

Dale Hall Community Primary School

Dale Hall Lane, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 4LX

Inspection dates	3–4 March 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Dale Hall has improved since the previous inspection. It is highly regarded by parents and pupils, who are enthusiastic about recent changes.
- School leaders, including governors, know their school well and have made important changes. They drive the school forward with energy and determination.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and phase leaders support and challenge teachers, who themselves form an effective team. As a result, the quality of teaching is consistently good.
- Teachers are well supported by skilled teaching assistants, academic mentors and a sports coach.
- The curriculum includes interesting topics that engage pupils' interest. As a result, pupils produce much high-quality work.
- Pupils make good progress and are well prepared for secondary school.
- Staff have developed a very positive ethos in which pupils feel valued. Pupils know their views will be listened to as they help shape their school.
- Behaviour for learning is very strong; pupils are resilient learners, eager to contribute, attentive, self-directed and curious to learn more.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and in the playground.
- Pupils say they feel safe and happy at school, and that they are well cared for.
- Children arrive in the early years inquisitive and ready to learn. They make good progress and enter Year 1 well prepared for their next stage.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Questions are not always sufficiently probing for staff to help the most-able pupils improve.
- Work is not always pitched at the correct level of difficulty for the most-able pupils.
- The progress of pupils with special educational needs or disability is not accurately checked, so the school does not know how well the extra help given to these pupils is working.
- The school does not rigorously check and act upon the low attendance of a small minority of pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the attainment of the most-able pupils further by ensuring that:
 - adults use suitable approaches to build on what these pupils already know in order to help them deepen their understanding
 - the activities they are given are always suitably challenging.
- Monitor the progress of pupils with special educational needs or disability more accurately to ensure that the support provided is beneficial to the outcomes for these pupils.
- Check the attendance of persistent absentees more rigorously and seek ways to intervene more effectively to significantly reduce their unapproved absences.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Governors, staff, parents and pupils all say that the headteacher is the catalyst for the many improvements made to the school in the recent past. They share her ambition for the school.
- The staff share the school's vision and combine to form a strong team. All staff responding to the questionnaire agree that the school culture encourages calm, orderly conduct, and is aspirational for all pupils. Pupils are continually encouraged to challenge themselves.
- The clear ethos is the foundation upon which important improvements are built. The school successfully meets its aim of 'learning together to challenge and achieve'. All pupils are given the opportunity to thrive in the school, and much is done to recognise and foster each individual's particular attributes.
- Senior leaders and governors regularly monitor the work of the school. The headteacher's analytical approach ensures that the school's leaders identify and make the improvements essential to moving the school forward.
- School improvement planning is based on clear action plans which outline precisely what needs doing, and by when, to ensure that actions are carried out in a timely fashion.
- Leaders' clear arrangements for checking on the quality of teaching accurately identify how teachers and teaching assistants can improve. Staff benefit from training matched closely to their needs, and rigorous performance management drives improvements in teaching and learning. All staff responding to the survey feel that school leaders do all they can to see staff are motivated, respected and effective.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a very effective team with complementary skills. Phase leaders ensure consistency between classes and years, an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Subject leaders' good knowledge and expertise are used very effectively. They are given the time necessary to check for themselves the quality of teaching and standards. As a result they are well informed and make accurate recommendations for improvements.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs or disability is good. Many improvements have been introduced. For example, class teachers are now much more accountable for their progress. However, the school does not yet have a suitable way of checking the extent to which their progress improves over time.
- The curriculum is imaginatively presented to enthuse all pupils, fuel their appetite for learning, and promote their personal and academic development. For example, writing tasks have been carefully selected in a range of subjects, in addition to English, that appeal to boys more than in the past, without losing the interest of girls. Visits and visitors are organised on the basis that they help deepen pupils' understanding. The level of pupil participation in clubs is good.
- Pupils' preparation for life in modern Britain is good. Pupils know that staff listen and respond to their views. Pupils' self-confidence grows when they take on responsibility, their self-knowledge deepening from knowing themselves better as learners. Pupils appreciate the many opportunities that they are given to express their views towards decision making, for example when new staff are appointed.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in the curriculum and assemblies. Pupils are generous in praise of one another because they are brought up to recognise and respect each other's attributes. They take part in charitable activities, for example, dressing up for World Book Day and raising funds to buy books for those less fortunate than themselves.
- Leaders effectively target the use of the pupil premium funding where it is most needed. Any pupils struggling academically receive high-quality extra help from skilled mentors. Provision of breakfast is used well to encourage punctuality, and gives pupils an opportunity to develop social skills and enables them to start the day positively.
- The primary schools sports funding is used very effectively. All pupils benefit from well-coached lessons, so their skills and techniques develop fully. The wide range of activities gives pupils many opportunities to participate. They do so enthusiastically, and understand the part exercise plays in healthy living. Staff benefit too, because they learn new skills and then practise them in their own teaching.
- The local authority supports the school well and has been instrumental in the improvements made since the previous inspection.
- The school works closely with other local schools, to the benefit of pupils and staff. Pupils regularly learn and compete with those from nearby schools. Staff share ideas and learn from one another; for example, comparing how they are using the new approach to assessing pupils' progress.

