

# Dunmow St Mary's Primary School

High Stile, Great Dunmow, Dunmow, CM6 1EB

**Inspection dates** 17–18 June 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher, senior staff and governors have successfully focused on improving the quality and consistency of teaching and pupils' progress over the last year. Achievement is rising across the school.
- Children in the Reception classes settle happily and make good progress thanks to a wide range of stimulating, well-taught activities.
- All pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers are particularly successful in engaging pupils in learning, so they are enthusiastic, keen to learn and take a pride in their achievements.
- Teachers make increasingly good use of improved information about what pupils already know and can do when setting work. As a result, pupils of all abilities generally find tasks challenging but manageable.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, behave well and, rightly, feel safe there. They have good relationships with each other and with staff. Attendance is above average and rising.
- The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of sporting activities, visits and visitors, and interesting practical work, so pupils say that lessons are fun.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, some pupils find the work they are doing too easy, or too hard, so their progress slows.
- Despite recent improvements, there remain weaknesses in pupils' skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- The marking of pupils' written work does not tell them clearly enough how to improve it. Even when they are given good advice, teachers do not always ensure that pupils follow this.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 20 lessons, several of these as joint observations with the headteacher or the assistant headteacher.
- Formal discussions were held with groups of pupils, members of staff, representatives of the governing body, and with the school's improvement partner and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also talked informally to individual staff, pupils and parents. Pupils in Years 1 and 6 were heard reading.
- Samples of pupils' work were analysed, in their books and on displays.
- Inspectors took note of 89 replies to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 50 replies to a questionnaire for staff.
- Observations were made of pupils around the school, at playtimes, lunchtimes and in assemblies.
- A range of documentation was checked, particularly that showing the pupils' attainment and progress, and how the school keeps them safe.

## Inspection team

Steven Hill, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mark Vickers

Additional Inspector

Jane Ladner

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is above average in size for a primary school, with two classes in each age group.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British, with a few coming from a range of other ethnic heritages. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is below average. This is extra government funding to help the education of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are minimum expectations set for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or through a statement of special educational needs, is also below average.
- The headteacher took up the permanent post in September 2013. In the previous year, she had shared the responsibility for the running of the school with the previous headteacher.
- A privately run before- and after-school care facility operates on the school site. This is inspected and reported upon separately.
- During the inspection, one of the Year 6 classes was out of school on a residential trip.

