

Inspection of a good school: Dale Hall Community Primary School

Dale Hall Lane, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 4LX

Inspection dates:

3–4 December 2019

Outcome

Dale Hall Community Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Classrooms at Dale Hall are busy places where pupils have many opportunities to learn and develop ideas with their teachers and with their friends. Teachers enjoy working at the school. Pupils find learning fun. They say that teachers make lessons interesting for them. Pupils read high-quality texts that light up their imaginations, help them to discover new words and improve their understanding across subjects.

Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy a range of responsibilities in which they represent their peers, for example as school councillors, sports ambassadors and eco-warriors. Staff encourage pupils to research and come forward with their own ideas for being active citizens. In a recent project, pupils designed ways to raise funds for 'sea bins' to collect plastic waste in the sea.

Most pupils behave very well. They show great enthusiasm for learning as well as for spending happy and caring times with their friends in the playground. Pupils say that bullying is rare at their school. If it does happen, they know that an adult will deal with it quickly. Pupils say they enjoy the range of opportunities to participate in sports, both in the school and through clubs, friendly matches and competitions.

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

Staff, led tenaciously by the headteacher, share a determination to deliver a curriculum that is interesting and inspiring. Pupils engage fully in learning, reflecting the high standards that leaders have set. The quality of the curriculum in reading, science and physical education (PE) is high. Good-quality training helps staff to teach pupils well.

Pupils enjoy a range of exciting topics where they learn about different subjects. For example, in a project about The Ice Bear, pupils learn about the harsh climate of the Arctic, the adaptations animals make to live there and the emotions of a mother who has lost her child.

In mathematics, pupils have good opportunities to develop their understanding of calculation as they move through the school. Pupils use resources such as counters and models to help them to develop understanding. Teachers expect and help pupils to discuss, share and use what they know already in new learning. For example, Year 6 pupils drew on a wide range of previous learning to consider how to divide fractions.

All staff are determined to help pupils learn to read and love reading. From the start of their school life, children quickly learn the sounds of letters. They learn to use them to read simple words. Staff give those at risk of falling behind the help they need to catch up. Teachers routinely read to and with pupils. These opportunities grab pupils' imaginations and ignite their interest in stories. Older pupils talk with delight about the books they read, both as a whole class and individually. They explain that they enjoy texts because the characters are 'developed carefully', 'the plot has unexpected twists' or 'the cliff hangers just make you want to get to the next bit'.

Staff in the Reception classes provide a good range of activities that interest and engage children. Children have plentiful opportunities to develop their early language, reading and number skills. They learn to play together harmoniously. Children develop independent, creative ways to solve problems. Parents say they appreciate the care given both to them and their children.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has worked hard to get pupils external support even when it is in short supply in the local area. The SENCo helps teachers to understand the barriers to pupils' learning. Teachers match activities to pupils' needs well.

Despite these strengths, some pupils have not achieved as well as they should have by the end of Year 6. Governors did not hold leaders to account enough for these standards in 2019. Leaders' work is not improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar rapidly. Teachers do not act quickly enough to address pupils' weaker handwriting and presentation. This prevents pupils from being able to demonstrate their abilities fully.

Leaders and governors have created a strong vision and ethos about what they want for pupils at the school. A local authority adviser helps leaders get an accurate view of the school's work. Staff appreciate the consideration leaders give to staff well-being. They say leaders manage staff workload carefully. Most parents and carers are positive about the school and the changes made by the headteacher. However, some parents feel that the school's communication is not efficient or effective.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors pay good attention to ensuring that pupils are safe. They carry out the right checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Staff are trained so they know what to do if a pupil might be at risk and report concerns appropriately. Staff support pupils who may be at risk well. Leaders challenge wider agencies when they do not see pupils and families receiving the level of support they need.

Pupils are taught effectively how to stay safe online and learn age-appropriate ways to keep themselves safe from the risks they may face.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not paid sufficient attention to making sure that the teaching of presentation, handwriting, and spelling is as effective as it is in other areas of the curriculum. The quality of pupils' extended written work is impacted negatively by this, especially for those who are able to achieve the highest standards at the end of key stage 2. Leaders should act quickly to implement their plans for improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting skills.
- While governors fulfil most of their responsibilities effectively, they did not rapidly hold leaders to account for the fall in published standards at the end of Year 6 in 2019. Because of this, it has taken them too long to ensure that leaders are addressing the development priorities for both the curriculum and standards effectively. Governors should work with leaders to make sure they focus their monitoring on these strategic priorities with greater pace and rigour.
- A recurring theme in a significant minority of parental responses to the inspection was that communication is not good enough. Leaders should make sure that parents have sufficient notice of all school events. They should also make sure that communication with individual parents, when necessary, gives the parents all the information they need to be fully confident in the work of the school.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Dale Hall Community Primary School to be good on 3–4 March 2016.

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 are 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

Unique reference number	124668
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10110300
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Angela Gage
Headteacher	Joanne Dediccoat
Website	www.dalehall.suffolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 March 2016

Information about this school

- The school has undergone some significant changes in staffing and leadership since the previous inspection. The headteacher has held the substantive post for just over a year.
- Premier Education provide an out-of-school breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- I met with governors, the headteacher and deputy and a range of leaders who hold different responsibilities across the school, including the SENCo. I also met with a representative of the local authority.
- I found out about the school's curriculum, how it is taught and how well it helps pupils to learn.
- I paid particular attention to how well pupils learn in reading, mathematics and PE. I discussed this with the subject leaders, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. I held meetings with pupils and their teachers to discuss pupils' learning.
- I visited most classrooms, including the Reception classes, to see pupils' learning. I observed pupils during their break and lunchtimes and while they were moving around the school. I spoke to pupils about their behaviour and asked if they had any concerns

about behaviour at the school.

- I looked carefully at the procedures and documents in place to keep pupils safe. I spoke to pupils and staff about how well they understand the risks pupils face as well as the procedures in place to ensure pupils are kept safe.
- I took into account the 120 parent responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire Parent View, and the responses made by parents using free text. During the inspection, at their request, I met with two parents of pupils at the school. I also took account of pupil and staff responses to the Ofsted survey of their views that was undertaken during the inspection.

Inspection team

Prue Rayner, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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