

Dewhurst St Mary CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117415
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	358135
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Canham

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 of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Robinson
Headteacher	Keely Folker
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, observed nine teachers and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and a group of pupils, and talked with pupils in lessons. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including assessment and attendance information, lesson plans, safeguarding arrangements, school development planning, minutes of governing body meetings and pupils' work. Inspectors also scrutinised the 57 questionnaires received from parents and carers, as well as those from staff and a sample of pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which higher expectations are increasing the level of challenge and rate of progress in English and mathematics.
- How improvements to assessment procedures have strengthened monitoring and extended the accountability of staff.
- The extent to which the senior leadership team and the governing body are influencing the school's direction and performance.

Information about the school

Dewhurst St Mary is smaller than most other primary schools. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Other pupils represent a wide range of minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average. In some year groups it is almost two fifths. The proportion of pupils who arrive or leave part-way through their primary school education is above that found in most other schools. The senior leadership team has not been at full strength since the last inspection and there have been significant changes to staffing.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage into the Reception class. The school has achieved the Activemark award, National Healthy Schools Status, and an Information and Communication Technology award.

There is pre-school care provision within the school, but this is not managed by the governing body and is inspected separately.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has a number of good features which include the care and support it provides within a harmonious community underpinned by Christian values. The school is very successful in enhancing pupils' self esteem, developing confidence and strengthening their personal qualities. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils have a very keen interest in learning about others and their different backgrounds. Their enjoyment of learning is reflected in the enthusiastic response to stimulating activities and sporting opportunities. This picture is reflected in the questionnaires completed by pupils, and in discussions, when they indicated that they really enjoy school and embrace the opportunities to help others. Attendance is improving, although a very small, but persistent, group of pupils do not attend often enough. The school has developed good relationships with parents and carers, who are very supportive of the school. One parent's comment sums up the views of others: 'I feel strongly that the school tries very hard to provide a positive learning environment.'

Despite substantial changes to staffing, the school is soundly placed to focus on raising levels of achievement and lifting attainment. Monitoring and tracking systems provide school leaders with a clear understanding of where the school is now and what needs improving. This has already had a positive impact on performance levels, although benchmarks against which the school's progress can be measured are not sufficiently detailed or precise. However, the school's awareness and vision are informed by an increasingly accurate self-evaluation and the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

Progress is satisfactory throughout the school. Attainment is rising and the push for consistently good teaching is evident in the review of classroom practice. However, the quality of teaching, which is satisfactory overall, varies and is reflected in pupils' progress. Pupils are progressing well in some lessons, where stimulating activities grab their attention and they are given enough time to practise and develop their skills. However, information from assessment is not always used as well as it could be to help match activities to pupils' differing needs and to ensure that the pace of learning is always rapid enough. Some activities do not expect enough from pupils, especially the more able. Marking, although supportive, does not always give pupils enough information about how to improve. Specific programmes are place which address satisfactorily the particular needs of individuals and groups of pupils.

Popular clubs and after-school activities provide pupils with many opportunities to develop their creative and performance skills.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by ensuring staff always:
 - use assessment information to adapt lesson content in response to pupils' differing needs
 - give pupils sufficient guidance when marking so that they know how to improve their work
 - provide challenging tasks throughout the lessons that are pitched at the right level, especially for the more-able pupils
 - give pupils sufficient time to work by themselves to practise and develop their skills.
 - Improve the effectiveness of leadership by strengthening monitoring procedures with the use of sharp success criteria against which the school's progress can be measured.
 - Improve attendance by making effective use of the good relationships with the parents and carers of those children who do not attend often enough.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' sheer enjoyment of learning, as seen in their keenness to become involved in engaging and well-paced activities in English and mathematics, is a characteristic of lessons. They work extremely well in small groups and readily share information and resources, showing a determination to complete the tasks and get them right. Pupils move without hesitation to different tasks and thrive on becoming involved in stimulating activities. Pupils work very well independently of the teachers, for example, when working in small groups in preparation for their creative writing. They were also fully engaged when looking at different ways to solve problems, for example, during mathematics. In assembly, pupils answered questions with confidence and willingly celebrated the achievements of others.