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

- Improve teaching and so raise achievement by:
  - marking pupils' written work with clear pointers on how they can improve it, and ensuring that they follow their teachers' advice
  - always checking that the work pupils tackle is neither too easy nor too hard for them
  - improving pupils' skills in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Reception classes with skills that vary, but are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress in all the different areas of learning. The current group have done particularly well this year, and their attainment is slightly higher than that of last year's group, despite having started school with weaker attainment overall. They have made a good start on learning phonics (how letters in words represent different sounds), using their knowledge well to support their reading and writing.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1. The results of the national check on Year 1 pupils' understanding of phonics were above average last year. This year's check was happening during the inspection and results so far are similarly positive. Pupils in Year 1 who read to an inspector showed a secure grasp of phonics, and an enjoyment of reading.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been going up steadily, and this year's provisional results match the 2013 national average in writing and mathematics, and exceed it in reading.
- Results of national assessments at the end of Year 6 have fluctuated considerably in the last few years. The pupils who left Year 6 in 2013 reached average standards but had not all made the progress they should have done since they left Key Stage 1, except in reading. The school's detailed tracking shows that their progress had been inconsistent until they started Year 6, partly because of disruption to teaching in the past. Although they made strong progress in all subjects during Year 6, this was not enough to overcome all the weaknesses from previous years.
- The current pupils in Year 6 have done much better across the key stage. During the current year, all year groups have made good progress, with previous differences in the progress of different classes largely eliminated. Boys and girls are now making similar progress, with a previous weakness in the progress of boys no longer an issue.
- A weakness in pupils' skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling skills was highlighted by the results in the new test in 2013 for pupils in Year 6. Staff identified that not enough attention had been paid to these elements in the past, and have worked to improve these skills since September. However, work in pupils' books shows clearly that past weaknesses have not been fully eliminated, and these aspects are still not of the same good quality as the content and originality of their writing.
- The small number of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium are now generally making similar progress to their classmates. In 2013, the eligible pupils in Year 6 were on average four terms behind their classmates in mathematics, three terms in reading and two terms in writing. The gap in attainment has been closing across the school as a whole because the funding is used to provide appropriately tailored help and guidance to eligible pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because work is adjusted to meet their needs and they receive good support from extra adults when they need it.
- The most able pupils are making good progress and it has improved this year. This is reflected in the attainment of the current Year 6 pupils, where over half have exceeded the nationally expected Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics. Several have done particularly well, reaching Level 6 in each subject, a very high standard for their age.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Teaching has become more consistent this year, particularly at Key Stage 2. It is now typically good, and achievement is rising as a result.
- Teachers manage classes well, establishing clear routines and high expectations of behaviour and hard work. Pupils respond well, so that lessons are orderly and productive, with little time wasted.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is strong, with children often engaged enthusiastically in a variety of activities. They are often completely absorbed in exciting tasks both indoors and out, and adults are particularly skilled at intervening in children's play to enhance their thinking and develop their understanding and vocabulary. Some excellent learning takes place as a result.
- A key strength in teaching is the use of assessment information to set different levels of challenge for pupils, which are characterised as 'mild', 'medium' and 'spicy'. Pupils are successfully encouraged to tackle the most difficult work they think they can manage, and this usually results in fast progress, as pupils are keen to show they can do well and try hard.
- Teachers make good use of the skilled extra adults to provide support to pupils. This is particularly effective in helping disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs to cope with tasks, and in challenging them to concentrate and to do the best they can.
- Pupils are encouraged to discuss and share ideas. This helps them to clarify their thinking and develop their communication skills effectively, as well as enhancing learning in the particular lesson.
- Teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT), which improves pupils' learning and their enthusiasm, and their skills in using ICT are good.
- Teachers explain things clearly in lessons, often enhancing pupils' understanding by clearly showing them what is wanted. This was exemplified in a lesson for Year 5 in ICT, when the teacher used the interactive whiteboard to illustrate how to investigate the use of a particular program. He followed up pupils' suggestions, even when they were unpromising, and showed them very clearly how experimenting and thinking about the results led to success. They were able to build on this to achieve similar success themselves later in the lesson.
- Teachers provide very interesting practical work which greatly involves pupils. One Year 6 pupil summed this up saying, 'Practical lessons educate you more.' This was seen when Year 6 pupils developed their investigative skills in a lesson covering aspects of geography and science. They tried to build 'sea defences' to protect a 'sand-bank' from the tide, based on their residential trip to the coast the previous week. Two pupils whose structure had failed had developed their understanding well, and could explain clearly why their model did not work, and how to build a better one.
- Just occasionally, learning slows when even the hardest tasks are not challenging enough for the most able pupils. At other times, a few pupils struggle even with the least challenging task and their progress is weak until an adult identifies this and provides extra support.
- The marking of pupils' work is a weaker element of teaching. Teachers' comments seldom tell pupils how they can get better, or improve what they have done already. A start has been made on improving this, and there is some good practice where pupils are given clear pointers for

