

# Dymchurch Primary School

New Hall Close, Dymchurch, Romney Marsh, Kent TN29 0LE

## Inspection dates

19–20 June 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning has declined since the last inspection. Some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
- Until recently, academy trust leaders have not acted fast enough to address school weaknesses. They have not held senior leaders to account with sufficient rigour.
- Too many pupils are not working at the standard expected for their age.
- Provision in the early years does not take enough account of children's individual needs and interests to help them make rapid progress.
- Teaching is not consistently good. There are inconsistencies in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers do not take enough account of pupils' previous learning.
- Teachers do not consistently challenge the most able pupils. Not enough pupils reach the higher standards that they are capable of.
- Some middle leaders do not have a clear enough understanding of their roles or contribute fully to school improvement.
- Current leaders' good work to improve the quality of teaching and learning has not had enough time to impact fully on current pupils' achievement.

### The school has the following strengths

- The interim chief executive officer has an accurate understanding of the school's weaknesses. In a very short time she has brought about significant improvement.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is improving.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders are alert and responsive to any concerns about pupils, and vulnerable pupils are supported well.
- Provision to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is effective.
- The curriculum provides a broad range of opportunities and experiences. As a result, pupils are keen to learn.
- Leaders' improvement plans identify the right priorities and are aspirational. The appointment of a new executive headteacher has strengthened leadership capacity.

## Full report

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that:
  - the school’s senior leaders frequently check and hold to account the work of school leaders to secure rapid and sustained improvements
  - leaders continue to regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning and use this information to improve teaching
  - leaders routinely check that teaching precisely targets pupils who have fallen behind so that they catch up quickly
  - the skills of middle leaders are sufficiently developed so that they are consistently effective and can contribute fully to school improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and accelerate pupils’ progress in all key stages, by ensuring that:
  - teachers develop secure subject knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics so that more pupils acquire the level of understanding that is expected for their age
  - there is a consistent approach to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics so that pupils’ skills are systematically developed
  - teachers appropriately challenge all pupils, including the most able
  - pupils develop the necessary strategies to work independently, without over-reliance on teachers’ support
  - teachers use the school’s assessment systems effectively to help them plan pupils’ next steps in learning.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- There have been significant changes to leadership since the previous inspection, both at trust level and within the school. This has led to inconsistencies in the quality of leadership and management. The multi-academy trust (MAT) has not been swift enough in providing the school with the structured support that it needed.
- The recently designated interim chief executive officer for the MAT has been quick to allocate high-quality support for the school. She has already improved the school significantly and is ably supported by the school's interim headteacher. Accurate priorities for improvement have been identified. The school's detailed action plan is improving pupils' achievement. However, there has not been enough time for leaders' actions to raise standards sufficiently for current pupils.
- In the past, leaders have not monitored the quality of teaching and learning well enough. Targets for professional development have not previously been precise enough to enable teachers to improve their practice effectively. This has led to some pupils making weak progress and not achieving the expectations for their age. However, the new leaders have implemented more rigorous monitoring to improve teaching and learning.
- Not all middle leaders are able to effectively support the interim headteacher in her endeavours to make rapid improvements. This is because, in the past, they have not been sufficiently equipped with the appropriate skills and expertise. Some leaders do not have a clear enough understanding about the ways in which to monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility. As a result, some leaders lack insight into the specific actions that are required to make improvements.
- Leaders have rightly introduced a new system of assessment to ensure that teachers' assessment of pupils' progress and subsequent next steps are correct and reliable. This system is at the early stages of development.
- A new executive headteacher has been appointed to join the school in September 2018. She is already working strategically with interim school leaders, which has added additional stability to the school and strengthened leadership. The executive headteacher designate has ensured that plans for improvement are accurate and aspirational and has demonstrated strong capacity to sustain further improvements.
- Rates of absence and persistent absence have been high in previous years. Leaders have recently implemented a range of strategies to improve pupils' attendance. Their work is already showing an impact. Pupils' attendance has improved and is now much closer to the national average.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress because the school provides strong provision and nurture. Leaders monitor the progress of this group of pupils carefully to ensure that they receive the support that is required.
- Leaders make good use of the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Current disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points.

- The sports leader is enthusiastic about providing a curriculum that promotes an active and healthy lifestyle. Her good leadership ensures that the school's spending of the sport premium funding is highly effective. The school has achieved the sports Gold Kite Mark for the third year running.
- The curriculum provides a broad range of interesting and exciting learning experiences for pupils. Around the school, vibrant and imaginative displays demonstrate examples of pupils' work across the curriculum. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 attended a careers fair, where they were able to interview a wide variety of successful career people, such as a solicitor, a football coach and an author. This has helped raise pupils' aspirations for the future.

