

Fen Ditton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110605
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	378127
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2012
Lead inspector	Martin Beale

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	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Liz Harrison
Headteacher	Richard Moore
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Martin Beale

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Over five hours were spent observing teaching and learning in parts of 13 lessons taught by six members of staff, holding discussions with pupils about their learning and hearing pupils read. The inspector held meetings with staff and members of the governing body including the Chair. The inspector observed the school's work, and scrutinised pupils' books, assessment data and case studies of specific pupils. He also looked at evidence of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. He analysed 56 responses to the questionnaire returned by parents and carers.

Information about the school

Most pupils are from White British backgrounds in this smaller than average primary school, although there has been a slight increase in the number from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has risen sharply and is now broadly average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Their needs are varied. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. Pupils in the rest of the school are taught in four mixed-age classes. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status. The school meets the current floor standards, which set the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

A new headteacher was appointed from the start of the summer term in 2012 and had been in post for three weeks at the time of the inspection. Interim arrangements had been in place during the spring term.

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

Key findings

- This is a good school. It has maintained the momentum of improvement since the last inspection through recent changes in leadership and is well-placed to improve further. The school is not outstanding because not all teaching is consistently of the highest quality and marking does not always help pupils to understand the steps they need to take to meet the targets the school sets for them.
- Pupils make good and improving progress from their starting points and attainment is above average and rising by the end of Year 6. The pupils' writing has become very creative and imaginative. They apply their mathematical skills well when solving problems and undertaking investigations. Early reading skills develop well but more advanced skills are paid less systematic attention, although pupils talk enthusiastically about the books they have read and authors they enjoy. The pupils' refined information and communication technology (ICT) skills are a considerable strength.
- Most lessons move learning forward at a fast pace in calm and well-managed classrooms. Teachers provide a range of imaginative activities that interest pupils so that they are absorbed in their learning. Lessons are pitched carefully to meet the needs of all pupils, providing considerable challenge for all.
- The pupils' good behaviour makes the school a harmonious and purposeful environment in which to learn and develop. There is a strong work ethic in all classes. Pupils are highly motivated, enthusiastic learners and respond well to their teachers.
- The new headteacher is already building on from the school's improvement in recent years, ably supported by skilled subject leaders and an effective governing body. Teaching has continued to improve through the sharp focus on managing the performance of staff and by teachers working closely together to share their expertise.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching in order to accelerate learning and progress by:
 - developing teachers' questioning skills to check pupils' understanding
 - ensuring that guided reading sessions focus more sharply on the next steps in each pupils' learning
 - making more effective use of the outdoor environment in Reception so that children's learning is linked more closely to their activities inside the classroom.

- Implement strategies from September 2012 so teachers' marking and feedback has a greater impact on pupils' learning by:
 - making targets for improvement understandable for pupils
 - bringing greater consistency to marking
 - providing time for pupils to reflect on and respond to their teachers' marking and other feedback.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Inspection evidence supports the strongly held view of parents and carers that their children make good progress. Children enter Reception with skills below those expected for their age. They make good progress, particularly in the key skills of literacy and numeracy. Their knowledge and development are broadly average by the time they enter Year 1.

This good progress continues across the rest of the school. Typically, pupils develop new skills quickly, and consolidate these securely by their application in different contexts, such as when solving problems in mathematics or undertaking investigations in science. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make good progress. This can vary and the steps can be quite small for pupils with significant learning difficulties.

Pupils write in a wide variety of styles and across subjects, using different strategies to plan thoughtfully their extended pieces of writing. A great deal of their writing grabs the reader's attention and includes much refined and ambitious vocabulary. This was seen when Year 6 pupils used lively and descriptive language to explain to a chick the experiences they would go through when hatching and growing. Year 5 pupils used their well-developed ICT skills to create newspaper articles about this winter's snow and amusing animations of short film-scripts were prepared by Year 4 pupils.

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Year 6 test results rose to above average in 2011. Inspection evidence indicates that current Year 6 pupils are on track at least to maintain this improvement. Attainment in reading is broadly average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils have a firm foundation for success at secondary school. Almost all pupils reach the level expected for their age by the end of Year 6. As attainment rises more pupils are working at higher levels. Any gaps between different groups are usually specific to a year group. Where boys are behind girls in writing it is usually because they have specific needs.

Quality of teaching

The strong qualities of a Year 3 and 4 English lesson characterised much of the teaching observed and supported the strongly held views of parents and carers and their children that teaching is good. The encouraging atmosphere in the classroom, generated by the teacher's calm approach and clear expectations led to a buzz of excitement. The teacher maintained the brisk pace of learning using timely interventions. The teacher used examples of pupils' developing writing to help others see how they might improve their work as they invented an imaginary animal. This led to spontaneous applause from the class for those who read out their work. The teacher's skilled questioning and probing of pupils' understanding was a key strength of this lesson, but is not a consistent feature of all lessons. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is regular, but does not consistently help pupils understand their individual targets and the steps to take to achieve them nor provide sufficient time for them to respond to their teacher's comments.

