

Debden Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	115128
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	395516
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2012
Lead inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Donohoe
Headteacher	Julie Gibbons
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2008
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Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	5–6 July 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Selwyn Ward

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited 13 lessons taught by nine teachers and a lesson taught by teaching assistants, with a particular focus on the impact of pupil mobility on progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The inspector listened to pupils read, and spoke with parents and carers, pupils, staff, and members of the governing body. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books and school documentation, including self-evaluation and leaders' monitoring of teaching. The inspector also took account of the questionnaire responses of 107 pupils, 24 staff and 65 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Debden is smaller than the average primary school. Most pupils are White British, with around 10% coming from various minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils learning English as an additional language is below average, as is the proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is low. Many of the pupils come from families working in the armed forces and based at the local barracks. Changes of posting mean that the rate of mobility is greater than in other schools; a small but very significant minority of pupils join or leave the school partway through their primary education. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are minimum standards expected by the government for attainment and progress. Debden C of E School has an Activemark award.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well. The school is not outstanding because the progress that pupils make in lessons and over time is good rather than better and because attainment at the end of Year 6 is only average.
- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress in lessons and during their time at the school. Good provision for pupils who join the school partway through their primary education, including those from families stationed at the local barracks, enables these pupils to achieve well.
- Teaching is good because it promotes good learning and progress. Teachers manage classes well and provide learning opportunities that are interesting and fun. However, work is not always matched to pupils' different abilities and not all marking gives pupils as detailed guidance on how to improve, as it does in English.
- Pupils feel very safe at school and their behaviour is exemplary. They listen intently in lessons and they are eager to do well. Their enthusiasm and very positive attitudes to learning contribute greatly to their progress. Attendance rates are consistently high.
- Debden is a well-run school. Performance management arrangements and leaders' monitoring of teaching have ensured consistently good provision. School leaders ensure that effective arrangements are in place to quickly settle pupils new to the school. Monitoring of lessons sometimes focuses on what the teacher does rather than on how much progress the pupils are making in the lesson and has led to an overly positive view of teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise attainment so that it is above average at the end of Key Stage 2, and increase the number of lessons where pupils of all abilities make outstanding progress by ensuring that:
 - work is always matched to pupils' different capabilities, especially to extend the more able
 - lesson introductions do not go on for too long
 - teaching assistants always have an active role promoting learning during whole-class teaching
 - marking in all subjects gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work
 - leaders' lesson observations always focus sharply on pupils' learning and rates of progress.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire say their children make good progress. The inspection confirms this is an accurate view. Pupils make good progress in lessons and over their time at Debden. Because they benefit from well-focused support, pupils learning English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make the same good progress as their peers. Some pupils with learning difficulties make exceptional progress.

The school has assessed children's skills and capabilities at the start of the Reception Year as very low in comparison with other schools. In most years, children leave the Reception Year with attainment that is broadly average. Attainment is above average for children currently in Reception. In a lesson built around the theme of 'message in a bottle', children demonstrated advanced social development as they worked together designing and painting their desert island and filming each other in a roleplay shipwreck in the outside area. There was some high quality writing and impressively accurate spelling as some children compiled lists of what they would miss if they were shipwrecked on an island. Not all the lists were materialistic: several children mused wistfully that they would mostly miss their brothers, sisters and pets; though not necessarily in that order.

By the end of Year 2, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is the equivalent of around a term ahead of the national average. Pupils who join the school during the course of Key Stage 1 attain similar levels to those who have been at Debden from the start. A difference in attainment between these groups opens up in Key Stage 2, however. This is because pupils who join during Key Stage 2 have their education much more noticeably disrupted by the move of schools. Even though staff carefully assess pupils' capabilities on entry, these pupils often have

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gaps in their learning because of variation in curriculum coverage between different schools. Although pupils who join the school partway through their primary education generally make the same good progress as those who spend their entire time at Debden, the high pupil mobility depresses the school's overall attainment. As a result, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is average at the end of Year 6. This is the case for pupils currently in Year 6 as well as for those in each of the previous four years. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been average every year since 2008, although the school's progress tracking data shows that pupils currently in Year 5 are expected to do better because they are currently working above age-related expectations.

Quality of teaching

Pupils enjoy lessons because teachers succeed in making learning fun. Pupils and their parents and carers say the teaching is good at this school. Inspection findings support this view. Reading is taught well in Reception and Key Stage 1, not least because the teaching of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) has been a well-established part of the curriculum at this school for several years.

Teachers know the pupils well. In an outstanding lesson on non-fiction writing for pupils in Years 5 and 6, progress was particularly rapid because the teacher took as the starting point the comments she had made in marking work from the previous day. This ensured that pupils were all focused on individual points for improvement and were able to build on what they had learnt before. Work in lessons is not always matched closely to the wide range of abilities in each class, especially to challenge and extend more-able pupils. Particularly in Key Stage 1, it is often the case that pupils of widely different abilities are given similar worksheets or writing templates to complete. Though lessons are often characterised by a brisk pace where pupils get a lot done, there are occasions when lesson introductions go on for too long and squeeze the time available for writing and other practical activities. Teaching assistants are often very well deployed, especially to support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as others who need extra help with their learning, but they are not always used to best effect during teachers' lesson introductions. They are sometimes mainly passive listeners when they could be doing more to directly support the teacher.

