

Ditton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111183
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	323197
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Thompson

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

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	298
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs V Cordy
Headteacher	Mr P Berresford
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Liverpool Road Widnes Cheshire WA8 7HD
Telephone number	0151 4245861
Fax number	0151 4245861

Age group	5–11
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2008
Inspection number	323197

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves an urban area. Pupils come from the full range of social and economic backgrounds, including some areas of disadvantage. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and none is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has experienced considerable staffing difficulties over the last two years, caused mainly through illness. The school has Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision in the Reception class. When the school was inspected in October 2007, it was given a Notice to Improve and asked to address issues relating to pupils' achievement and standards, particularly in mathematics, and the teaching of mathematics. It was subsequently visited in May 2008 when it was found to be making satisfactory progress.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with Section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. The school has maintained the improvement noted by Her Majesty's Inspector in May 2008 and is now providing a satisfactory standard of education.

Pupils enter the school with skills that are broadly in line with those expected nationally. They make satisfactory progress through the school so that by Year 6 standards are broadly average.

Personal development is satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. Behaviour is good. Smiling faces and eager, enthusiastic responses in classrooms show how much pupils enjoy school. The school promotes a harmonious and inclusive atmosphere in which pupils say they feel safe and valued.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is developing good practice on which the school is building but inconsistencies remain in the way that teachers provide feedback to pupils through marking. Although marking is unfailingly supportive, too often pupils are not given clear enough guidance about how to improve their work and opportunities are missed to increase achievement.

Curriculum provision is satisfactory. The school is working to restructure the curriculum to make better links between subjects in order to increase opportunities for pupils to practise their skills, for example in literacy and numeracy, in other subjects.

Care and support are good. All school staff work hard to support all pupils so that pupils are confident that there is someone to turn to if they are in need. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported effectively and the school has good relationships with support services to help meet pupils' needs well. Academic guidance is no better than satisfactory because pupils do not know clearly enough how to improve.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's efforts to improve have been successful in dealing with the issues of the Notice to Improve. Monitoring of teaching by senior staff has had a positive impact on classroom quality. However, middle managers' roles are not sufficiently well defined to make them accountable for standards in their subjects and they have little opportunity to monitor classroom performance. Consequently, they do not yet play a full role in driving standards and achievement upwards. The school has a wealth of data that is analysed carefully but it is not yet used to best advantage in identifying underachievement at an early stage in order to promote pupils' progress.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the EYFS is good. Most children enter the school with skills that are below those expected for their age with particularly low levels in communication, language and literacy that persist for a substantial minority. Children make good progress through the EYFS so that, when they enter Year 1, the majority are working at broadly nationally expected levels. Learning is of a good quality because teaching is lively and staff have high expectations of what children should achieve. Assessment procedures are thorough and underpin children's good progress. Effective induction arrangements enable children to settle quickly and have a happy and productive start to school life. Parents reinforce this with comments such as, 'She adores school

and skips in, which means the world to me.' Children are well cared for and welfare issues are paramount in the minds of all members of staff. Children respond well to the warm welcome provided by the staff and the good support they receive. Teaching assistants are involved well in assessing achievements. They make an effective contribution to children's learning and personal development. A good balance of adult-led tasks and independent activities encourage children to make choices and take responsibility for their learning. Parents are encouraged to become involved in their children's learning and workshops are provided for them on topics, such as phonics, so that they can support learning at home. The EYFS is well led, with teamwork at the heart of its success. Planning is good with full coverage of the whole curriculum. Children are provided with quality experiences and a good foundation for their future learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Ensure that middle managers understand their role, take responsibility for pupils' progress in their subjects and are able to monitor classroom standards.
- Ensure that available data are used effectively to identify underachievement and promote pupils' progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Following good progress in the EYFS, pupils' progress slowed in Key Stage 1 last year because of the discontinuity of pupils' learning caused by staffing difficulties. As a result, standards by the end of Year 2 were below average overall and well below average in writing. The school has successfully tackled the issues affecting pupils' performance and inspection evidence is that the majority of pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress through the key stage. Achievement continues to be satisfactory through Key Stage 2. The school's strategies to raise achievement are beginning to pay off and many pupils are making good progress. Inspection evidence and school data show that by Year 6 standards in English and mathematics have improved over the past year. Standards are close to average in English although still below average in mathematics. Standards in science have been maintained in line with those expected nationally. The school's challenging targets for the number of pupils reaching the expected level were met in 2008 and a larger than expected proportion of pupils reached the higher level in all three subjects. There are no significant differences in the performance of different groups of pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similarly satisfactory progress to their classmates because of effective support from teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy their lessons and the extra-curricular activities that the school offers. Attendance is close to average but improving. Pupils show a responsible and positive attitude to others and to their learning. They behave well around school. They are confident that there is little bullying and that any incidents which do occur are dealt with swiftly. Pupils show good awareness of how to stay safe but are not all fully aware of Internet safety. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the community and take on responsibilities, such as acting as road safety