Teachers promote attributes such as teamwork well through collaboration on tasks and in discussion. The most effective teaching observed required pupils to think, be creative and stimulate their imaginations when responding to literature, music and other resources. Drama and role-play are used skilfully to stimulate writing, such as when Year 5 pupils developed the characters of pirates. After jotting down notes, they shared their ideas in groups to help them prepare their descriptions.

The good teaching in Reception is based on effective sessions led by adults, particularly in developing literacy and numeracy. The inside classroom provides a wide range of well-resourced and interesting activities that attract the children. However, learning does not always flow freely between inside and outdoors where activities are not always closely linked to the children's learning needs and interests.

The specific difficulties of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are identified swiftly and individualised action is put in place to meet their targets. Skilled teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the learning of individuals, continually encouraging them to become more independent. Teachers carefully check their progress to review programmes and adjusted them accordingly.

Reading is taught well. Sessions teaching letters and sounds to younger pupils move their learning forward rapidly and make good use of a wide range of engaging resources. Targeted activities are provided for individuals to catch up if they are

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falling behind. Pupils read regularly at home, but guided reading sessions are not always sharply focused on the next stages in each pupil's learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are kind and considerate towards each other. They listen to each other and respect their views. They move around the school sensibly and play happily together. They have positive attitudes towards learning, listen attentively, ask and answer questions confidently and persevere with their work. Parents and carers are in strong agreement that a good standard of behaviour exists throughout the school, which is a view shared by their children. Pupils respect the high expectations for their behaviour from all staff, and the consequences if they do not meet them. They feel that the behaviour policy is fair and consistently implemented. Pupils who have more difficulty in managing their own behaviour are helped to modify their conduct through sensitive support so that they can access all lessons and learning. Records confirm the good behaviour seen during the inspection is typical for the school.

Pupils say how safe they feel in school, which is a view overwhelmingly supported by their parents. Pupils are very aware how to keep themselves safe when using new technology and the internet and through road safety training. Pupils understand what constitutes bullying and say that it does not occur. They are confident that it would be dealt with swiftly if it did. Pupils feel valued and undertake with pride their responsibilities such as play leaders or as school council representatives. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in above average attendance.

Leadership and management

The governing body is well-informed, challenging and fully involved in planning for the school's future. Governors were instrumental in ensuring continuity during the period of changing leadership. The united staff team were led well during this period so that the drive for improvement was maintained. Previous improvements in teaching have continued and account for the rise in attainment, particularly in writing. The new headteacher's impact has been considerable in a short time. He has quickly established his expectations and begun to involve the school community in reviewing the school's vision as a basis for the next stage of its development. Rigorous monitoring of performance has continued and, coupled with incisive evaluation, has enabled planning to be focused sharply on driving improvement forward.

The curriculum emphasis is on the development of pupils' basic skills and on their use across subjects. Themed events such as 'science week' with its focus on investigation and 'book week' including challenges and a visiting poet bring learning to life. Activities such as these and their developing 'Forest School' experiences contribute significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Provision for sport and other clubs is extensive and the school benefits from specialist coaching from external organisations. Provision for information and communication technology is a considerable strength and includes successful annual

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entries in the Cambridge Film Festival. Programmes are tailored well to individual needs including many activities to extend the learning of gifted and talented pupils such as teaching Latin. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about different peoples and cultures, celebrating similarity and diversity and learning what it is to be a global citizen.

Governors and staff take very seriously their responsibility for ensuring that safeguarding requirements are met and implemented effectively, particularly in relation to the impact of changing new technology. The school effectively promotes equality and tackles discrimination. The productive partnership with parents and carers contributes significantly to pupils' successful learning and development. Pupils and their circumstances are well known so that highly effective action taken if there is the remotest sign of possible underachievement. As a result, any gaps in achievement are not significant or are closing.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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 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.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



14 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fen Ditton Primary School, Cambridge, CB5 8SZ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I saw that you work very hard and are proud of the part you play in school life. I was particularly impressed by your confident answers to my questions. I have judged that Fen Ditton is a good school. Your new headteacher, staff and governors try hard to help you all achieve of your very best. These are the things I liked most.

- Members of staff take very good care of you and make sure you are kept safe.
- Your positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour contribute significantly to your good progress.
- The curriculum provides many enjoyable experiences for you including many clubs and events such as 'science week' and 'book week'.
- You apply your well-developed information and communication technology skills on a regular basis to extend your learning in many subjects.
- Those of you who find learning difficult are given good support so that you can make the same good progress as others in your classes.
- Teaching is good and in most lessons effective use is made of assessment data to support your learning and progress.
- You understand very clearly how to keep yourselves safe and deal with any risks you might face.

In order to improve learning further I have asked your school to ensure that teachers use questions to check your understanding, develop guided reading sessions and improve aspects of planning for the youngest children in Reception. I have also asked them to improve their marking so that it helps you to understand how to improve your work and meet your targets. You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Lead inspector

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