- The partnership with parents is strong; the overwhelming majority of parents responding to the online survey would recommend the school to another parent. Parents say that they like the growing number of opportunities to be involved, and occasions when they can learn alongside their children. While they are very positive about the changes introduced, some say that they feel too much is asked of younger pupils.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The highly effective governing body uses each individual governor’s expertise and experience to the benefit of the school.
 - Governors’ high expectations of themselves mean they constantly strive to improve. For example, they increasingly visit the school to see and judge for themselves the changes they hear about from staff. As a result, they have an accurate view of the school’s strengths and those areas that need to improve.
 - Governors work closely with the headteacher and staff to help maintain the strong impetus of improvement. They closely analyse the progress of pupils to ensure that they do well, and to question and challenge leaders when they do not.
 - Governors rigorously manage the performance of staff, including teachers. They ensure that decisions about pay increases are well informed by a good range of evidence.
 - Oversight of the school’s finances, including the use of additional funding, is good. Governors help ensure good value for money is achieved.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The policy and procedures are thorough and known and understood by staff. Training in how to keep pupils safe is up to date. The school is a safe place for pupils and staff. Parents are involved in learning with their children about areas such as e-safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is good. Information such as the school’s own regular and rigorous checks on teaching shows that teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
- Staff form an effective team. Strong, positive relationships between staff ensure that feedback and advice are acted upon. Staff share ideas and expertise to their mutual benefit.
- Staff are excellent role models, consistently demonstrating the behaviour expected of pupils. Clear rules and routines for pupils’ behaviour, consistently implemented by all staff, ensure that the school is orderly.
- Teachers’ good subject knowledge promotes clarity in learning, for example, through finding solutions to help if a pupil is struggling to understand. In particular, very good use is made of particularly strong subject expertise to teach the more advanced curriculum in the higher classes.
- Teachers check their pupils’ understanding regularly, and make good use of this information when planning their lessons. Questioning is generally used skilfully, but at times does not promote the learning of the most-able pupils well enough.
- Teachers encourage pupils to be reflective as learners, and take responsibility for the progress they are making. For example, pupils think very carefully when selecting from a range of tasks, and generally have sensible reasons for their choice. However, some of the activities designed for the most able do not sufficiently challenge them.
- Teachers deploy their teaching assistants and academic mentors well. These staff make a positive contribution to learning, whether giving extra help to a small group or supporting learning more generally in the classroom. Sports coaching develops pupils’ skills well and extends their knowledge of techniques.
- Reading is taught successfully. Early reading skills, including phonics (the link between letters and the sounds they make), are taught and then practised frequently. Teachers have a thorough understanding of the principles of good phonics teaching because they have been trained well.
- Writing, too, is taught effectively. Once pupils have been taught an aspect of grammar or punctuation, they take advantage of good opportunities to use and apply it in an interesting way, often in another subject.
- Mathematics is taught well. The calculation policy is now consistent throughout the school, so pupils’ understanding is built from year to year, an important improvement since the previous inspection.
- Through activities such as discussion, pupils’ speaking and listening skills develop well. They express themselves clearly, for example when talking about their learning, and listen attentively to one another.

