inspection, there have also been many improvements in the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage which have led to outstandingly good learning. Throughout the school, teachers know the pupils very well and plan work that meets their needs and interests. Learning moves at a very good pace and pupils respond exceptionally well to the challenges set. The innovative curriculum makes a very positive contribution to pupils' personal development and academic achievement. There is a buzz of excitement and activity around the school as pupils set

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about their 'jobs'. One of the most impressive features is the way in which they develop confidence and the ability to act and work independently. Because activities are so interesting, pupils thoroughly enjoy what they are doing and behave exceptionally well. Pupils are actively encouraged to respect others through learning about a range of different beliefs, religions and lifestyles. They make an outstanding contribution to the school by taking on roles which develop their feelings of responsibility. Pupils are especially well cared for and supported. Care and welfare of the younger children are also of a particularly high standard which helps them to settle well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Impress further on the parents of children from Nursery to Year 2, the importance of their children coming to school regularly so they do not miss aspects of their learning.
- More regularly evaluate the school's work to promote community cohesion in order to improve the quality of this aspect.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Observations during lessons, an analysis of assessment data and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that they are currently making particularly good progress. Staff have addressed the slight dip in mathematics last year by introducing more practical activities which better match the range of pupils' abilities. Pupils' writing is interesting and particularly well-presented. Staff monitor progress and outcomes very well and develop successful strategies to reduce any possible unevenness between groups of pupils. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those from minority ethnic groups and those with English as an additional language attain higher standards than similar pupils nationally. More capable pupils are successfully challenged and also do particularly well.

Excellent relationships create an atmosphere of trust and result in pupils feeling very safe. They know they will be listened to, so are keen to suggest ways to improve the school. They have an excellent understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. As there are no set playtimes or snack times, pupils learn to recognise when they need to eat, drink and take exercise. Pupils develop very good personal qualities such as working in groups, taking turns and helping each other which all contribute very positively to their future economic well-being. However, their attendance is only satisfactory so negatively influences this aspect of development. Pupils' develop a keen spiritual awareness through many areas of study and through thinking about themselves and their place within the world. They develop a very good understanding of the natural world through working on the allotment, growing and selling their produce. Their cultural education is developed particularly well as they discover ways of life in different countries. Staff show respect for pupils which, in turn, develops pupils' high self-esteem and respect for others.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The school provides a very positive climate for learning with stimulating classrooms that display and celebrate pupils' work. Teaching is highly effective in ensuring that pupils are well motivated and engaged in their learning. Pupils show high levels of initiative and quickly discover that learning is fun. Teachers use good subject knowledge, and information from accurately assessing pupils' work, to plan exciting lessons which build systematically on previous learning and successfully meet the range of needs within each class. Pupils know how to succeed because adults give clear guidance and make useful comments to encourage pupils' progress during lessons. Staff use questioning very well to develop pupils' thinking and encourage their problem-solving skills. The expertise of teaching assistants is used very well to support pupils, particularly those who find learning difficult. New technology is used effectively to enhance teaching and learning.

Staff have developed a very well-organised and imaginative curriculum based on the philosophy of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It provides opportunities that sustain very effective learning and ensure pupils' well-being. Whilst there are

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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specific periods throughout the day where core skills are taught successfully, for the rest of the time pupils make decisions about their own learning. Success in gaining national recognition for sports and healthy schools' status reflects excellent provision which develops pupils' understanding of how to live healthy, active lives. There is a wide range of popular visitors and enrichment activities that capture pupils' interests. Tailored programmes meet the needs of pupils at the early stages of learning English, higher-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they, too, make particularly good progress from a wide variety of starting points. Staff are particularly effective at removing barriers to learning, and well-targeted support for particular groups and individuals ensures that pupils are able to make the best of all opportunities. The needs of vulnerable pupils are identified quickly and their progress and well-being carefully monitored. Very effective work with parents and a range of agencies ensure pupils' needs are well met. The popular breakfast and after school clubs provide excellent care and a range of interesting activities which support pupils' learning, well-being and social development. Day care and extended services are outstanding. There are excellent arrangements to ensure a smooth transfer into and out of school and between the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Pupils who arrive part-way through their infant schooling are also very well supported so soon settle into school life.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

An exceptional lead is given to colleagues who, in turn, work as a strong team sharing the headteacher's sense of purpose and vision. Staff morale is very high as seen from their questionnaire responses. They are encouraged to be innovative and respond well to the challenge. This reflects their drive for improvement. Staff take on a variety of management responsibilities successfully and their work has a direct impact on school improvement. Leaders are especially effective in using the information from the regular and accurate evaluation of what individual pupils achieve to set challenging targets to ensure outstanding progress. Very effective steps are taken to improve the quality of teaching through regular monitoring, very effective support and quality training.

