

Ditton CofE Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111293
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	310559
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	David Blackburne

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Hugh Sandison
Headteacher	Mrs Carol Lawrenson
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2003
School address	Spinney Avenue Hough Green Widnes Cheshire WA8 8LD
Telephone number	0151 4244234
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a smaller than average primary school. Pupils are drawn from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal is lower than the national average. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. The school has achieved a number of national and local awards including, National Standard for Cognitive Education, Artsmark Award (silver) and the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This school provides a good education for its pupils. It has a number of outstanding features. Ditton Primary is very proud of its 'Thinking School' status and this underpins every aspect of the school's work. The excellent progress made by pupils in developing their thinking skills has a marked effect on their personal development and the standards they attain.

Because of the outstanding curriculum and good teaching, pupils make good progress to achieve higher than national standards in reading, mathematics and science. However, standards in writing are only average.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They are thoughtful, articulate and responsible young people. Their behaviour is excellent and they are considerate in their actions. They are conscious of the feelings of others and the effect their own actions have on those around them. Pupils clearly enjoy school and their better than average attendance shows this. They mix well together and benefit from the many links with other schools in this country and abroad. These give pupils an excellent understanding of other cultures and faiths. Pupils actively follow a healthy lifestyle by being involved in the many after-school clubs and choosing to eat healthy snacks on offer at playtime. Pupils know how to keep safe partly because many visitors provide them with much information on this aspect of their lives. Pupils take a very active part in the school community and they willingly assume a range of responsibilities.

The overall good quality of teaching helps most pupils to achieve well. The quality of relationships in lessons contributes to pupils' enjoyment of their learning. For example, a pupil reported, 'the teachers make the lessons fun'. Lessons are well planned, with teachers making good use of resources such as interactive whiteboards to assist teaching and stimulate learning. However, not all teachers have high enough expectations of the amount that pupils will write in a lesson and this contributes to their lower standards in writing than in reading. The outstanding curriculum succeeds in its aims to ensure that pupils enjoy school and become independent learners. Lessons often embrace a range of subjects based around a topic which helps pupils to develop their basic skills well in reading and numeracy. All staff contribute to the outstanding care, guidance and support pupils receive. This in turn contributes significantly to pupils' excellent personal development and well-being and good academic development.

The headteacher has an exceptionally clear vision for pupils to become independent thinkers and lifelong learners. The senior leadership team and quality improvement teams are very effective in developing the curriculum. The school provides good value for money and it shows a good capacity to improve. The great majority of the parents have very positive views of the school. One parent summed up the views of many when he said, 'this is a caring and nurturing school where all children are valued and achieve their potential and more.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Reception with expected levels of skill apart from in their communication, language and literacy skills, and in their mathematical development. They make good progress, with most children reaching the goals set nationally for them in all areas of their learning apart from these two areas.

The curriculum is well planned and organised. It meets the needs of the children well in all areas of their learning. Children make good progress because they are given very good opportunities

