

Ditton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111183
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	378243
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2012
Lead inspector	Lyn Pender

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	306
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	V Cordy
Headteacher	P Berresford
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Lyn Pender
Desmond Stubbs
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Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 13 teachers in their classrooms and observed 16 lessons or part-lessons. They listened to pupils read, talked to them about their work and observed the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). They held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary, school development plan, safeguarding documents, minutes of the governing body meetings and external evaluation reports. Inspectors reviewed parents' and carers' responses in 52 completed questionnaires and the views of pupils and those of staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned.

Information about the school

The school is a larger than average primary school. Since the previous inspection the number of pupils on roll has fluctuated. An unusually large number of pupils has joined and left the Key Stage 2 classes during this period and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, which is currently well above the national average, has doubled.

Higher than average proportions of disabled pupils and those with special education needs attend the school. Most pupils are White British, with a very small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language attend the school. The school holds Healthy Schools status. The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations of attainment and progress. Since the previous inspection there has been some staffing problems ; including several long-term health-related absences.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Its strengths lie in the positive relationships that exist between adults and pupils. The school’s overall effectiveness is satisfactory rather than good, because the progress pupils make across the school is too variable. This is because leadership and management are not having sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching.
- Children enter the school with skill levels below and, for some cohorts, well below those typical for their age. Although a good start is made in the Early Years Foundation Stage where children achieve well, attainment, while broadly average by the end of Year 6, fluctuates over time owing to uneven progress through Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall. The quality varies between classes. Where teaching is only satisfactory pupils are not sufficiently challenged by the content of lessons and feedback and marking does not provide the advice pupils need to improve their work. As a result, the rate of pupils’ progress slows.
- Pupils feel safe and secure in school. Behaviour is good and pupils are considerate of others. They apply themselves well in lessons even when activities do not fully engage their interest. Pupils and staff are proud that attendance has risen and is now average.
- Systems to manage performance and provide essential information to lead the school forward are strengthening. Systems to track and measure pupils’ progress are in place but the information provided is not being used effectively enough to identify underachievement in groups and classes sufficiently early. Monitoring of teaching is strengthening and becoming more focused but it is not yet rigorous enough and some shortcomings remain. Recent improvements are becoming more effective, but are not yet fully developed or embedded.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted Inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good and better in order to raise pupils' achievement by:
 - making precise use of assessment information and ensuring that learning builds on pupils' prior knowledge and work matches individual needs more closely
 - providing clear marking and feedback so that pupils have a secure understanding of where they are, what level they are aiming to reach and how to improve
 - ensuring that pupils, and their parents and carers, are clear about individual targets and that these are based on accurate assessments and are updated regularly.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the school's development plan includes priorities and actions that are sharply focused on raising achievement
 - making the monitoring of the quality of teaching more rigorous and resolving identified shortcomings
 - using the information gathered in the school's tracking data to monitor rigorously the attainment and progress of individuals and groups of pupils and the impact of actions taken to tackle underachievement.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Learning is effective in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children settle quickly and effective teaching helps them make good progress. They develop curiosity and positive attitudes and become increasingly independent learners. In lessons, they benefit from ample opportunities to learn through first-hand experiences and this greatly enhances their progress. In Key Stages 1 and 2 learning in lessons is satisfactory, but improves when teaching captures pupils' interest. Pupils are eager to learn. They enjoy working in pairs and in groups where they willingly contribute their thoughts and ideas and listen respectfully to the views of others. Learning is less effective when tasks are set that do not challenge pupils enough. Work is sometimes too easy or too hard and this means that occasionally pupils of all abilities do not make enough progress in lessons.

Achievement is satisfactory overall. From often, well below average starting points on entry to the Reception, children make good progress and enter Key Stage 1 much closer to the level expected for their age. Although progress is satisfactory overall in Key Stages 1 and 2, it varies between classes linked to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, which has left some gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. Evidence from the school's assessment data, lesson observations and scrutiny of the work in pupils' books all confirm that these gaps are starting to close and progress is satisfactory overall across the school in reading, writing and mathematics.

Overall attainment by the end of Year 2 is below average, although an increasing number reaches the level expected for their age. In reading pupils are becoming more adept at tackling new words, but this is not yet secure and attainment in reading is below average by the end of Key Stage 1. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average in English and mathematics. Pupils' reading skills steadily improve in Key Stage 2 so that by the time they leave school, attainment is broadly average and many read with interest and enjoyment. More consistency in teaching has led to pupils improving their basic skills and this has led to more accuracy in writing and confidence in applying skills in mathematics.

Pupils who join the school at other than the normal times are welcomed and supported very effectively to settle in. These pupils, and others whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, are well-supported by the arrangements made for their provision. As tracking now identifies the needs of these pupils more promptly, they make satisfactory and in some cases, good progress. Disabled pupils and those who have special education needs make satisfactory progress linked to the teaching they receive. Their progress is starting to accelerate as targeted support is becoming more effective.

The vast majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaires identified that their children make good progress. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' progress is satisfactory rather than good.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers indicate that they are pleased with the teaching provided for their children. However, although inspectors identified strengths in teaching, they found that it is satisfactory overall, with some inconsistencies between classes.

Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and provides children with a range of stimulating activities which spark their interests and imagination. Inspectors saw children immersed in the world of pirates where they were enjoying drawing maps and writing instructions to help the pirate captain find the treasure. This work was linked carefully to the teaching of phonics (linking letters with the sounds they make) and was helping children make good progress in their early reading.

In Key Stages 1 and 2 teaching is satisfactory. Although there are some shortcomings, there are positive features in many lessons. Planning is detailed and teaching is conducted at a good pace. A change to the way the school sets homework is popular with pupils. They now have the opportunity to work with their parents and carers to research information on the curriculum topics. Improvement in teaching letters and sounds is evident in Key Stage 1, although pupils in Year 2 still have a way to go to read harder words with confidence. In the best lessons teachers provide regular and accurate feedback so pupils know how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher's skilled questioning and high expectations challenged very effectively pupils' knowledge of angles, checking their understanding regularly to make sure all were learning as well as they were able. However, overall use of assessment to support learning is variable and assessment information is not used consistently successfully to match work to pupils' ability. The over reliance on worksheets in some classes sometimes prevents pupils producing their best work.

Opportunities to enable pupils to check how well they are doing against what is expected, such as in 'Recipes for Success', are used very well by some teachers, but leaders have not yet ensured that this is used consistently in all classes. Marking is not consistent in helping pupils understand the next steps in their learning and teachers do not routinely provide individual targets for pupils to measure their own progress.. Pupils say that they do not always know what they need to do to improve their work.

The curriculum has a satisfactory impact on teaching. It is not yet fully building on pupils' prior learning to ensure that expectations are consistently high. Pupils enjoy the way their teachers use topic work to explore the curriculum. Key Stage 1 pupils in particular, were very enthusiastically taking part in a medieval day during the inspection. Teachers are using these topics to add more excitement to learning and to promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is good. In lessons, pupils behave well although they sometimes become restless when they are not sufficiently interested in their work. Around school and at play pupils conduct themselves sensibly and show consideration for others. Pupils say behaviour is typically good and inspectors observed limited evidence of behaviour disturbing lessons. Pupils welcome visitors in a polite and friendly manner and show concern and consideration for others. Their good behaviour promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and reflects the school's caring ethos.

Pupils say school is a safe place and that help is always on hand from adults if they encounter any problems. Older pupils understand that there are different types of bullying and say that instances are rare and dealt with swiftly. The curriculum ensures that pupils know how to care for their own safety. Pupils make a good contribution to school life. For example, some pupils act as Road Safety Officers, helping other children know how to keep safe and others help younger children on the playground where they act as play leaders. Most recently the School Council had the responsible task of helping the governing body think about the kind of questions they should ask when choosing the new head teacher who will join the school in September. Attendance continues to improve and is now average owing to determined actions by school leaders. Inspectors agree with parental and carers' positive views about the behaviour of pupils in the school.

Leadership and management

Leadership of the school is satisfactory and improving. A recent audit of leadership and management systems has clarified what needs to be done to move the school forward. Concerted teamwork by senior leaders, managers and the governing body has established a framework for on-going improvements. A clear plan of action is in place, although priorities and actions are not always closely linked to their effect on outcomes for pupils. Systems to track pupils' progress are strengthening and providing more information to guide the school's decision making. However, as yet this information is not used effectively as it could be to spot underachievement early enough and to hold staff robustly to account for the progress pupils make. Monitoring of teaching is regular and teaching is improving steadily, although there remain weaknesses yet to be resolved. Professional development is promoting stronger teaching with a positive impact on developing pupils' reading skills. Currently, the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

The governing body has been strengthened by new appointments; members support the school well, have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and increasingly hold school leaders to account. They ensure that the school meets current requirement for safeguarding. Governors work closely with leaders to promote a school where there is no harassment or discrimination and the school has a welcoming ethos. They are becoming more effective in meeting the needs of all, with additional support provided for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. As gaps in attainment start to close, the impact of the school's promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory and improving.

The curriculum is satisfactory and covers all required subjects. More imaginative topics and a range of visits and out-of-school activities are enhancing pupils' interest as can be seen in improved attendance. The curriculum prepares pupils satisfactorily for the next stage of their education and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on serious issues, which they respond to maturely. For example, Year 6 has been thinking about what being racist means and how this can harm others. Pupils understand and adhere to the school's code for behaviour. This results in good behaviour, happy relationships and respect for others.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



29 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ditton Primary School, Widnes, WA8 7HD

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit and it was a great pleasure to meet you all. As you know, we came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning.

We found that Ditton Primary is a satisfactory school and that it is a happy place for you to learn in and grow together. Your education gets off to a good start in the Reception classes and your school helps you reach average standards by the end of Year 6. Your attendance is improving and almost all of you attend school on time. You try hard in lessons and your behaviour is good.

There are still some aspects that the school needs to improve to make sure that you all make as much progress as possible and these are to:

- make your lessons even more interesting and check that all your work is set at just the right level
- make it clearer to you how to make your work better especially by reminding you about your targets
- make sure the leaders and governors of your school check that their main priorities focus on improving your school.

All of you can help your school even further by working hard, behaving well and doing your best.

Yours sincerely,

Lyn Pender
Lead Inspector

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