Achievement is satisfactory for all groups of pupils. Children enter the Reception at age-expected levels. Attainment is broadly average throughout the school. School data show that levels of attainment and the rate of progress are improving securely, especially in reading. There are no significant variations in the rates of progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, the small minority of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, or by those pupils who join the school part-way through their primary school education.

Pupils say they like coming to school because they enjoy making friends, and learn lots of things because, '...the teachers make work fun so it's not boring.' Pupils show a profound interest and an acute respect for different people's feelings and backgrounds. These qualities are reflected in the pupils' involvement in community and international projects, and when helping other pupils in their role as playground and sports leaders, for example. Pupils' excellent understanding of living healthily is reflected in the school's nationally recognised qualification. It is also evident in the way they talk confidently about the importance of eating different kinds of food, the need for regular exercise and its impact on the heart. Pupils also talk about the importance of a balance between physical and

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mental health. The large majority of pupils take part in regular exercise and participate in sports events. Pupils have an exceptionally clear understanding of what constitutes safe behaviour and the reasons why it is essential in physical education, for example. The school council gives pupils good opportunities to represent the views of others. It also provides a number of opportunities for pupils to make decisions regarding the support for national and international fundraising activities and community events, which underpin Christian values.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Strong relationships and the very effective use information and communication technology (ICT) are particular strengths of teaching and learning. The latter is reflected in the school's Information and Communication Technology award. Topics, including those that encourage creative writing and make links between different subjects, such as English and history, successfully capture pupils' interest and hold their attention. Consequently, pupils willingly become interested in their learning and want to discover more for themselves. Questions are often used skilfully to draw pupils into discussion. However, some introductions are long and pupils are not given enough time to practise or work by themselves, especially the more able. Assessment is not used consistently to guide planning which means that tasks are not always matched well enough to the needs of different abilities. As a result, the pupils do not always learn as well as they should.

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High quality and informative classroom displays give an insight into the range of pupils' learning experiences. The school is developing a curriculum that provides a considered balance between basic skills in English and mathematics and the enhancement of pupils' performance and creative skills. The school has rightly identified the need to improve pupils' skills in writing and mathematics, building on the improvements already established in reading. Planning links different subjects so that pupils are given opportunities to reinforce their learning and develop their skills through topics. However, some of the pupils' written work is not completed before moving on to another topic. Skills, including the ability to work independently and collaboratively, are encouraged satisfactorily. The teaching of French adds an additional positive dimension. Pupils' learning experiences are further enriched by a number of popular clubs, including, residential trips, visits to places of local interest, and the use of subject specialists.

The good care, guidance and support have a positive impact on improving outcomes for pupils. The quality of pastoral care is recognised and valued by parents and carers. One parent's comments sum up the views of others: 'I have been extremely impressed at how quickly all the teaching and support staff got to know my child.' The close attention to pupils' health and well-being is reflected in the many opportunities for physical activity and the provision of healthy school meals. These have contributed to the award of Activemark and Healthy School Status. Individualised programmes of support are successfully compiled for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, covering a wide range of personal and learning needs. Individual achievement is managed through improved tracking of pupils' progress. Good transition arrangements ensure that pupils who join part-way through their primary education are well integrated. The appointment of key staff has enabled the school to develop a close liaison with parents and carers, and outside agencies. As a consequence, well-informed and individual attention enables those pupils with the greatest needs to gain confidence and self-esteem.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The leaders and managers of the school are satisfactorily embedding ambition and driving improvement. The leadership team, well supported by other staff, is creating a culture that is committed not only to strengthening each pupil's self-esteem, but also to raising their achievement. The school has established a planned approach to monitoring and an acute awareness of the path it needs to follow to increase the pace of learning. Secure systems are in place to ensure that this ethos is maintained even through staff changes. However, planning for improvement does not always include sufficiently honed criteria against which the school's progress can be gauged. The promotion of equality and

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approaches to tackling any form of discrimination are satisfactory. As a result, groups of pupils make similar progress, although some pupils, especially the higher attainers, do not make fast enough progress in some classes.