### **Governance of the school**

- This year, there have been many changes to the governance of the school. New members joining the academy council have brought significant skill and expertise to the group and instilled a new level of rigour and sense of urgency for school improvement.
- Members of the academy council take their responsibilities seriously. They have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development. They hold leaders to account to ensure that weaknesses in pupils' skills are effectively targeted.
- The academy councillors are passionate about the school and ambitious for the future of the pupils. They are determined and confident that the achievement of pupils will improve quickly.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Records of recruitment procedures are regularly checked by the academy council's safeguarding leader to ensure that they meet statutory requirements.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' welfare is a priority and they are vigilant in their work to keep pupils safe. Leaders know their pupils well and processes to support vulnerable pupils are effective. The family liaison officer provides additional support for families who are experiencing difficult circumstances. Some parents and carers expressed how grateful they were for the help and assistance that the family liaison officer provides for them.
- Staff receive regular training in how to keep pupils safe. As a result, they are confident and quick to follow the school's safeguarding procedures if they have concerns. Pupils talk about the many ways the school teaches them to stay safe, including online. For example, pupils have a good understanding of road safety, cyber bullying, and 'stranger danger'.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- The past legacy of weak teaching, coupled with inconsistent senior leadership, has led to many pupils falling behind.

- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good and, consequently, the rate of pupils' learning is too variable. Teachers do not always make effective use of assessment to inform their teaching so that it accurately matches pupils' next steps to their needs. As a result, standards for some pupils are too low.
- When teaching is most effective, pupils' misconceptions are identified and addressed swiftly by teachers. At other times, teachers do not recognise quickly enough when pupils understand and are ready to move on. Some pupils have not been taught the necessary strategies to work well independently and some are too reliant on support from the teacher. This slows the rate at which some pupils could be learning.
- Teachers do not consistently provide sufficient challenge for the most able pupils because some teachers have low expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving. Pupils are not given sufficient time to develop their ideas, deepen their understanding and apply their skills. This slows their progress.
- When writing is taught well, teachers ensure that pupils build upon their skills systematically. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils rise to the challenge, applying themselves diligently to their learning. Teachers provide pupils with lots of opportunities to edit and improve their work to produce high quality writing. However, the teaching of writing is too variable. Some teachers do not have strong enough subject knowledge to ensure that pupils produce the quality of writing that they are capable of. Other teachers do not ensure that pupils are taught the basic skills needed to write a structured, grammatically accurate sentence.
- The teaching of reading is similarly inconsistent. Some teachers ensure that books are well matched to pupils' ability so that the right amount of challenge is provided. This enables pupils to apply the skills and strategies they have been taught, reading with increasing fluency and with a good level of comprehension. However, some teachers do not read often enough with pupils and do not routinely check on the quality and frequency of pupils' reading. This results in some pupils making slower progress.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved recently, although there remain some inconsistencies. Pupils often have a clear understanding about the concept they are learning and develop their knowledge through well-planned tasks and appropriate resources. Pupils have regular opportunities to practise their skills through solving problems and reasoning about number. As a result, some pupils' progress is now more rapid and some are beginning to gain the knowledge expected for their age. However, teachers do not always challenge pupils sufficiently, which leads to variable rates of progress for pupils from class to class.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are happy at school and keen to learn. Most pupils are confident to talk to adults and willingly discuss their work. Leaders and teachers encourage pupils to be self-assured and have positive attitudes to their learning.
- Pupils report that they feel safe in school. They understand what bullying is and state

that it rarely happens. They are confident that teachers will deal with any issues, should they arise. Pupils care for each other and value the friendships they have.

- Provision for pupils' social and emotional well-being is strong. The work of the family liaison officer is highly effective in supporting the most vulnerable pupils. The vast majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, felt that their children were well looked after at school.
- Pupils understand the importance of staying fit and leading a healthy lifestyle. They talked about the many opportunities they get to exercise, including the 'golden mile' that pupils are able to walk or run on most days.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite and respectful towards their classmates, adults and visitors to the school.
- In the majority of classes, pupils' behaviour is good and they apply themselves positively to their learning. This is because in these classes teachers have high expectations. In a small minority of classes there is occasional off-task behaviour or low-level disruption. This occurs when work is too easy, or teaching does not suitably engage pupils in their learning.
- Behaviour around the school and during playtime is good. Pupils enjoy playing with the equipment at lunchtime but say that they would also like access to equipment during morning playtime. Pupils play nicely together. Play leaders responsibly take the lead in activities and teach their classmates the rules of new games.
- The family liaison officer drives the school mini-bus every morning to collect pupils who live the furthest from the school. This has contributed to the improvement of attendance and the decline of persistent absence this year.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Weak teaching over time has meant that some pupils have not made the progress they needed to. Consequently, pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6 has been lower than that seen nationally for the past two years.
- In 2017, pupils' progress in Year 6 was significantly below national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, considerably fewer pupils reached the expected standards for their age, compared to other pupils nationally.
- Significantly more Year 6 pupils reached the expected standard in 2017 in writing than they did in the previous year. However, achievement still remained lower than the national average. Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks indicates that many pupils are currently working at a standard that is too low for their age. This is because the quality of teaching is not consistently good.
- The achievement of the most able pupils is not yet strong enough. In 2017, the proportion of Year 6 pupils that exceeded age-related expectations was significantly lower than national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because teachers do not always challenge this group of pupils sufficiently.
- Phonics is taught well in key stage 1. The proportion of pupils who met the expected

standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 has been broadly in line with the national average for the past two years. Pupils who read with inspectors used many phonics strategies to read and sound out unknown words. This enabled them to read clearly and fluently.

