

# de Vere Primary School

Kirby Hall Road, Castle Hedingham, Halstead, CO9 3EA

**Inspection dates** 11–12 September 2014

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Reception children make good progress because they settle quickly and are curious to learn from the interesting activities provided.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make good progress in reading and writing. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, standards are usually above average.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress.
- Teaching is good; pupils say it is 'interesting' and 'fun.'
- The new behaviour policy is effective and ensures that pupils consistently behave well. The school community is increasingly hard working and orderly.
- The curriculum increasingly reflects pupils' needs and interests and caters well for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and know staff will take care of them.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range and excellent number of clubs.
- The school is implementing clear arrangements to check pupils' learning to meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum.
- Parents welcome recent changes, such as the chance to 'meet the teacher' and talk about their child.
- Staff are very positive about changes to important policies such as behaviour, teaching and learning, and fully understand their roles within them.
- Governors and the headteacher are improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in mathematics is slower than in reading and writing because pupils are not regularly asked to apply new learning to solve problems. When pupils struggle, the extra help which they are given out of the classroom can be too general and means they miss important teaching.
- Teachers rarely use questioning effectively enough to help pupils learn.
- Pupils are not routinely taught to try to overcome difficulties for themselves, and their learning is sometimes slowed because they are too dependent on adults.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector sampled substantial parts of nine lessons, all but one jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector and headteacher made several shorter visits to classes to gain an overview of learning, looked at pupils' workbooks and listened to pupils reading.
- Discussions were held with pupils, the headteacher, other staff, parents, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 25 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and associated text comments, and other parental views. The responses to 19 staff questionnaires were also considered.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents including: the school's own information on pupils' progress; planning and monitoring documentation; the school's view of its own performance; records of how the school uses its funding, especially how the money from the pupil premium is spent; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and documents relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Robert Greatrex, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Reception children are taught in one class. Other pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes; Years 1 and 2, Years 2 and 3, Years 4 and 5 and Years 5 and 6. These arrangements vary from year-to-year, dependent upon pupil numbers in each year group.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported through a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium (the extra government funding for pupils looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- In 2013, the school met the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics when they leave primary school.
- The new headteacher took up her post at Easter 2014, and the new deputy headteacher in September 2014. Another class teacher is also new to the school this term.
- An independent pre-school shares the site. It is separately inspected.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by making sure that teachers:
  - give pupils sufficient time to work out answers to the questions they are given
  - ask questions that more consistently challenge, extend or clarify pupils' thinking
  - find strategies to ensure all pupils are involved in answering questions
  - fully and consistently implement the school's agreed teaching and learning policy, particularly to encourage pupils to use the aids they are given to try to solve difficulties they face for themselves.
- Improve standards in mathematics by:
  - giving pupils more regular opportunities to apply what they know and understand to solve problems
  - ensuring extra help is matched more precisely to pupils' gaps in knowledge
  - ensuring pupils do not miss important teaching because they are out of class.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- In a very short time, the headteacher has led many improvements to important aspects of the school, such as pupils' behaviour. This has led to quicker transitions from one activity to another, so learning time is not lost. The climate is increasingly one in which teaching and positive behaviour flourish. With the newly appointed deputy head, she is beginning to form an effective team.
- School self-evaluation is accurate and development planning well thought out so the right changes are being made in the right order of importance. The teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) is now more effective, and a new approach to teaching grammar, punctuation and spelling is being implemented. The pace and momentum of further and future improvement is clearly mapped out.
- Staff have nothing but praise for the headteacher. The inspector was given a list of 49 improvements she has made, not all popular with staff, like the immediate banning of hot drinks around the school while pupils are on site! Nonetheless, they say the school is very well run and they see the benefits to the school.
- Teaching is well led. The headteacher gave this very high priority and has led staff discussion of what constitutes effective high quality teaching. As a result, new and established staff have 'gelled' very quickly into an effective team.
- The quality of teaching is regularly monitored, clearly focussed on an aspect of the new teaching policy, and this information is used to offer feedback to individuals and to shape the direction of future staff training.
- Assessment data is used effectively. Usefully, the whole staff share thoughts and ideas about how best to support any pupils falling behind, and act on the decisions made.
- The school is working well towards a new approach to assessment with the intention of making changes at half term. Staff are sharing ideas with their peers in other consortium schools in order to create a consistent approach. In the meantime, staff base assessment on the 'key questions' they ask at the start of units of work.
- Subject leaders are effective, bringing enthusiasm, experience and expertise to their roles. With curriculum and staff changes, the school is sensibly reviewing roles and responsibilities.
- The management of teachers' performance is effective, and teachers see clearly how their targets help them develop and feed into the whole school improvement. Plans exist to extend this system to learning support assistants.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and tailored closely to pupils' needs. For example, any pupil needing it is given additional practice to master a particular skill. Visits or visitors are used well to generate interest and curiosity at the beginning of a new unit of work. An awareness of structures like 'democracy' and values such as 'tolerance' are built into everyday teaching, preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The few pupils eligible for pupil premium funding benefit because they make good progress in reading and writing. It is used less effectively to raise achievement in mathematics.
- Additional sports funding is used well. The range of activities and level of participation have increased. Pupils' enthusiasm is strong and they have a good understanding of how physical exercise can increase both their physical and mental well-being. An audit of staff skills led to staff training by sports specialists but, as yet, no formal information has been collected about the impact.
- Parents say they like that the headteacher opens the door nearly every morning, that she is there and available if you want to speak to her.