Staff have a highly positive relationship with parents and carers and help them to support their children's learning by providing a wide range of information about teaching and the curriculum. The school is in the process of widening the range of methods used

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to communicate with parents and carers, particularly in relation to the use of new technology. Excellent partnerships have been developed with local schools and a range of agencies. These help to widen the pupils' experiences and enhance their learning and well-being. Equality of opportunity is at the centre of the school's work. Staff are fully aware of the groups of pupils who may be subject to discrimination, and very clear expectations and effective measures ensure that the school operates as a harmonious community. The school strongly promotes community cohesion, particularly within the school and the local community. Formal procedures to protect pupils and keep them safe are excellent. Staff and governors have a keen awareness of all issues. They know which pupils are at risk and give priority to ensuring their welfare. Governors make an exceptional contribution to the work and direction of the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery with knowledge, skills and understanding similar to those typically seen in children of that age. In some year groups they are slightly below average. Provision is excellent here and in Reception. Children regularly make outstanding progress so that by the time they enter Year 1 most are working securely within or above the early learning goals across all areas. Pupils' communication, language and literacy skills are high. Those children who have experienced Little Pirates provision settle particularly well because staff are familiar and welcoming and procedures and expectations clear. The children's personal, social and emotional development is particularly impressive. Staff organise a programme of rich, varied and imaginative experiences both in classrooms and outside which are especially successful

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in developing high levels of independence, curiosity and creativity. Teaching and support are outstanding. A wide range of good quality resources and spacious accommodation are used very well to provide activities that meet the range of children's interests, needs and capabilities. Well-trained and qualified staff use their excellent understanding of how young children learn and develop, to ensure a good balance between activities that children choose for themselves and those that are led by adults. Staff frequently involve the children in deciding what they want to do. High quality accurate assessments of children's learning are regularly made and the evidence from these are used to plan the next small steps in learning. Information is recorded and together with photographs and examples of children's work provide an interesting and informative profile of each child's learning and progress. Children respond very well to the expectations of the adults who teach them and relationships are excellent. The children's welfare is promoted exceptionally well. Regular routines together with a warm, sensitive approach help the younger children to deal well with their separation from parents and carers. The older children demonstrate a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe through their attitudes and behaviour towards others. Good health and well-being are encouraged particularly well and children learn good habits such as washing their hands at appropriate times. Excellent leadership and management and comprehensive policies and procedures ensure that children feel safe and are well protected.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers responses in the questionnaires are extremely positive. A very small number, for example, say they would like more information about their child's progress and ways in which they could support their learning but the vast majority indicate how pleased they are with the school and Little Pirates. Inspection findings support the many positive comments such as, 'This is a lovely school with caring and supportive staff' and confirm that opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress and find out how to help them learn are good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Drake Infant School and Nursery 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 103 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 208 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	77	22	21	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	82	80	20	19	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	59	57	41	40	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	63	61	38	37	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	68	66	32	31	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	62	60	37	36	4	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	65	64	37	36	0	0	0	0
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)	45	45	47	47	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	61	59	40	39	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	53	47	46	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	47	52	50	1	1	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	67	65	34	33	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	78	76	23	22	2	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.



11 March 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Drake Infant School and Nursery, Thetford, IP24 1JW

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we recently visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. We think that Drake Infant School and Nursery and Little Pirates are outstanding. Here are some of the things we found out.

Teachers and other grown ups give you lots of interesting things to do and lessons are fun so you thoroughly enjoy learning.

You make excellent progress so that by the time you leave at the end of Year 2, you are working at levels higher than those we often see.

You are very clever at doing things for yourselves and getting all your jobs done.

You really understand how to eat sensibly and that it is good to do lots of sport and exercise.

Your behaviour is excellent and we particularly like the way you all play and work together happily.

All the adults look after you extremely well so you feel safe and know who to go to if you have a problem.

You have a great headteacher who gets lots of help from all the staff and governors. They are always trying to make things better for you. We think it's a shame that some of you miss lessons so they will remind your parents and carers how important it is for you to come to school every day unless you are ill. They will also try to find out how successful the school is in helping people to get on well together, both in the school and wider community.

We wish you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Frith

Lead inspector

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