- In 2017, Year 2 pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was at or above the national averages. A higher-than-average proportion of pupils exceeded the expectations for their age. However, the school's assessment information, and work in pupils' books, indicates that achievement for some current pupils is not strong in key stage 1. Leaders are addressing this issue and have introduced a new assessment system to support teachers in planning effectively for pupils' next steps.
- Leaders track pupils' progress regularly. School assessment information indicates that most pupils are now making better progress. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress, relative to their starting points. Staff are effectively deployed to support this group of pupils and a wide variety of interventions are in place to further supplement the individual needs of pupils.
- Provision for disadvantaged pupils ensures that they achieve well. Leaders frequently monitor the progress of this group of pupils to make sure that they do not fall behind. School assessment information indicates that current disadvantaged pupils are making good progress. Further evidence of this was seen in pupils' workbooks.

### Early years provision

### Requires improvement

- Early years provision requires improvement because the quality of teaching and learning is not consistently good. Most children enter the Reception Year with knowledge and skills that are broadly typical for their age. However, for the last two years fewer children have achieved a good level of development than the national average. The proportion of children achieving the early learning goals in reading, writing and mathematics was lower than that seen nationally.
- Outcomes for current children in the early years are improving and more children are now working at the expected standard. However, some children are not making fast enough progress in reading, writing and number from their starting points and only a very small percentage of children are working above what is typically expected. This is because teaching is not precise enough to pinpoint exactly what children need to do to make strong progress.
- Disadvantaged children and those children who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress, relative to their starting points. Some disadvantaged children make better progress than their classmates. This is because leaders regularly monitor the effectiveness of interventions to check that these children are achieving well.
- The school's assessment information indicates that the achievement of boys is significantly below that of girls. This is because, too often, provision is the same for all children and not enough time is given to allowing children to follow their own interests.
- The early years leader has a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in Reception. An action plan to improve key priorities, such as the inconsistency between the achievement of girls and boys, was recently implemented. However, the action plan has had limited impact because it was not evaluated with sufficient rigour.



- The early years leader ensures that training opportunities, which carefully target the setting's priorities, provide good support and development for staff.
- Staff know the children well and are kind and nurturing in their manner. As a result, children are happy and confident to explore the setting and investigate the many learning experiences planned for them.
- The learning environment is bright and stimulating. The organisation of the classroom provides children with distinct areas of learning, with writing permeating every area. The classroom design helpfully encourages children to work independently.
- Effective procedures are in place to ensure that children are kept safe. Relationships between children and adults are good. Children know that they can talk to adults if something is worrying them or if they need help.



## School details

Unique reference number	142347
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10046696

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	190
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Interim chief executive officer	Hayley Spedding
Interim headteacher	Alice Witty
Telephone number	01303 872377
Website	<a href="http://www.dymchurch.kent.sch.uk">www.dymchurch.kent.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:headteacher@dymchurch.kent.sch.uk">headteacher@dymchurch.kent.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	16–17 July 2013

## Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those who have an education, health and care plan, is lower than the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards of 2017, which are the minimum requirement for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2015, 2016 and 2017.
- The school is currently led by an interim headteacher. A new executive headteacher has been appointed to join the school in September 2018. She is already currently working with interim leaders at the school. The interim chief executive officer from the MAT is currently providing a high level of support to the school.

- The school is sponsored by The Village Academy. This was the first inspection of the school since it joined The Village Academy Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) in October 2015. Dymchurch is one of six primary schools in the trust. The school has an academy council, which forms the local governance level within the MAT. The MAT delegates certain functions to the academy council. The predecessor school was judged to be good in July 2013.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes, some jointly with senior leaders.
- In addition to discussions with parents, 31 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were taken into account, including 14 free-text comments.
- A range of the school's documentation was scrutinised to gather information on: leaders' evaluation of the school's performance; the behaviour and safety of pupils; safeguarding; the progress and attainment of pupils; and the leadership of the curriculum.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's website to evaluate the quality of information for parents and whether the school meets statutory publishing requirements.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils to gather their views and heard them read.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, representatives from the academy council and the interim chief executive officer from the MAT.

## Inspection team

Luisa Gould, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Meades	Ofsted Inspector

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