

# De Vere Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114726
<b>Local Authority</b>	ESSEX
<b>Inspection number</b>	290012
<b>Inspection date</b>	24 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Messer

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	126
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Drury
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Margaret Miller
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 November 2002
<b>School address</b>	Kirby Hall Road Castle Hedingham Essex CO9 3EA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01787460237
<b>Fax number</b>	01787462477

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Pupils are taught in five classes in this small village primary school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Most pupils are from White British families and a small number is from minority ethnic backgrounds. No pupils speak languages other than English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average overall but in some year groups it is exceptionally high. The school has a Healthy Schools award and Investors in People accreditation. Attainment on entry is average overall but it is below average in communication, language and literacy. The proportion of pupils who enter or leave the school part way through this phase of their education is much higher than average.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils' personal development is good and makes a strong contribution to effective learning. Pupils develop good social skills, talk sensibly about their work and are sensitive to the needs of others. They have a good understanding of how to eat sensibly, keep fit and lead healthy life styles. Pupils are courteous and self-confident. They are articulate and express their views clearly. Pupils enjoy accepting responsibility and the school councillors take their duty for helping to improve the school very seriously. Pupils develop a good range of key skills, including information and communication technology (ICT), to support their learning in the next phase of their education.

Teaching and learning are good and so pupils achieve well. Pupils say that teachers make lessons fun and that they enjoy learning. The quality of provision in the Foundation stage is good and children achieve well. By Year 2 standards are broadly average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. By Year 6, standards are average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Given the high numbers of pupils with learning difficulties in this year group and that some of the pupils have had a disrupted education through moving schools, these standards represent good achievement. Learning targets are displayed in each classroom and these help pupils to understand what they need to do to reach the next stages in their learning. These targets are framed for three broad ability groups in each class and do not always match the specific learning needs of all pupils, especially the faster learners who are not always sufficiently stretched by their targets. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and friendly and support learning well.

The curriculum is satisfactory and is enriched by a good range of educational visits, after-school clubs and interesting visitors. The school has identified the need to develop the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of all groups of learners. It also recognises the need to improve opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills in other areas of the curriculum. Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school. Most parents are pleased with the education that their children receive.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The new deputy headteacher works closely with the headteacher to form an effective management team. He has given a renewed impetus to school improvement, especially in the use of ICT to support teaching and learning. The leadership team has made a good start in monitoring pupils' progress. However, pupils' performance is not analysed in detail or frequently enough to see if there are any particular pockets of underachievement. The school's self assessment is largely accurate but sometimes rather too modest because there is a lack of appreciation of how well pupils are achieving. This is because school leaders have not assessed all the factors that affect pupils' achievement, including evaluations of attainment on entry. Finances are managed efficiently and the school provides good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils have challenging targets for learning in English and mathematics, especially the faster learners.
- Develop a system for measuring pupils' progress frequently so that any underachievement can be quickly identified and appropriate extra support provided.
- Evaluate in more detail the factors that have an impact on pupils' learning and the progress they make.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Although attainment on entry is average overall, the school's assessments show that children's communication, language and literacy skills are often well below average when they start school. They get off to a flying start in the Reception class where they make good progress so that by the end of the Reception year most attain the expected standards in all areas of learning except writing. This is because many start from a very low level. Some of the youngest children cannot hold a pencil properly or write their names accurately. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 to 6. Assessments for pupils in Year 2 show that the pupils perform better in numeracy than literacy. In the national tests for pupils in Year 6 in 2006, the school's performance was below average in English, above in mathematics and average in science. The school's most recent assessments show that English has improved and is now average. Although the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average overall, there was an unusually high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties in last year's group of Year 6 pupils and again in this year's group. The continuity of the older pupils' learning has been interrupted by moving to this school from other schools at a late stage. Although the school's performance in the national tests was average overall, most pupils had made good progress through Years 3 to 6. This was much better than the amount of progress that pupils make nationally and several made exceptionally good progress. The school has identified the need to accelerate pupils' progress in writing.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their good attendance. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and they say they feel safe. Pupils stay healthy through regular exercise, energetic play and through their good understanding of the importance of eating healthy foods. Pupils have many opportunities to show initiative and consideration for others, as peer mediators, through the school council and as 'buddies'. Older pupils are eager to take on new roles as play leaders.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Good quality teaching has been maintained despite a number of the regular teachers having been absent for an extended length of time. In the Foundation Stage, stimulating and inviting activities help children to learn effectively and make good progress. Teaching is often imaginative, as in Years 1 and 2 where pupils nibble biscuits and grapes to help them to find suitable adjectives to describe taste. Interactive white boards are used well to support teaching and learning where teachers prepare excellent presentations to enliven lessons and capture pupils' interest. Targets are displayed in each classroom and these help some pupils to understand what they should be aiming to achieve in their learning. The targets are often too broad to meet the precise learning needs of all pupils, especially the faster learners. Some said that when they were presented with new targets they felt that they had already mastered them.

Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils' learning and work effectively alongside teachers in lessons.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. There is an appropriately strong emphasis on teaching literacy and numeracy which has a positive impact on achievement. There is also a good emphasis on caring for the environment. Pupils use computers confidently and develop a good range of key skills that support their economic well-being and prepare them well for the future. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop writing skills within other subjects. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. All areas of children's learning are planned for effectively with the support and involvement of parents. Drama and music are used well to mount productions, such as the recent performance of 'Goldilocks'. These elements of the curriculum give great enjoyment and effectively promote pupils' personal development. There is a good range of educational visits, including a residential visit to Wales, and visitors to the school to enrich the curriculum. The school is embarking on a review of the curriculum as it explores the best way to link subjects together in order to create a curriculum that meets the needs and interests of all learners.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The care and safety of pupils are given the topmost priority and staff's personal support for individuals is strong. Risk assessments are conducted thoroughly, child protection procedures are clearly understood by all staff and pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe. The school complies with recent government guidance on safeguarding. Pupils receive good guidance about road safety, the dangers associated with the misuse of drugs and how to lead healthy lifestyles. Pupils say they have someone to go to in school if they have any worries. Pupils also take responsibility in caring for each other by collecting any lonely pupils from the playground 'bus stop' and befriending them. They have clear learning targets to aim for but these are sometimes not challenging enough, especially for the faster learners.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school has had a succession of staffing issues, including long-term staff absence, to deal with. This has been managed well in order to minimise any adverse impact on pupils' learning. The headteacher has been successful in establishing a productive climate for learning. Her good leadership has encouraged all staff to work together closely to explore ways of raising standards. The issues raised in the last inspection report have been resolved and the school is well placed to improve further. The governing body ensures that the school meets its statutory responsibilities and has clear aims and policies. The headteacher and the school governors monitor teaching and learning thoroughly. They have accurately assessed the quality of teaching and concluded that it is good. They are not able to explain clearly why the impact of the good teaching does not result in standards that are above average. Nevertheless, the school's self evaluation is generally thorough and leaders have developed a good appreciation of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school is well prepared to make further advances. It is looking forward to a more stable period now that staffing issues have been resolved.



## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of De Vere Primary School, Kirby Hall road, Castle Hedingham, Halstead, Essex, CO9 3EA

We thoroughly enjoyed our short visit to your school just before half term. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. I am writing this letter to you because I thought that you might be interested to know what we thought of the school.

Quite simply De Vere Primary is a good school. What makes it good? First and foremost the teachers work very hard to make lessons interesting and help you to learn. You said that they make lessons fun. The interactive white boards are great and encourage good learning. In Class 1, there was wonderful display of intriguing pictures accompanied by lovely music. This set the scene beautifully and prepared the older pupils well to create powerful poems. You are keen to learn and you work hard. You develop a good range of skills in reading, mathematics science and ICT. It has been a bit of a struggle to raise standards in writing but things are improving. You are well behaved. You said that one of the best things about the school is the good friendships that you make. It certainly is a friendly place. You enjoy school. You know how to stay safe and look after yourselves. We think that your headteacher gives good leadership and manages the school well.

There are several things we have asked Mrs Miller to do to help you to learn even more. We think that you should have clearer targets that really challenge all of you to reach even higher standards in your work, especially the faster learners. We also think that the leaders of the school should measure your progress more accurately so that they can show everybody how well you are doing. We think that they should thoroughly examine all the different things that affect how well you learn so that they can spot exactly who might need a little extra help with their learning.

The teachers, support staff and governors are making good plans to make your learning even more exciting. We wish you every success in the future.

John Messer

Lead Inspector