improvement, or asked questions to build on their successes or practise weak aspects of their work. However, even when this happens, pupils do not always show that they have responded to the advice given, or tackled their teachers' questions.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They concentrate hard in class and are keen to succeed. They work diligently on their own, or collaborate effectively with their classmates as appropriate.
- Pupils themselves agree that behaviour is good. They identify minor deficiencies, but say that problems are always addressed quickly by teachers or other adults so that there is no serious disruption to learning, and they feel safe in school.
- Pupils are keen to do well, and develop very mature attitudes in selecting work at the right level. They are proud to be successful in tackling 'spicy' tasks, but are realistic about attempting something a little easier if they lack confidence. All this supports their good progress.
- Pupils behave sensibly around the school and are polite, helpful and cheerful. They help make this an orderly, friendly and purposeful place of learning. They willingly tackle jobs, and do them well, from tidying up conscientiously in Reception, to helping younger pupils to organise games in the oldest classes.
- Pupils greatly enjoy school at work and at play. One said, to general agreement, 'Teachers try to make every lesson fun.' This is reflected in their above-average attendance, which continues to improve. Pupils appreciate the importance of good attendance, and say that almost all absences are due to illness or medical appointments.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. They have great confidence that the adults will look after them, and will step in quickly if they are hurt or upset. Pupils know about different kinds of bullying, such as cyber-bullying, and say that it seldom happens in school, although classmates do have arguments from time to time. They say that the teachers deal with any poor behaviour strictly.
- Pupils have learned about how to keep themselves safe, such as when riding bicycles, or in case of fire. This has been rounded off for the current Year 6 by a visit to the 'Crucial Crew' in Thaxted, where they clearly learned a great deal about different aspects of safety, and can describe this enthusiastically in detail.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governing body have focused sharply on developing pupils' achievement through better, more consistent teaching. Staff have responded very positively, and teaching is now good across the school, having been too inconsistent in some previous years. A clear, shared purpose and positive ethos are raising standards across the school.
- Good use has been made of improved assessment data to plot pupils' progress, and to tackle any underachievement. All teachers now have a clear picture of how well pupils are doing, and work successfully to help any who are not progressing as they should.
- The management of teachers' performance is thorough. They are given clear feedback about how they are doing, and are helped to improve through extra help and training. This has been a

key element in improving teaching and achievement. Performance is now clearly linked to pay rises and promotion.

- A new middle tier of leadership, consisting of four 'phase leaders' who each take overall responsibility for a group of classes, is now contributing effectively to the management of the school. They work well as a team, liaise effectively with senior leaders, and make good use of their opportunities to monitor teaching and progress to help their colleagues to make improvements.
- The pupil premium funding has been spent effectively, not just on academic support to individual pupils, but also in providing pastoral help where needed, and in ensuring that all pupils are fully involved in all aspects of school life.
- Extra government funding to support sports and physical education has been spent well. It has been particularly successful in raising pupils' enthusiasm for sport, and increasing their participation in exercise. A wide range of sport-related clubs, and teaching from a specialist, have greatly contributed to this. The school has identified that the work has not been as successful in increasing the skills and confidence of its own staff in teaching physical education, and plans are in hand to tackle this next year.
- Links with parents are good and their responses to the online survey showed great confidence in the school and what it does for their children. The school consults their views and makes modifications to practice in response. For example, the format of homework has been changed to enable parents to play a greater part in contributing to their children's learning.
- The wide-ranging and practically-based curriculum contributes well to pupils' enjoyment and progress. It makes a particularly good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Visits, visitors and the wide range of additional activities are notable strengths.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school, giving useful advice, and validating the judgments of school leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors use effective systems to give them a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They use performance data well to give them a clear view of pupils' progress, and understand the complexities of this. The staff performance management system gives them a clear overview of the quality of teaching, and how it is improving. Their good understanding means they are well able to challenge and support the school, and help it to improve. Governors, supported by the school improvement partner, helped facilitate a very smooth transition in leadership when the new headteacher was appointed. They take a full part in safeguarding and have ensured that the school's procedures meet current national requirements. They have ensured that the pupil premium funding and extra sports funding have been spent appropriately, and understand both the strengths in their impact and the few aspects that still need further attention.

## 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>	115299
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	444208

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>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	406
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jane Eacott
<b>Headteacher</b>	Clare Griffiths
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 September 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01371 872340
<b>Fax number</b>	01371 875144
<b>Email address</b>	admin@dsmprimary.essex.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)  
[Store St](#)  
[Manchester](#)  
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2014