The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. It is supportive and fully involved in the strategic management of the school. Links have been established with different subjects and governors are beginning to check systematically on the school's progress with regard to lifting achievement and raising attainment levels. Detailed and well-organised procedures ensure that safeguarding arrangements are carefully followed. The school uses embedded and reliable quality-assurance and risk-assessment systems. Local services and agencies are used well to enhance the well-being of pupils experiencing difficult circumstances and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school demonstrates a good understanding of local needs and challenges. It provides a number of opportunities for pupils to gain a good understanding about people's backgrounds and communities in this country. In addition, there are opportunities for pupils to develop community cohesion at the international level through links with a school in Zambia, for example. Parents and carers are given many opportunities to play an active part in school events, including fund-raising projects and workshops to help them understand their children's different learning experiences.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly, are eager to learn and make satisfactory progress. Caring staff have successfully established a welcoming and attractive environment in which children are nurtured from the start. Effective links have been established with parents and carers, with the help of their children's learning journals. Recently introduced assessment procedures are beginning to ensure that staff have accurate and reliable information about

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children's starting points and their progress. Children are involved in planning and, as a consequence, are more engaged in the activities than they were in the past. Support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for those who are more vulnerable, is appropriately focused.

Children listen attentively and chatter about their work. Children happily move from one activity to another. Questioning is often used well to probe their understanding and capture their interest. Themed topics ensure all areas of learning are covered, with a particular focus on early reading, writing and number skills.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

An average proportion of the school's parents and carers returned the questionnaires. The very large majority of the responses were positive. A number of parents and carers made written comments and the majority of these expressed considerable satisfaction with the school. These included positive remarks about the caring and supportive community and the quality of the staff. However, some questionnaires recorded reservations over a very small number of issues. These included the amount of progress their children are making and the way the school deals with suggestions or concerns. The inspection found evidence to indicate that pupils are making more rapid progress than they did before, although those who learn quickly are still not challenged sufficiently. The school is planning more opportunities for parents and carers to attend meetings and to discuss ways in which they can support their children's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dewhurst St Mary CofE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 194 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	53	24	42	3	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	49	27	47	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	26	46	29	51	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	33	32	56	5	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	32	36	63	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	37	35	61	0	0	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	30	38	67	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	16	28	37	65	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	28	36	63	4	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	33	31	54	7	12	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	30	27	47	10	18	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	39	33	58	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	42	30	53	2	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



20 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dewhurst St Mary CofE Primary School, Waltham Cross, EN8 9ND

We very much enjoyed our visit to your school - thank you for making us feel so welcome. This letter is to tell you about some of the things we found while we were with you.

Dewhurst St Mary's is a satisfactory school, where you behave exceptionally well, feel extremely safe and benefit from good care and support. You told us it is also a place where you want to be, make friends, and enjoy taking part in the many exciting activities, stimulating trips and interesting clubs. The very large majority of your parents and carers expressed considerable satisfaction with the school.

Here are some other important things about your school.

You make satisfactory progress in lessons and reach attainment levels by Year 6 that are similar to those found in most other schools.

You respond enthusiastically to activities that encourage you to work imaginatively and creatively.

You make a positive contribution to the smooth running of the school by taking responsibility and helping each other.

You contribute successfully to local activities and events.

You have an excellent understanding of what makes for a healthy lifestyle.

To make things even better for you, your school has been asked to:

- help you to make faster progress, especially those of you who learn quickly, by giving you challenging activities and more time to work by yourselves in lessons
- give you more guidance when marking your work so that you know how to improve
- ensure that those in charge of the school, and your teachers, keep an even closer eye on how you are doing
- work more closely with those of you who do not attend often enough, and your parents and carers, so that you attend school more often.

We wish each one of you every success in your future education and hope that you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now. You can all help the school by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Paul Canham

Lead inspector

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