

# Downham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Road, Ramsden Heath, Billericay, CM11 1NU

**Inspection dates** 22–23 January 2014

|                                |                      |                             |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory                | 3        |
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Good                        | 2        |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The school's leaders and the governing body have not yet done enough to make sure achievement is consistently good for all age groups in English and mathematics.
- The teaching seen was typically good but this is not yet reflected in pupils' standards.
- Teachers do not always use marking effectively to help pupils improve their work.
- The work set in some lessons is not always hard enough to stretch and challenge the most able pupils.
- Pupils are not always helped enough when they get stuck on a piece of work, and are sometimes moved on before they have understood the task.
- Pupils' progress in English and mathematics varies too much across different classes and age groups.
- Senior leaders do not always accurately evaluate information on pupils' achievements in order to challenge teachers.
- The advice, guidance and support provided by external agencies does not always help the school to gain an accurate review of its performance.
- The best teaching skills in the school are not shared widely to help other teachers improve.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, including the governing body, have improved teaching and are starting to increase pupils' rates of progress, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well.
- Relationships are good. Pupils' behaviour is good, and they feel safe in school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is promoted particularly well.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out 14 lesson observations, one of which was a joint observation with a co-headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 6 read.
- Meetings were held with pupils and staff, including senior leaders and subject leaders. Two telephone conversations took place with representatives from the local authority. A discussion was also held with three members of the governing body.
- School documents were also looked at, including those relating to safeguarding, information on pupils' achievement and school improvement planning.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 47 parents through the online Parent View website. The views of staff were considered through the 38 responses to an inspection questionnaire.

## Inspection team

|                                      |                      |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Peter Lacey-Hastings, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Gillian Walley                       | Additional Inspector |
| Veronica McGill                      | Additional Inspector |
| Susan Cox                            | Additional Inspector |

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Downham is an average-sized primary school.
- The two co-headteachers work part-time and share the leadership of the school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. This is additional funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or from families with a parent in the armed services.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is similar to other schools.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement for special educational needs is similar to other schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

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

- Make more teaching good or better by making sure all teachers:
  - set challenging work that is hard enough to help pupils make quicker progress
  - make sure pupils do not get bogged down in activities that hold back their progress
  - use marking effectively to raise standards, so pupils respond to marking more often, do not repeat errors and make quicker progress.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - evaluating information on pupils' achievement rigorously and accurately
  - making full use of the available external support as a sounding board to check the school's performance
  - using good practice in the school and beyond to share and model good teaching.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is not consistently good enough from year to year, or across the different subjects. It is slower in mathematics in Key Stage 1 and in reading in Key Stage 2. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress, but it slows in Key Stages 1 and 2 and only speeds up again in Years 5 and 6. As a result standards fluctuate too much, and pupils sometimes do not reach the standards they are capable of.
- In the past children have started school with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age. However, in the last two years their skills and knowledge levels have been in line with those expected for their age.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been in line with national averages for the last two years. Attainment in mathematics has generally been higher than in English. However, last year pupils' progress was better in reading and writing than in mathematics. Their starting points in Year 1 were lower in English. Progress is quicker in Year 2 than in Year 1.
- In 2012 the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics (how letters link with sounds) check was well below the national average. In 2013 it was much higher than the national average. This is because the teaching of phonics has improved considerably.
- In 2012 pupils in Key Stage 2 made slow progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The 2013 Year 6 results show that their overall progress improved. Attainment in mathematics was higher than in English, and attainment overall was higher than national averages. Pupils made more rapid progress in writing and mathematics than in reading, where progress required improvement. Rates of progress in mathematics and writing continue to rise this term, but progress in reading remains slower.
- The 2013 results show that in Key Stage 1, the more-able pupils did better in reading than in writing or mathematics. In Key Stage 2, however, they made good progress in mathematics and in writing. The school is not yet challenging them consistently well in all subjects areas.
- Younger pupils enjoy reading. They mostly read with fluency and expression. They use a range of techniques to help them, including phonic skills. This is mostly successful, but sometimes less-able pupils are not sure how to apply their phonic skills. Older pupils say they enjoy reading, what kinds of books they like to read, and which authors they like. For example, they like books by Roald Dahl, Jacqueline Wilson and Michael Morpurgo.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have a broad range of learning and personal targets. As a group they make similar progress to other pupils, but their rates of progress show greater variation. Some make better progress than other pupils, while others make slower progress.
- The achievement of pupils who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is similar to that of other pupils. The very small number of eligible pupils means that it is not possible to comment on their attainment in Year 6 tests without identifying individuals.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet bringing about good rates of progress over time and across all subjects. The

large majority of teaching observed during the inspection was good, especially in Years 5 and 6 and the Early Years Foundation Stage, but this better teaching has not yet had a marked impact on pupils' overall achievement over time.