- Pupils' work books are presented well because teachers' expectations are very clear, and pupils themselves are proud of their work.
- Teachers set homework that effectively consolidates learning in school. In addition, some activities give pupils opportunities to use their imagination and present their work in a way that suits them. Pupils say that they enjoy these tasks, and the work they produce is often of very high quality.
- Parents are full of praise for teachers, and the clear communication with them. Nearly every parent responding to the online survey said that they felt their children are taught well and make good progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to the online survey feel that their children are happy in school.
- The school's aspirational approach promotes achievement because it encourages pupils to try their best in everything they do. High regard is given to promoting healthy lifestyles through physical activity.
- Pupils embrace the notion of personal challenge very enthusiastically. They discuss which attributes they need for a particular task, such as being 'willing to have a go'. They recognise that they have characteristics such as 'curiosity' and 'concentration', and sometimes point out when a classmate uses one. Over time, they develop a good understanding of how to be successful learners, and understand that they should be the strongest advocates of their own learning. For example, in one group, inspectors heard a pupil say, 'No, don't tell me, I'll have another go and see if I'm right'. In another group, a pupil said, 'Why don't we all just work together, so we don't disagree?'.
- Pupils have a strong sense of democracy because they see Dale Hall as their school. They know staff are interested in their views, and they are very happy to take opportunities to fill the many varied roles, including play leaders and house- and team captains.
- Pupils have a very clear understanding of how to keep safe. They are fully involved in encouraging each other to be aware of safety issues. Junior road safety officers organise events, for example, to promote wearing reflective clothing on winter days, and give regular tips such as, 'If you can't see the driver, the driver can't see you'. Each class has a trained pupil e-safety officer, someone they can go to for advice.
- Staff know their pupils well and do much to meet their very differing needs. Before school and at lunchtime, very suitable activities promote positive social skills to those struggling to build relationships.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school, and all parents responding to the online survey agreed. Pupils are very confident that adults in school will listen if they are worried. They say that there is very little bullying, and that it is always dealt with quickly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons, they pay attention to staff and follow instructions. Pupils say that they like the new behaviour code because it makes clear what is expected of them. One pupil, typical of many, said, 'We all know the rewards for doing the right thing, and the punishment if we misbehave, so we all behave and we get more done in our lessons'.
- Attendance overall is a little above average. The school has been innovative, for example, in introducing a breakfast club to encourage better attendance. This has made a positive impact. However, there remains a small proportion of pupils who regularly miss school, and whose attendance is not monitored rigorously enough for effective action to be taken. As a result, their academic and personal development suffers.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching have been eradicated, so pupils overall make good or better progress in all year groups and classes.
- In 2015, nearly every Year 6 pupil reached or exceeded the expected standard in reading, writing (including grammar, punctuation and spelling) and mathematics. The proportion reaching higher levels was above the national average in writing and mathematics, and well above in reading. The picture was similar at the end of Year 2; nearly every pupil reached the expected standard, and many exceeded it.

- The progress these pupils had made over the last four years was similar to the national average. The proportion making faster progress, while high in reading, was similar to the national picture in mathematics and below that in writing. This is because, while the quality of teaching is now good, it has not been consistent over time.
- The school's checks on progress and the quality of work in pupils' books show that pupils currently in the school are making good progress overall in English and mathematics, and that standards in these subjects are consequently rising further. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, largely because all teachers share high expectations for their pupils.
- Phonics is taught well and pupils make good progress. School information and inspection evidence indicate that results this year will continue to be above the national average. Pupils use their phonics knowledge routinely in their everyday work, and develop a good understanding of how to apply it.
- The small proportion of disadvantaged pupils generally make similar progress to their peers. These pupils usually reach the standard expected of their age for all pupils nationally. However, some of them have below-average attendance and do not do as well. Some others also have special educational needs and make good progress from their lower starting points, but do not always catch up.
- The quality of work in the books of pupils with special educational needs or disability suggests that these pupils also make good progress from their differing starting points.
- The small but growing proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress generally because they settle quickly and are given good support. Tasks, too, meet each pupil's particular needs. However, again, the progress of a few pupils is adversely affected by low attendance.
- The most-able pupils are not always set work that fully meets their needs, because some of the activities they choose or are given are not sufficiently difficult to challenge their ability.
- In their personal development, attitudes to learning and academic standards, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.

