

# Dale Hall Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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|                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 124668         |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Suffolk        |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 380952         |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 16–17 May 2012 |
| <b>Lead inspector</b>          | Martin Beale   |

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

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|--|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary                              |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community                            |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 4–11                                 |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                                |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 403                                  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | John Birch                           |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Alison Beckett                       |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 25 September 2008                    |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Dale Hall Lane<br>Ipswich<br>IP1 4LX |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01473 251651                         |
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|---------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Age group</b>          | 4–11           |
| <b>Inspection date(s)</b> | 16–17 May 2012 |
| <b>Inspection number</b>  | 380952         |



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## Introduction

Inspection team

|              |                      |
|--------------|----------------------|
| Martin Beale | Additional Inspector |
| Ruth Frith   | Additional Inspector |
| Andrew Read  | Additional Inspector |

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Over 14 hours were spent observing teaching and learning in parts of 29 lessons taught by 12 members of staff. Inspectors held discussions with pupils about their learning and heard pupils read. Inspectors held meetings with staff and members of the governing body including the Chairperson. They observed the school's work and scrutinised pupils' books, assessment data and case studies of specific pupils. They also looked at evidence of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. The inspection team analysed 193 responses to the questionnaire returned by parents and carers.

## Information about the school

Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds in this large primary school. Few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. Their needs are mostly associated with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties or speech, language and communication difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes. The school has been re-accredited with Healthy Schools status. The school meets the current floor standards which set the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

The school hosts a privately run breakfast and after-school club. This provision is not managed by the governing body and as such 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

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>          | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Achievement of pupils</b>          | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Quality of teaching</b>            | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>      | <b>3</b> |

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not good because although pupils make good and improving progress in English, their progress is only satisfactory in mathematics, and not all teaching is consistently of a good quality. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Pupils' writing has become creative and imaginative as a result of changes introduced this year. Their reading skills develop well. A major improvement since the previous inspection is how pupils more confidently solve problems and undertake investigations in both mathematics and science. However, their basic mathematical skills develop at a slower pace than in English and their attainment in mathematics is broadly average rather than above average as in English.
- At its best, teaching is engaging and stimulates the pupils' imaginations. This is particularly the case in lessons where pupils plan and undertake extended writing and in topic themes, where learning is linked thoughtfully between subjects. However, not all teachers are as effective in teaching mathematics or meeting the needs of all pupils, particularly the less able.
- The pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes make Dale Hall a harmonious and purposeful environment in which to learn and develop. Pupils are highly motivated, enthusiastic learners and respond well to their teachers. They undertake responsibilities as prefects, school council representatives and play leaders with pride.
- Self-evaluation based on the rigorous monitoring and improvement of performance has sharpened considerably at all levels since the last inspection. The headteacher and staff have a very clear view about what makes for good and better teaching and have been successful in improving teaching and learning in English, but less consistently so in mathematics.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress in mathematics so that attainment matches that in English, by:
  - introducing a rigorous programme to develop staff subject knowledge and expertise in teaching mathematics
  - ensuring that activities in mathematics lessons are accessible to pupils of all abilities, particularly the less able
  - planning for pupils to develop their numeracy skills systematically across other subjects.
  
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching in order to accelerate learning and progress by:
  - developing teachers' questioning skills to check pupils' understanding
  - using assessment information more effectively to ensure teaching is pitched at the next steps in learning for all pupils
  - deploying other adults in classes more equitably to the groups and pupils they support.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Attainment on entry to Reception has fallen so that children now start with skills below those expected for their age, particularly in aspects of literacy and numeracy. They make good progress in the Reception classes and attainment is broadly average by the start of Year 1. Progress is particularly strong in their personal and social development. Children become independent learners who collaborate well and are able to concentrate for long periods on activities they themselves initiate.

While progress across the rest of the school is satisfactory overall and attainment broadly average, they are stronger in English than in mathematics. Parents and carers feel that their children make good progress. This is certainly the case in English but not always so in mathematics, particularly for the less able. At its best, learning is fast paced and enables pupils to develop and consolidate skills quickly, particularly through their application across subjects and within topic themes. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress as others in their classes, although the steps can be quite small for pupils with significant learning difficulties. Less-able pupils, despite some issues in mathematics, make the same satisfactory progress as their classmates.

Pupils' writing has improved rapidly this year. They write in a wide variety of styles using different strategies to plan thoughtfully their extended pieces of writing. Boys are showing much more interest in writing, particularly within the topic themes such as the variety of writing Year 5 pupils produced during their recent topic on space or

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Year 6 pupils writing instructions for a game to play on sports day. Pupils also make good progress in reading. They learn quickly the sounds made by letters and use this to help them to tackle unfamiliar words, such as when Year 1 pupils identified the 'ew' sound in 'sew' having looked at other combinations of letters making the same sound. Attainment in reading is broadly average by the end of Year 2 and rises to above average by the end of Year 6. The pupils' basic mathematical skills are not consistently secured and so progress overall is only satisfactory and attainment average by the end of Year 6.

Year 6 test results in English and mathematics fell to a broadly average level in 2010, but rose back to above average in English in 2011. The school's action to improve writing is leading to accelerated progress for boys but also for girls. This means that the gender gap in school remains, while it has closed significantly between boys' attainment and that of boys nationally.

