

# Inspection of Ditton Church of England Junior School

New Road, Ditton, Aylesford, Kent ME20 6AE

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Inspection dates: 29–30 October 2019

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils have mainly been resilient while the school has been through a tough few years with many changes in staff. However, they have not done as well as they could in their learning. Pupils have continued to come to school regularly. They enjoy the morning workout and the wide range of activity choices on the playground at lunchtime. There is a growing range of opportunities for pupils to attend clubs and take part in interesting visits and activities. These help pupils become well-rounded citizens.

Behaviour is positive around the school and in lessons. Pupils normally listen well and are polite to each other. Pupils understand exactly what bullying is, but are not too worried about it. One pupil explained that 'bullies are unhappy people having a bad day who want to make us unhappy too'. Pupils know that adults can and will help them to stay safe at school.

Leaders want the best for all pupils and have been working to improve the school, but not all the changes necessary have been popular with everyone. The pupils are keen and ready to do well but leaders have further improvements to make to help them truly flourish and succeed.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

In recent years standards have been too low in reading, writing and mathematics. When the governors appointed the current headteacher they did not realise the school was performing so poorly. Leaders have made improvements to many aspects of the school in the last two years. However, these improvements are often thwarted by constant changes in staffing. Some parents have concerns about the number of staff changes and how the school communicates with them. The leadership team is now stronger and ready to make the necessary improvements.

The curriculum is ambitious. It aims to give pupils the experience of a wide range of classic and modern literature, linked to the topics they are studying. However, too many pupils cannot fully access the curriculum because of gaps in their learning. They have not been taught, or remembered, what they need to know.

Pupils who find reading difficult do not have the fluency to read the texts because they are not taught phonics. Some of the chosen texts are too difficult. This is because pupils do not understand the vocabulary or do not have the subject-specific knowledge needed to understand them. Additional adults nurture pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Despite this, tasks chosen for pupils, including those with SEND, by teachers do not help them learn well. Pupils' attention can wander when they do not understand their learning. However, inspectors saw no disruptive behaviour in classes.

Many subject leaders are new to their roles and many teachers are new to the year

groups they are teaching. They are still developing their knowledge and skills to lead and teach the whole curriculum successfully. Teachers already receive training to improve their scientific subject knowledge. This is making the termly science weeks popular with pupils and helping them to learn and remember more.

Teaching in some subjects such as personal, social and health education and physical education is well planned. It helps pupils learn to be safe, become fit and healthy and make a positive contribution to society. Trips and visits, including the Year 6 residential to the Brecon Beacons, help to develop pupils' character. Pupils are enterprising. Year 5 playground buddies held a cake sell to raise money to buy walkie talkie radios to help with their roles. A wide range of clubs and activities are well attended by pupils, including those with SEND.

Most staff enjoy working at the school. They feel well supported to make improvements and appreciate the help they get with their well-being and work-life balance. However, this view is not held by everyone. A significant minority of staff do not feel well supported by all leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The headteacher has ensured that staff are well trained in safeguarding. Procedures and systems in the school to keep pupils safe are fit for purpose. Leaders ensure that the most vulnerable pupils get the support they may need from external sources when necessary. Leaders are not complacent about safeguarding matters and check that their practice is maintained at an appropriate level by sensibly commissioning external audits and checks.

Physical intervention is used to keep pupils safe when necessary. However, leaders' recording of such incidents is not precise and accurate enough.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Attainment and progress in reading have been poor in recent years. Pupils who join the school unable to read fluently, and others who fall behind, are not helped to catch up quickly. Leaders need to train teachers in the use of systematic synthetic phonics so that they can help the weakest readers to read fluently and access the curriculum.
- The curriculum is well balanced and interesting. However, some of the choices of topics and class reading texts that have been selected need to be reviewed to check they are appropriate and well sequenced. This is to ensure that pupils have the subject-specific knowledge and vocabulary to access them successfully.
- Many subject leaders are new to their roles. They need more training to enable them to help all teachers to have the necessary subject knowledge and skills to

teach all subjects in the curriculum well.

- Not all staff feel well supported by leaders. Governors should do more to explore the reasons for this to ensure that staff well-being and workload are acceptable, including for senior leaders.
- Parents have mixed views of the school. Leaders need to ensure that they communicate clearly with parents about the changes and improvements they are making.
- Leaders must ensure that the record-keeping about incidents of physical intervention is precise and accurate.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118854
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10111158
<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	222
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Emma Stone
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alex Coulbault
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.ditton-jun.kent.sch.uk">www.ditton-jun.kent.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8–9 January 2015

## Information about this school

- The majority of pupils join the school from the neighbouring infant school. The schools share an inclusion manager.
- There have been significant changes in staffing recently. The deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2019.  
The school is designated as having a religious character and received its section 48 inspection in December 2015, when this aspect of the school's work was graded as good.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. We also met with other teachers with leadership responsibilities throughout the inspection.
- We met with the chair of the governing body and one other governor. We held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority and met with a

representative of the Diocese of Rochester.

- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and physical education. This included discussions with leaders of the subjects, visits to lessons, discussions with teachers, looking closely at pupils' work and discussions with pupils. We also looked at learning in science.
- We observed and talked to pupils at different times of the school day and heard some pupils read. We observed an assembly.
- We spoke to parents at the start of the school day. We took account of 36 responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey. We considered 24 responses to the Ofsted staff survey and 86 responses to the pupil survey.
- The lead inspector changed for the second day of the inspection.

### **Inspection team**

Lee Selby, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Frances Nation, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Teresa Davies

Ofsted Inspector

Rosemary Keen

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