

Inspection of Dunmow St Mary's Primary School

High Stile, Great Dunmow, Dunmow, Essex CM6 1EB

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 June 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The high expectations set at Dunmow St Mary's Primary School for behaviour and learning are met by pupils. The curriculum that pupils experience is established in most subjects. Where this is the case, pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well. Pupils are well supported in their reading and have an enthusiasm for sharing books.

Pupils forge respectful relationships. Pupils know what it means to be a good friend. As a result, incidents of bullying are rare. When they do occur, leaders do not tolerate it. Pupils know that adults can help them if they have any worries. All pupils receive the support they need to access school life.

Most pupils behave well. They interact with kindness, playing games well with each other at breaktimes. All pupils feel welcome. One pupil said, 'we don't judge anyone here'. As a result, pupils are happy and safe.

Pupils value the wider opportunities they are given. They develop a sense of responsibility through a range of opportunities, including the 'pupil voice' group. There are a wide range of clubs and competitions. Pupils benefit from an interesting range of trips which complement what they learn, including to the local river and Hindu temple.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. This begins in early years and includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In many areas of the curriculum, pupils remember what they have learned. However, in a small number of subjects, in their curriculum thinking leaders have not made clear the most important knowledge and vocabulary pupils need to learn. Therefore, teaching of the curriculum does not always focus on the most important things pupils need to learn, such as subject-specific vocabulary. As a result, pupils sometimes struggle to explain important concepts.

Teachers make sure that pupils, including those with SEND, understand new learning. Activities are generally designed well to ensure pupils practise skills and deepen their knowledge. However, on occasions teaching focuses too much on the activity or experience rather than the knowledge pupils need to learn. When this happens, pupils do not retain the knowledge that leaders intend.

Leaders have implemented a new phonics scheme and trained most staff well. Teachers check what sounds pupils know and provide support for those who need to catch up. They regularly practise their reading with books matched closely to the sounds they know. Therefore, pupils catch up quickly. There is a high-quality curriculum for pupils to develop their reading fluency. Teachers deliver this well. As a result, pupils become confident and fluent readers.

Leaders have focused on developing a love of reading across the school. There are regular opportunities to read for pleasure. There is a wealth of engaging and diverse books in the library. Displays demonstrate how literature inspires work across the curriculum. Pupils talk about their favourite stories with enthusiasm.

In Reception, children are highly motivated to learn. Children play nicely with each other, showing kindness and respect. They know what it means to be kind and share well. In common with the rest of the school, the curriculum is well thought through. As well as developing their knowledge about number, children learn to read, write, and develop their vocabulary. Children are well prepared for key stage 1.

Leaders have developed an inclusive culture where pupils with SEND succeed. Staff are trained to accurately identify pupils' needs. Leaders routinely work alongside staff to plan well-designed support. Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers and achieve well.

Pupils behave appropriately and lessons are typically disruption free. The school's behaviour approach is well established. There is a calm environment in and around school. Very occasionally, there are a small number of pupils that do not meet leaders' expectations. Leaders identify and provide support that addresses any root causes of behavioural issues. Consequently, pupils' learning is not interrupted.

Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. They learn about how to respect those who are different to themselves. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the many ways we can be different and how respect underpins all their relationships. Leaders carefully select books that support pupils to learn about diversity and different cultures. This contributes towards pupils' personal development. Leaders understand the power of literature as a vehicle for exploring diversity and culture.

Governors check what leaders are telling them so they know for themselves that the school is improving. Governors identify what works well and what needs to improve. Staff appreciate how leaders help to manage their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed a culture in which everyone understands that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Leaders check the knowledge that staff have and deliver regular training and updates.

Staff are quick to identify when a pupil is at risk of harm. They report concerns in detail. Leaders act quickly, securing help from external agencies when required. Leaders work closely with families to provide support. Leaders identified an administrative change to the way a check would be recorded. This was updated on inspection.

Pupils learn how to stay safe, including online. They are confident to report any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few areas of the curriculum, leaders have not made clear the knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should learn in precise enough detail. Therefore, teachers are not always clear on which knowledge is critical to future learning. This means that pupils do not develop a detailed body of knowledge as they do in other subjects. Leaders should identify the key knowledge and vocabulary across the curriculum.
- On occasion, learning activities are not specifically planned to focus on the key knowledge pupils need to learn. Pupils often remember the experience or activity but not what they need to learn. When this happens, pupils do not deepen their knowledge over time. Leaders should ensure staff receive training on how to effectively design activities that enable pupils to learn the important knowledge they need to achieve consistently well.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	115299
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10287092
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	470
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Perry
Headteacher	Clare Charter
Website	www.dsmprimary.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 April 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one school-based, registered alternative provider.
- This is a Church of England primary school. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in October 2019. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, design and technology, and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the subject leader, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about

their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also looked at other curriculum plans, including for science.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- To inspect safeguarding, meetings were held with the designated safeguarding lead, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector also reviewed records, policies and documents relating to safeguarding.
- To evaluate aspects of the school and leaders' work, the lead inspector met with governors, the diocesan representative, and the local authority improvement partner.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors observed and spoke to pupils, including at breaktimes. Inspectors reviewed the 94 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the 142 responses and the 95 free-text comments submitted to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.
- The inspectors took account of the 51 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for school staff.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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