- On many levels, work with the local consortium of schools is effective. For example, expertise of high school physical education specialists has been beneficial to pupils and staff alike.
- The school has continued to be rated 'good' so local authority involvement has been minimal. With the change in leadership, greater involvement is planned, for example in raising standards in mathematics.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are well led and managed. Individual expertise is used effectively, such as in the personnel committee. They plan meticulously, for example so that finances are carefully controlled and focussed on improving the quality of education. Governors understand information about how pupils are doing, and how additional pupil premium and sports funds are spent, and why. They have broad knowledge of the impact of spending. This helps them to support staff and hold them to account for the school's performance. They have begun to contribute more to school self-evaluation and long-term planning, and are shortly to have discussions about assessment, the curriculum and how British values are promoted. Governors have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching, the role of performance management and how pay will link to performance. They are prepared to take difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions in the best interests of the pupils. They carry out their legal duties effectively, including those related to safeguarding.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good because the new behaviour policy is making a positive difference and the vast majority of pupils understand and conform. Pupils who misbehave are given every opportunity to rectify the situation. Any exclusions are for appropriate reasons.
- Pupils say that bullying is very rare. They have every confidence that school staff will listen to them should they have concerns, and not tolerate any form of harassment.
- Pupils respond very positively to the different rewards, including house points, and enjoy sharing their achievements in assembly. They are proud of their school and look after equipment well.
- Attitudes to learning are good and pupils come to lessons ready to learn. They listen to staff attentively, follow instructions closely, and most contribute enthusiastically. Staff care for pupils well, for example the support for emotional well-being at difficult times.
- Pupils say that they know and understand how they are expected to behave in school and on visits, and how the school community works much better if everyone conforms. They understand that it is important to be tolerant and respectful of others.
- Pupils are compassionate and caring. For example, they recognise that we are very fortunate and that many people in other places have very little. They have aspirations, many hoping to go on to university and recognising the importance of a good school education, and their own part in bringing that about.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are taught to be aware of their own safety, and that of those around them, on and off the school site. They understand how to stay safe when using the internet, and the potential risks. Visitors are checked to ensure pupils and staff remain safe.
- Attendance is average and is rising. By thoroughly analysing information, the headteacher has recognised that more than half of the small number of pupils with below average attendance are making less progress than pupils who attend better, and is beginning to work with their parents.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Weekly assemblies are led by the local church and other faiths are explored during events and lessons. Some classes have a 'thought for the day.' The new curriculum includes emphasis on creativity and teaches key concepts such as 'democracy.' Pupils take pleasure and pride from sharing their interests and hobbies with the school community.