Early years provision

is good

- Most children enter Reception with skills and knowledge above those typical for their age. In particular, they are 'school-ready', possessing the attributes to make the most of school life.
- Children's progress in the Reception Year is generally at a good pace and they are well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1. Over the last few years, the proportion reaching a good level of development has increased year on year. The school's checks and inspection evidence suggest that this will rise further to about three quarters this year, well above last year's national average.
- Children have a thirst for learning. Each morning they arrive keen and eager, full of curiosity to see what interesting and varied activities their teachers have planned for them.
- Children respond very well to the high expectations of staff. Each activity planned will include an opportunity for children to take it further, if they wish. 'Challenge yourself' is a phrase heard often. Staff quickly recognise children doing well, and suggest a way to develop their learning further.
- Children's behaviour is good. They work cooperatively, share and play well together. They recognise each other's achievements, and will tell an adult when a friend has done something particularly well. Equally, they spontaneously help anyone struggling with a task. They understand right from wrong and always try their best. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Children achieve well because the planning of activities is based on clear and accurate assessments of each child's needs. As a result, all groups of children do well. Staff take every opportunity to promote children's basic skills. For example, early reading skills such as phonics are taught well and then practised through the day's other activities. Learning journals show good progression in a wide range of activities, particularly in writing and number skills.
- Teamwork among staff is strong. They share expertise and know their children well. The teaching methods and approaches they use are highly suitable for these children. Staff are vigilant; Reception children are safe and well cared for.
- Although the school draws children from many settings, links are good so transition into Reception is smooth. Parents say that their children settle quickly, and they have the information they need.
- Transition to Year 1 is seamless. Children yet to reach a good level of development are particularly well catered for, with activities designed to help them settle and catch up.

- Leadership is good. Checks are made to see all children regularly experience all areas of learning. Shortcomings in Reception were quickly recognised. Some changes made immediately have made a positive impact, for example addressing the imbalance between activities children choose for themselves and those led by staff. Plans exist to improve the outdoor provision so that it enables children to have continuous access to a full curriculum, particularly to enhance their physical development. In the meantime, through physical education lessons, the school does all it can to compensate. Additional funding is used effectively so disadvantaged children do well.

School details

Unique reference number	124668
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10009141

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	409
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Gage
Headteacher	Anna Ledger
Telephone number	01473 251651
Website	www.dalehall.suffolk.sch.uk
Email address	admin@dalehall.suffolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 March 2014

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Each year group is taught in two classes.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is below average.
- In 2015, the school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher is new to the school.
- The school runs a daily breakfast club for pupils thought to benefit from this extra care.
- An independent breakfast club also meets daily at the school. This will be subject to a separate inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classrooms, some with the headteacher or other members of the leadership team. In addition, inspectors observed small groups of pupils being taught.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors attended assemblies and observed pupils as they moved around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders, teachers and governors. The inspectors also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors met with pupils to discuss their experiences at school.
- The views of 73 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspectors also held informal discussions with parents. The inspectors also took account of the questionnaire responses from 32 members of staff.
- The inspectors looked at a range of school documents and information, including the school development plan, checks on the quality of teaching, curriculum plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body, and pupils' behaviour and attendance records. The inspectors also looked at arrangements and records for safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Robert Greatrex, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Ashley Best-White	Ofsted Inspector
James Dyke	Ofsted Inspector

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