



Ducklington Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123107
Local Authority Oxfordshire
Inspection number 292584
Inspection date 26 September 2006
Reporting inspector Christopher Parker

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Aston Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Ducklington
Age range of pupils	4-11		Witney OX29 7US
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01993 703651
Number on roll (school)	170	Fax number	01993 709212
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Susan Weston
		Headteacher	Mrs Julia Hamper
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. Half of the pupils come from outside the immediate locality. Most pupils come from advantaged homes. A very small proportion of pupils have free school meals. Fewer pupils than usual have learning difficulties and disabilities although there are more pupils with statements of educational need than in most schools of this size. About a tenth of the pupils have heritages other than White British.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good education for the pupils. It has secured important improvements in standards and achievement over the last two years. Whilst creating a better curriculum and enhancing the quality of teaching it has had to grapple with significant changes to its organisation, moving from single to mixed age classes in Years 3 to 6. The headteacher has managed this move very well and improved many elements of the school's provision but marking and target setting are not yet consistently sharp enough to ensure all work is matched precisely to the needs of all pupils.

The re-structured leadership team and subject leaders are very focused on further improving provision and, subsequently, the pupils' achievements. As a result of successful changes standards are now above average. The pupils' overall rate of progress has improved from being in the bottom third of schools to the top third in 2005. Improvements in mathematics have proved more difficult to secure than in English. However, the results of national tests in 2006, and the school's assessments, indicate that standards have risen significantly. Most pupils are now making good progress in English and mathematics. Achievement is good.

Almost all parents are pleased with the school. However, a very small number have concerns about the impact of mixed-age classes. The school has modified its curriculum to ensure that pupils will cover, without repetition, all units of work during Years 3 to 6. The teaching is good and takes into account the ages and abilities of the pupils. The teachers make increasing use of the information they collect about each pupil's progress to help them to achieve as well as they can but the more able pupils are not consistently challenged in all lessons. Nevertheless, group activities outside lessons have proved effective in ensuring more able pupils reach higher standards. Individual support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is very carefully organised and this ensures they make good progress towards their personal targets.

The curriculum for the youngest children generates considerable enthusiasm for learning that ensures they make a good start to school. They are well taught and ably supported.

Personal development and well being are good. Behaviour is outstanding. The pupils display considerable understanding and concern for others and for their environment. They feel safe, accept responsibility and, 'love to represent the school,' particularly in sports tournaments. The pupils feel the school council is a very effective body which has taken their ideas, such as the activity playground and, with the support of the school and parents, brought them to fruition.

The well focused leadership, improving standards and achievement and well established good personal development place the school in a strong position to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the precise needs of all pupils, particularly the more able, are fully catered for in all lessons.
- Make more extensive and effective use of marking and target setting, to help the pupils to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The pupils achieve well. They make a good start in the Foundation Stage. Many of the children reach the goals set for the end of the Reception year and some exceed them. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected level by the end of Year 2 is above average although fewer pupils reached the higher level in 2006 than in the previous year.

At the end of Year 6 standards in English and science are now consistently above average. Recent efforts to raise attainment in mathematics have proved beneficial and standards are now above average and similar to those achieved in English. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher level in national tests in 2006 increased in English and science and doubled in mathematics. The school has rightly set targets to raise standards still further.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school provides the pupils with many opportunities to develop their personal skills and enhance their well-being. Discussions with the pupils indicate that they benefit considerably from these opportunities. On the playground boys and girls say how they enjoy school, play happily together and have no concerns about their safety or the behaviour of others. As one older pupil commented, 'We know a lot is expected of us'. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In an assembly, where behaviour was exemplary, the pupils made well informed and mature contributions to a discussion about personal responsibility for the environment and the benefits of recycling. They support charities and participate in many local events. The pupils know the importance of staying fit and healthy. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education and for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The teaching and learning are good. Lessons get off to a lively start. In a Year 5 and 6 mathematics lesson the teacher made good use of the interactive whiteboard to engage and motivate the pupils by setting them challenges which became increasingly

demanding. In all lessons the teachers modify the tasks they set to cater for the broad range of abilities in the class. Whilst the tasks are well matched to the needs of some groups there are occasions when they are not sufficiently demanding, particularly for the more able pupils. In addition, whilst there are examples of good marking and target setting that helps the pupils to improve, approaches are inconsistent and are not having the impact in all classes that they are, for example, in Years 1 and 2.

The pupils with statements of special educational need are well supported and take an active part in lessons. The teaching of the youngest children is particularly strong. The children are well supported, encouraged to develop their independence. They make considerable steps forward because the adults are constantly talking to them and extending their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The older children talk with considerable enthusiasm about the range of opportunities they have to participate in interesting science lessons, theme weeks such as one on Africa, musical performances and sporting activities. One pupil summed up the opportunities the school provides by saying, 'Our school is quite special, there are so many things going on.'

The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils. It caters very well for those with learning difficulties and disabilities because they each have individually tailored plans. Group activities are used to good effect to help pupils to catch up in areas where their progress in English and mathematics has faltered. More able mathematicians are given additional challenges through lessons and groups given by teachers from local secondary school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school makes effective use of a wide range of external agencies to provide specialist support for pupils with statements of special educational need. All pupils are well cared for and the older pupils are very clear about their responsibilities for, 'looking after the little ones on the playground.'

The headteacher is keen to ensure that the high standard of pupils' behaviour is maintained. It is a constant priority for the school. The code of conduct is well known by the pupils and class rules are prominently displayed. The school takes appropriate steps to ensure the pupils are, and feel, safe.

The academic guidance given to pupils has many strong features but the school has yet to develop the consistency of approach needed to ensure all pupils know precisely how to improve their next piece of work so that good progress becomes even more rapid in every lesson.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Since the school was last inspected it has encountered many changes and some financial difficulties. The headteacher, who has been in post for two years, and the governors have successfully tackled a range of issues. As a result, the school's budget will be balanced this year and the level of provision now matches its resources.

The senior leadership team has a well focused plan for further improvement which sets out very clearly what the school expects to achieve in the next year. It is based on incisive monitoring and evaluation.

The governors fully support the headteacher and are now playing a far more active and effective role in guiding the work of the school. However, they recognise the need to improve how they tell parents about their decisions.

The support for pupils with statements of special educational need is well managed so that the work of support assistants and specialists from external agencies combine to good effect.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing to let you know what I found on my recent visit to inspect your school. I particularly enjoyed talking to some of you about the opportunities you have and how well you feel you are doing. All of you said that you enjoy school and feel you were doing well. I agree most of you are making good progress and results in tests at the end of Year 6 are improving. This is because the teaching is good, the lessons are interesting and you are enthusiastic and eager to learn.

Yours is a good school but there are still things to do to make it even better. The teachers set different tasks for the groups in your classes but I have asked to them to make sure that the work is neither too easy nor too hard. I would like them to give you work that makes you really think in all lessons.

The teachers mark your work so that you know how well you are doing. In some cases their comments help you to improve. Some of you have targets. I have asked the teachers to use their marking to help you to make each piece of work better than the last and to set very clear targets for you all, in order to help you make even better progress.

Your behaviour is excellent and you are very thoughtful about others and about the environment. I hope you continue to enjoy school and that it helps you to do your very best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker

Lead inspector