Among the particularly strong features of teaching are the emphasis placed throughout the school on accurate spelling and teachers' use of homework. Expectations for homework are made very clear to parents and carers, including through the school's website, and pupils are diligent in completing the regular assignments that build as pupils move up the school, preparing them well for their next school. The research and writing projects pupils undertake especially help to move their learning on. This was evident, for example, in the tasks set as part of the rain forests topic for pupils in Key Stage 2. These promoted independence by combining book and internet research, art, writing and imaginative use of design technology. The project contributed well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

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development, prompting consideration of the needs of other cultures, and issues over encroachment into native habitats. Pupils' targets give them a clear picture of what they need to do to improve their work. Marking of pupils' work in literacy and creative writing gives them helpful feedback on what they need to do to improve, but marking in science and other subjects is much less detailed.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The comments of parents and carers, and of pupils themselves, confirm that the exemplary behaviour seen in lessons during the inspection was typical and the norm at Debden. Parents, carers and pupils agree with inspection findings that children are very safe at school. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and how to keep safe. Pupils are aware of the different forms bullying can take. The great majority of parents and carers confirm that bullying of any kind is rare at Debden and that it is dealt with well on any occasions when it occurs. A very small number of parents voice concerns about occasional incidents in the playground. Pupils explain, however, that though friends sometimes 'fall out', they usually patch things up.

The stand out feature of behaviour at this school is the pupils' positive attitude to learning. Pupils are highly attentive in lessons, even when teachers' introductions take up quite lengthy periods. They are keen to volunteer answers and they readily work very sensibly together in pairs and small groups, invariably settling to work quickly and without fuss. Discussion and collaborative work is of a high quality and contributes to the good progress pupils make. Pupils comment on how much they enjoy school and they show their enthusiasm through their hard work and concentration.

Attendance rates are high. This is indicative not just of pupils' enjoyment of school, but also of the very strong partnership with parents and carers, and the tight systems for chasing up any unexplained absence.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, leadership team and governing body have an ambitious vision for the school, which is shared by staff, parents and carers. As a result, morale is high and the school is popular with parents. Performance management arrangements, including the monitoring of teaching, show the school's capacity for improvement because they have led to a consistent approach ensuring that teaching is good. Monitoring of lessons tends to focus on the features of teaching rather than on how well all the pupils are progressing. This has contributed to leaders' overly positive view of the effectiveness of teaching and of the school.

Pupil mobility remains a significant factor. A notable strength of the school is the care taken to settle and support those who join Debden partway through their primary education. That these pupils are helped to successfully overcome the disruptive impact of moving schools is a tribute to Debden's effective promotion of

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equality of opportunity and to the quality of the school's induction procedures.

The curriculum is made interesting and fun, especially through the cross-curricular activities. Literacy, in particular, is supported well within other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 2 eagerly followed up the previous day's literacy session on writing instructions with activities in the food design technology area, where they followed the instructions they had written to make sandwiches. Cross-curricular topic work raises awareness of global issues and of other cultures and beliefs. Different cultures and backgrounds within the school community are celebrated; with pupils learning, for example, about Nepal. Combined with the notable opportunities for performance in dance and music, these contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The governing body is supportive. Its members know the school well because they visit regularly to gain a first-hand picture of what goes on in school. The governing body ensures that arrangements for safeguarding meet regulatory requirements.

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).

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.



9 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Debden Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Saffron Walden, CB11 3LE

Thank you for welcoming me to your school on my recent visit. I want to give a particular thanks to those of you who filled in questionnaires and who talked to me about the school and your work.

Debden is a good school. It is run well and the teaching is good. As a result, you make good progress in lessons and over your time at the school. That is true for those of you who are at the school from the start of Reception onwards, as well as for those of you who join Debden partway through your primary education. Your attainment at the end of Year 6 has been average and so I have suggested some ways in which the school could help to make good teaching even better so that you make faster progress and reach higher standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. You can help with this by continuing to work hard and doing your best, and by telling your teacher if ever you have work that seems too hard or too easy.

I was especially impressed by the excellent behaviour I saw in lessons and around the school. You, and your parents and carers, told me that what I saw was exactly as things normally are at Debden. You get on very well together and you are careful to look out for and help each other. You listen carefully in lessons and you get on with your work quickly and without fuss. I was also impressed by your excellent attendance.

Thank you again for the welcome you gave me, and my very best wishes to all of you for the future, both at this school and, for those of you about to leave to start at secondary school.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward
Lead inspector

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