to learn through play and to develop their basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Provision encompasses outdoor as well as indoor activities very well. Teachers and support staff assess children's progress rigorously and use the information adeptly to plan activities that challenge children to master new skills. Staff encourage children to think and take responsibility which promotes their ability to solve problems well. Arrangements to settle children new to Reception are very thorough, especially the good relationship with the on site private pre-school group. These processes help children to settle very quickly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that in all lessons teachers set high expectations of the amount and quality of pupils' writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter Year 1 with standards that are broadly average except in writing and mathematics which are below average. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Their progress in reading is good and in the most recent teacher assessments, standards in this subject were above average. They make satisfactory progress in mathematics and in 2007 the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 was above the national average. Progress is least good in writing and standards are below the national average. Pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6, particularly in reading, mathematics and science; standards are consistently above average and the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 is also above average. However, writing standards are only average because in some lessons too little is expected of pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress as well as their peers because their learning is well managed and supported.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent overall. It is particularly strong in their social and moral development. Very strong links with other schools develop pupils' awareness of other cultures and of the ethnic diversity of our society very well. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and make very positive choices about the food they eat and the way they choose to spend their time. They take advantage of the range of activities on offer after school, many of which involve sport or exercise. Pupils' contribution to the community is outstanding. They take on many responsibilities within school including membership of the school council, acting as junior play leaders and as house captains. In addition to being involved in many parish activities, pupils invite members of the local community into school regularly for coffee mornings. Pupils' consistently above average attendance is a clear indication of how much pupils enjoy school. Their behaviour is outstanding and pupils deal with each other in an increasingly mature and considerate manner as they move through the school. Pupils' preparation for their future adult lives is further helped by their involvement in a mini enterprise scheme which gives them experience of the workings of business.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good relationships are a feature in every classroom and this helps pupils to feel secure and enjoy their lessons. Lessons are well planned, ensuring that all groups are catered for. Teachers generally have high expectations and pupils respond positively to this in their good behaviour and in the quality of their work. However, in some lessons, teachers are not sufficiently demanding of the amount pupils write. This means that pupils rarely write at length and this leads to them making satisfactory rather than good progress. The good use of computers and interactive whiteboards support teaching and stimulate learning well. Pupils' work is well marked. They are given specific praise and told how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Outstanding provision is made for pupils' learning in mathematics, reading, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). Improved provision in writing is being implemented, but has not yet had its full impact in raising standards. A thematic approach across the school adds to pupils' enjoyment and helps to consolidate their skills in mathematics and English. The subject specific, whole-school days are very popular with pupils and promote their learning in a way they find exciting. The needs of different ability groups are catered for, ensuring that all groups make good progress. The training by specialist coaches contributes well to pupils' sporting development. The outstanding level of out-of-class activities on offer, including residential opportunities for all pupils from Year 1 to Year 6, caters for a range of pupils' interests. The extensive range of visits and visitors helps to make learning a very rich experience for them. Philosophy sessions are popular and provide pupils with further strategies to help them in both their learning and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding levels of care, guidance and support make a major contribution to pupils' excellent personal development. Staff know pupils very well and good relationships contribute significantly to pupils' considerable enjoyment of school and their good progress. All pupils' learning is carefully assessed as they move through the school and this enables staff to set challenging individual targets for improvement which are clearly understood by pupils. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are clearly identified at an early stage. Support for these pupils is well planned and implemented so that they make similar good progress to their classmates. There are strong transfer arrangements for pupils moving to secondary school. The very many close links with other schools enrich pupils' curriculum and enhances their personal development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is an inspirational and visionary leader who is driving the school forward. She empowers all staff to be adventurous in the work they do. Innovative management structures

allow different aspects of the school to be developed effectively by teams of staff. This has led to the outstanding curriculum that the pupils enjoy. School self-evaluation is undertaken rigorously and takes into account the views of all major stakeholders. The school has rigorously analysed data and correctly identified its own strengths and weaknesses. The school was overly modest in its judgement of personal development and well-being, care, guidance and support, and curriculum and other activities when it completed the self-evaluation form. Targets set are challenging and are frequently achieved by the school. This leads to the good progress and standards that pupils achieve. The school has improved in many ways since the last inspection and this indicates that the school has a good capacity to improve. However, the issue of standards in writing still remains, despite the school's many efforts to address this. Governors are very supportive of the school and of the headteacher. They challenge the school to good effect through probing questions about any areas of weakness.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

Annex A

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Ditton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Widnes, WA8 8LD

I am writing on behalf of the inspectors to thank you for the special welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. Everyone was very polite and helpful in answering our questions.

We judged your school to be good and found some areas excellent. You all work hard. Your behaviour is outstanding and you know that if anyone has a problem, your teachers will help you to sort it out. Your attendance is good and we could tell that everyone enjoyed coming to school. You are all part of a very healthy school where people care particularly well for each other and enjoy themselves. You make many good choices about the food you eat and many of you spend a lot of your time getting plenty of exercise.

Your teachers help you by telling you what you have done well and what you need to do next. Your targets help you to improve your work and we found that everybody is doing well at nearly everything they do. We have asked your teachers to help everyone to do better in their writing by encouraging you to write more quickly and to produce more in the time you are given. You can help by always trying to start quickly and produce your best writing.

We could tell that you like your teachers and that they help you to learn well. We were very pleased that you get to go out on visits and have lots of visitors into school to help to make your learning even more interesting and fun.

We were very impressed by the way you try to help others and the sensible way you do the jobs you are given. We are sure you are proud of the many awards that you have helped the school to get, particularly the Artsmark and Activemark.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. We hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make your school even better.