### **Quality of teaching**

A major strength of all lessons is the calm atmosphere in classrooms and the teachers' constructive management of the pupils' behaviour. The strong qualities of two Year 6 English lessons characterised the best teaching observed. Through good subject knowledge, the lessons were well planned, challenging and provided engaging contexts for writing linked to the Olympic theme. The teachers' skilled questioning and probing of pupils' understanding were key strengths of these lessons, but are not consistent features of all. Furthermore, it is only through additional adult support that the less able pupils can access activities because they are not sufficiently modified to meet their specific needs. This means they frequently work with teaching assistants rather than independently or with the direct input from the class teacher. In contrast, 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.

The good teaching in Reception is based on the regular assessment of each child's progress so that activities are closely linked to their learning needs and interests. Classrooms and the outdoors are full of well-resourced activities that attract the children and hold their attention. Well-taught sessions led by adults are balanced with plenty of opportunity for the children to take responsibility for initiating activities themselves.

Teachers frequently promote teamwork by encouraging collaboration when pupils work on practical activities. They expect pupils to think and use their imaginations, particularly when responding to texts and video clips. Many texts chosen are of stories from different cultures, thus broadening the pupils' outlook and understanding of others. Parents, carers and their children judge that teaching is good. This view is accurate in many respects but not always in mathematics. Many teachers successfully promote thinking and reasoning through investigations and problem-solving. However, not all teachers are confident and sufficiently skilled when adopting this approach in mathematics. While the activities themselves are

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interesting and challenging, they do not always enable the less-able pupils to access and so benefit fully from them.

Reading is taught well. Sessions teaching letters and their sounds to younger pupils are focused sharply on the next steps in learning for all. They are planned well to develop other reading skills such as comprehension as well as promoting an interest in different forms of literature. The pupils' reading journals provide opportunities for them to write reviews of the books they read, although this is not consistently undertaken or checked by staff.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The headteacher's high expectations for the pupils' behaviour are shared by all members of staff, who are consistent in their implementation of school policy. Prefects contribute greatly to ensuring that behaviour around the school and at playtimes remains good. Pupils show respect for others and are aware of the impact of their actions. They are keen to learn. They concentrate hard and show determination when tackling difficult work. Even on the few occasions when lessons are less dynamic, pupils still behave well and try their best. Pupils who have more difficulty in managing their own behaviour are helped to modify their conduct through sensitive support. Records confirm the views of parents, carers and their children that the good behaviour seen during the inspection is typical for the school.

Pupils say how safe they feel in school because they are encouraged to share their concerns with staff. Their parents and carers agree. They understand what contributes to a potential risk and how to keep themselves safe when using new technology and the internet. Pupils understand what constitutes different types of bullying and say there are a few isolated incidents of name-calling or unhappiness when friends fall out. They are confident that, when any poor behaviour or bullying does occur, that the school takes it seriously and sorts it out quickly. In support, they cite the school's rapid and effective response to concerns of possible cyber-bullying amongst some pupils. The pupils' confidence in staff is reflected in their pride in the school and their consistently above-average attendance.

### **Leadership and management**

The school is in a secure position to continue improvements in future, given its recent track record and the effectiveness of leadership at all levels. The headteacher has driven forward several improvements since the last inspection, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and an effective team of subject leaders. Very thorough monitoring of teaching, and the provision of further training where needed, have led to accelerating progress in writing and greater challenge for the more-able pupils. The changed approach to teaching mathematics through investigation and problem-solving has seen slower success for some teachers and so remains a priority for the school. The governing body is well-informed, challenging and fully involved in planning for the school's future. It checks the school's performance carefully, including through the evaluation of assessment data, and has a clear understanding

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of where improvements are needed.

The curriculum is good because it develops a wide range of skills and promotes well the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Learning is made meaningful for the pupils by linking subjects, as appropriate, through topic themes. Art is a considerable strength and used to develop an understanding of other cultures, such as through the Dogon masks made by Year 6 pupils. Close links with a school in France and another in Uganda, and the celebration of festivals such as Chinese New Year, all help pupils to understand how others live and their place in the world.

The governing body and staff ensure 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. Pupils and their circumstances are well known so that highly effective action is taken if there is sign of any underachievement. As a result, any gaps in achievement are not significant or are closing rapidly, such as in boys' writing.



## 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](http://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.**



18 May 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Dale Hall Community Primary School, Ipswich, IP1 4LX**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We saw that you work very hard and are proud of the part you play in school life. Inspectors were particularly impressed by your confident answers to their questions. We found that Dale Hall is a satisfactory school. These are the things we liked most.

- As you told us, the headteacher, staff and governors take care of you and make sure you are kept safe.
- Teaching is good in English and, in almost all lessons, teachers make sure you can learn in an atmosphere of calm and hard-work.
- The children in Reception have a good start to their school life in an interesting and stimulating environment.
- Your positive attitudes to learning, good behaviour and regular attendance contribute significantly to making the school calm and happy.
- Your writing has improved considerably, partly because you are given opportunities to develop your skills in a wide range of subjects.
- Teachers take every opportunity to promote your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- You understand clearly how to keep yourselves safe and deal with any risks you might face.

In order to improve learning further we have asked your school to bring teaching consistently up to the quality of the best and to increase the progress you make in mathematics.

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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