**The quality of teaching****is good**

- Teaching is good despite the relatively high number of staff changes recently because, as soon as she arrived, the headteacher worked with staff to draw up a 'teaching and learning policy' which listed expectations for every lesson. Staff have worked successfully to implement most aspects of this.
- Teachers use information about what pupils already know and can do to plan lessons that are neither too easy nor too hard. They routinely evaluate their lessons and modify the next accordingly.
- The clear behaviour guidelines mean that pupils understand what is expected and work with teachers and learning support assistants in an atmosphere of mutual respect and awareness that this is 'learning time'.
- Pupils' presentation of their work is generally good and improved recently because staff expectations are higher and more consistently reinforced. Past workbooks show both a good range of activities and tasks of increasing difficulty.
- Basic literacy and numeracy skills are taught well, but pupils have too few opportunities to apply what they have learnt in numeracy to new problems.
- Marking is used with increasing effectiveness as staff concentrate on offering clear guidance to pupils on how to improve.
- Homework is effective in both practising and extending work done in school. Pupils particularly like the more open-ended questions which enable them to decide for themselves how to respond.
- Teachers start most lessons with a 'learning question' to provoke pupils' interest and check their progress towards understanding it at the end with a very suitable question such as, 'What have you learnt today?'
- Other questioning techniques are less effective. While teachers give good levels of attention to most pupils, they tend to take answers from those who offer, so the understanding of more reticent pupils is not checked. When asked a question, pupils are not always given the thinking time they need before the teacher moves on. Rarely do teachers respond to pupils' answers with a second question to clarify or extend what they have said.
- Learning support assistants are very effective when working alongside teachers, supporting individual pupils and when leading groups in subjects in which their training has been sufficient, such as phonics.
- Although the teaching and learning policy 'non-negotiables' are agreed by all staff, some are used inconsistently so impact is lost. For example, while a school aim is to encourage pupils to use resources such as their 'learning mats' and the information displayed on classroom walls to help themselves to learn, teachers rarely check that they do. This makes them too dependent on adults and at times their progress slows.

**The achievement of pupils****is good**

- Through the school, pupils make good progress in reading because skills are taught methodically and practised regularly, both in school and at home. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average. In 2013, the school's results were in the top fifth nationally. This was also true in 2012. Results in 2014 are similar; nearly everyone reached the expected standard and four in every ten exceeded it.
- Writing is usually of a similarly high standard, but in 2013 pupils' key skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling were very low, with less than half the pupils in Year 6 reaching the expected Level 4. Since then, the school has begun teaching these skills in short, focussed sessions. This has been very effective and, in 2014, the proportion reaching Level 4 nearly doubled.

- Over time, standards tend to be lower in mathematics than in either reading or writing. This is largely because, while pupils are taught skills and techniques, they are not then given enough opportunities to practise using them to solve different problems that they may, for instance, meet in everyday life.
- The most able pupils do well, particularly in reading and writing. Here, their skills are developed better than in mathematics where they have too few opportunities to apply what they know to solve everyday problems. The school is good at recognising pupils' individual attributes early, and providing opportunities for them to excel.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of the way letters link to the sounds they represent (phonics) because the system used has been re-organised. Pupils now learn in smaller groups with pupils of similar ability which staff find more effective. As a result, while the proportion reaching the expected level in the Year 1 national screening in 2014 was a little below the national average, a much larger proportion are on track to meet it in 2015.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their different starting points because the support they receive from teachers and learning support assistants strikes the right balance; enabling them to succeed in tasks while challenging them to think for themselves. Parents spoken to during the inspection said they, '...cannot speak highly enough,' of the attention to detail of staff supporting their children.
- There were not enough Year 6 pupils in 2014 known to be eligible for pupil premium funding to comment on their attainment without the risk of identifying individuals. Information provided by the school about the progress of these pupils in all year groups shows that they make good progress and are catching up in reading and writing. In mathematics, progress is slower because, when pupils are taken out of lessons for extra help, the content of the help is not matched closely enough to the pupil's needs and these sessions often happen when important teaching is taking place in the classroom.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and they contribute well to their own learning by paying attention to staff and trying their best.
- Parents say that the school looks to find each pupil's skills and attributes, for example in music or sports, and then works to encourage them.

### **The early years provision** is good

- Over the last few years, data show that children start in Reception with skills and experiences which, overall, are typically seen at that age. Children's understanding of number is seen by the school as a strength.
- The present Reception class have settled quickly and are demonstrating many positive attributes; they listen attentively, answer questions thoughtfully and understand that they need to take turns when working in a group.
- Teaching is good. Already staff know each child well, and often use the child's interests as a starting point for their learning, so the child is immediately curious and keen to find out. A great deal is done before children start to ensure they make a very smooth transition.
- Children achieve well. Their independence, a key skill the school is trying to develop, is good. After three mornings in the Reception Class, children have already mastered the skill of dressing for the outdoors in the very effective but rather cumbersome dungarees. Once outside, children are comfortable and confident enough to work together and follow their own interests. For example, they dismantled a 'cafe' and created their own 'builder's yard'.
- Leadership and management of Early Years are good. Staff form a very effective team, using their

complementary skills effectively to offer good quality learning in an interesting environment, inside and outside. Each day, children are surrounded by a good variety of activities that successfully meet the aim to 'grab' their interest and promote their well-being.

- There have been inconsistencies in assessments of children's progress in the past. This has been resolved with the help of the local authority, so current data is reliable.



## 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>	114726
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	448442

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	125
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Catherine Gransden
<b>Headteacher</b>	Shelley Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 November 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01787 460237
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