officers, willingly. Although the school council gives pupils a voice in school affairs, they are unsure of how effective they are in having an influence. Pupils show their awareness of the needs of others through a range of charity work. They know how to live healthy lifestyles and make good use of the school's healthy tuck shop and lunchtime salad bar. The school's focus on improving pupils' basic skills, especially in literacy and numeracy, means that pupils are making satisfactory progress in preparing for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils are eager learners and enjoy lessons because teachers usually make them interesting through a variety of planned practical activities. For example, Key Stage 2 pupils took part in a mathematics treasure hunt using their learning from interpretation of data. In the majority of lessons, teachers make effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to help bring learning alive. Teachers mostly plan well to meet the range of pupils' needs so that tasks provide challenge for all levels of capability and build on what pupils already know. Nevertheless, opportunities are sometimes missed to build on pupils' answers and stretch their thinking. In the best lessons teachers are good at explaining exactly what they want pupils to learn and questioning them to make sure that they understand. Here, pupils are required to think hard and solve increasingly complex problems and, as a result, make good progress. Teaching assistants know pupils well and have a good understanding of how to promote pupils' learning, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's curricular provision is satisfactory. Satisfactory provision is made for teaching the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Development planning to make better links between subjects and so enable pupils to apply their skills across the curriculum is at an early stage of implementation. Work on display around the school and seen in lessons shows that art and design and modern foreign languages are strong features of the curriculum that are enjoyed by pupils. The school makes effective use of links with partner schools to enhance learning. A satisfactory range of visits, visitors to the school and residential opportunities helps bring learning alive and contributes well to pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils feel safe in the school because they are confident that all staff care for them well. Safeguarding requirements are met. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory and the school has effective procedures for identifying and providing for pupils' different needs. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Marking does not give pupils clear enough guidance on how to improve their work. Assessment systems are not yet used effectively enough so opportunities are missed to promote pupils' progress by identifying underachievement at an early stage. Individual targets are not widely used but group targets are based on assessment and pupils are increasingly meeting these targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's leadership has demonstrated its capacity to improve by dealing effectively with the issues from the last inspection. The quality of mathematics teaching has improved and consequently standards show a rising trend, particularly at the higher levels, and targets have been met. There is no complacency; the school's leadership recognises that there is still more to do in raising standards and achievement. Leadership has set a clear direction to maintain improvement through staff development and associated training. The school's self-evaluation is reasonably accurate and senior staff use data well to check pupils' progress over time. However, full advantage is not taken of the results of analysis to identify underachievement at an early stage or to support subject leaders' planning. The school has gained the support of the great majority of parents. A few have concerns that the school does not take sufficient account of their views. The school has plans to tackle this matter. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is informed and supportive. With a strong lead from the chair of governors, they are beginning to hold the school more rigorously to account.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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 Primary School, Widnes, WA8 7HD

Thank you very much for the way that you welcomed us into your school. We are particularly grateful to those of you who told us about your life and work in the school. We were impressed by your good manners and behaviour. We agree with you that the school is a safe and happy place where everyone can enjoy learning. The school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. Your standards and achievement are improving. It was good to see how well you work together in lessons. You told us that your teachers make lessons fun and we could see that you enjoyed the practical activities. The pupils making 'mud pies' in mathematics were certainly having fun learning to weigh different amounts. You know that it is important to have a healthy way of living. We could see at lunchtime that you take this seriously. Everyone in the school cares for you all well so that you get help with any difficulties.

We have asked the staff to improve some things to make your school an even better place to learn. These are:

- to make sure that you know what to do to improve your work
- to make sure that teachers who have responsibility for subjects understand their responsibilities and are able to check what is happening in lessons
- to make sure that all the information the school has about how well you are doing is used to help you to do even better.

We wish you well for the future and hope that you will continue to help make your school an even better place to learn.