- In a few lessons activities are not always hard enough for some pupils, and teachers' explanations are not clear enough. Pupils sometimes get stuck on one aspect of learning and teachers do not always spot this and help them to move on. In contrast, at other times pupils are asked to move onto a new activity before fully or showing that they understand the first one.
- Marking is carried out regularly, with suitable comments that help pupils to know what they need to do to improve their work. However, teachers do not always make sure pupils respond to their comments, and sometimes the same errors are repeated later on in pupils' books.
- In the majority of lessons, expectations are high and this leads to pupils making good progress. In a typically well-taught Year 5 and 6 mathematics lesson the teacher kept pupils on their toes and clearly modelled what they were expected to learn. This led to pupils making good progress.
- Teaching assistants are generally used well to support learning across the school. This is true in classrooms and when they work with small groups or individuals in other areas. Their ask questions skilfully to make pupils think and choose carefully when to intervene so pupils do not become too reliant on their help.
- Pupils are mostly motivated in lessons and engaged in their learning activities. They respond well to teachers' explanations and instructions.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are courteous, polite and welcoming. For example, they greet visitors warmly, say 'please' and 'thank you' and hold doors open for each other. They line up and move around the school in an orderly way.
- In the playground pupils play well together. They use the equipment and apparatus well in the quiet area, the covered area and on playground equipment. This helps to promote good behaviour.
- In lessons pupils show a positive attitude to their work and enjoy learning. They apply themselves enthusiastically to the task at hand. Occasionally, when pupils spend too long on a task, their concentration wanes.
- Behaviour is well managed by adults and pupils respond quickly to guidance and direction. For example, in the playground two pupils who argued were calmed down and helped to 'make up'.
- Attendance has been close to the national average, but is now higher. This is due to the effective use of rewards, careful monitoring and improvements for the very few pupils who are persistently absent. Exclusions are very uncommon.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils understand different forms of bullying, including though the use of technology such as the internet. Pupils say there is no bullying because pupils behave well and when a problem looks likely to start, adults are quick to intervene.

- Older pupils act as play leaders and prefects, and say they like this role. They enjoy the responsibility of helping the younger ones. Pupils also show responsibility and pride in the school by wearing and following the school uniform rules.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Leaders collect and analyse information about pupils' achievement. They use this to plan improvements. However, sometimes this information is not evaluated accurately, so the resulting feedback does not challenge teachers enough to bring about quicker rates of progress. As a result, the actions taken by leaders are not improving children's education rapidly enough.
- Leaders set targets for teachers to improve the quality of their teaching. These are suitably linked to pupils' achievement, the national Teachers' Standards and pay progression. Teachers are given training to improve their skills, but as yet the school is not drawing sufficiently on the best teaching it has, or good and outstanding teaching elsewhere, to help other staff improve their skills.
- Teaching is monitored regularly and weaker teaching in the past has been tackled appropriately. Some middle leadership posts, for example subject leaders, are currently unfilled and the school is in a time of transition with regard to its leadership team.
- The school uses some partnerships to increase its capacity to make further improvements, including through close links with other local schools. It works with the local authority to monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. However, the partnership with the local authority does not always help establish accuracy in the school's judgements of its own effectiveness.
- Leaders at all levels are committed to the school and know it well. The co-headteachers work closely together and with other members of staff. They identify the right areas to improve. Their actions are starting to increase rates of progress, especially at Key Stage 2.
- Funding is used carefully. The new funding for primary school sport is directed at training for staff and the employment of specialist teachers to work directly with pupils. This is starting to have a positive impact on pupils' physical education through an increase in the numbers of pupils that attend a growing range of activities such as karate. It is also used to increase access to the number of swimming sessions and inter-school competitions such as cross-country and athletics, where pupils have had some success.
- The school has prepared appropriately for the start of the new national curriculum in September, with suitable timescales and detailed plans for literacy and mathematics.
- Pupils have good opportunities to improve their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. They have time for reflection about moral and spiritual issues, and are helped to understand other cultures and religions through visits beyond school, such as to a mosque.
- All statutory safeguarding requirements are met. This includes checks on adults working with pupils and training for staff on child protection.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governors know the school well and contribute to its improvement plans and school self-evaluation. They also check on their own effectiveness and create plans to improve how they work, identifying training needs. They have attended courses on safeguarding, special

educational needs and safer recruitment. They manage and challenge the performance of the co-headteachers appropriately. They make sure staff performance targets are linked to pupils' achievement and to pay progression. The governors know how much pupil premium funding they receive and use it to directly support eligible pupils. They know that they make similar progress to other pupils. They receive information about pupils' achievement across the school and use this to challenge school leaders. However, this has not yet led to quicker rates of progress over a sustained period of time.

## What inspection judgements mean

| School  |                      |  |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| Grade   | Judgement            | Description  |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding          | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.   |
| Grade 2 | Good                 | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.   |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.   |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate           | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

## School details

|                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 115119 |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Essex  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 430736 |

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

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary                         |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Voluntary controlled            |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 4–11                            |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                           |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 257                             |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body              |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Janice Josiah                   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Helen Craig and Sue Crace       |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 28 June 2012                    |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01268 710387                    |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01268 710387                    |
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