



Dymchurch Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118565
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291171
Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006
Reporting inspector Michael Barron

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	New Hall Close
School category	Community		Dymchurch
Age range of pupils	4–11		Romney Marsh TN29 0LE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01303 872377
Number on roll (school)	247	Fax number	01303 873909
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Jeff Davis
		Headteacher	Mark Fisher
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Dymchurch Primary is an average size primary school serving the coastal village of Dymchurch, which is located in a rural regeneration area. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Nearly all are of White British heritage although a few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A very small number of pupils have a first language other than English and none are at the early stages of English language acquisition whilst a small number of pupils are classed as 'looked after children'. The present headteacher took up his position in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Dymchurch Primary is a satisfactory school, which gives pupils a sound start to their education. Leadership and management, criticised in the previous report, are now satisfactory overall. The headteacher has led the school well since his appointment and both staff and governors share his clear vision for improving achievement. Whilst some of the initiatives the headteacher has introduced have already led to improvements, for example in raising standards in reading, there are still several other areas in need of development and these include improving achievement in writing in all year groups.

Pupils enjoy school and describe it as a 'happy' place. They say they feel safe, well looked after and enjoy contributing to village events. Parents appreciate that the school offers pupils a caring environment in which to learn whilst pupils describe their teachers as 'the best thing about school'. As a result pupils work hard and try to do well. They display responsible attitudes and learn how to make sensible and healthy choices. They show respect for others, behave well and are prepared satisfactorily for their future life and economic well-being. Children enter the Foundation Stage with below average skills, especially in language development. They make good progress because staff offer good support and make learning interesting. By the time they enter Year 1 they reach the expected standards in nearly all areas of learning with the exception of aspects of language development, especially writing.

Teaching is satisfactory overall throughout the rest of the school although teachers' marking does not consistently give pupils ideas on how to improve their work. Even though the school has developed efficient systems to monitor learners' progress, these are not always used effectively when planning further work. As a result, pupils are not always provided with work in lessons that is matched to their abilities. Whilst pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the effective level of support they receive, more able pupils do not always do as well as they should because the work they are given does not consistently provide them with enough challenge. Even so, by Year 6, standards are similar to those attained nationally overall although they are lower in English than in science or mathematics.

The curriculum is satisfactory and is enhanced by a range of out-of-school activities that further develop pupils' skills and their enjoyment of learning. However, opportunities for pupils to increase their awareness and understanding of the multicultural nature of British society are limited. Whilst the quality of care provided by the school is good and contributes to pupils' sense of well-being, procedures for guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The governing body supports the school effectively but does not always provide it with enough challenge. The school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in writing throughout the school.

- Ensure pupils are provided with work that matches their different abilities and enables them to attain their full potential.
- Ensure marking consistently helps pupils to understand how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage because of good teaching and a well planned curriculum. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and this reflects the satisfactory quality of teaching. Standards in Year 6 are presently similar to the national average and have shown an improvement over time, although this is more apparent in mathematics and science than in English. The school recognises that improving progress in English is a key area for development and has successfully introduced strategies recently to improve achievement in reading. However, pupils' progress in writing still lags behind their progress in other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, make the same progress as most other groups of pupils because of the effective level of support they receive. However, work for more able pupils is sometimes too easy and their progress suffers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy being at school and have developed positive attitudes to learning. They work and play well together and their good behaviour and relationships with others contribute effectively to their well-being. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and fit and are beginning to make informed choices about what they eat and how to stay safe. Pupils feel that they are part of the school and talk with enthusiasm about how good they think it is. They feel that the school council is now beginning to give them a more formal voice in school affairs. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Moral and social education is good and pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. Visits to places of interest, for example the Isle of Wight, provide pupils with experiences of life outside their village locality. However, pupils do not fully appreciate the multicultural nature of modern British society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and provides children with a range of activities which combine independent learning with teacher directed tasks. Lessons are well organised and children feel safe and secure. As a result they make good progress.

The quality of teaching throughout the rest of the school is variable, although satisfactory overall. Teachers use a variety of approaches to try to make learning interesting and keep pupils attentive. However, there are occasions when more able pupils are insufficiently challenged. This affects their progress. When teaching is at its best, teachers manage pupils well and unobtrusively correct pupils whose attention strays without interrupting the flow of the lesson. Lessons are well structured and have a clear purpose, although this is not always shared with pupils.

Pupils have good attitudes to school and feel teachers are 'kind and really helpful'. They are keen to learn and work hard although they do not always present their work well. However, the quality of teachers' marking is variable, often just a tick or a cross, and it does not consistently give pupils a clear understanding of how to improve their work. This affects their progress. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to contribute effectively to pupils' progress, especially when supporting pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's curriculum is well balanced and meets the needs and interests of pupils soundly. The good range of learning opportunities in the Foundation Stage contributes to children's enjoyment and their developing independence. As a result they make good progress.

Pupils in other year groups make satisfactory progress in building up their knowledge and understanding in subjects such as mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), although opportunities are missed to promote writing across subjects. Pupils are also given only limited opportunities to develop their investigative skills in science through practical work. Good planning and provision for personal, social and health education ensure that pupils develop an understanding of the importance of fitness and well-being and ensure pupils feel valued as individuals. Interesting visits and visitors to the school increase pupils' enjoyment of learning. Pupils also have regular opportunities to take part in a range of well supported, out-of-school activities, including girls' football.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Whilst procedures for care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall the quality of care provided for pupils is good and contributes to their sense of well-being and enjoyment of learning. Parents value this and know that there is always someone on hand for their child to approach if he or she has a problem. This good quality of care is evident in the school's focus on ensuring that every child matters. Child protection procedures meet current government requirements. Health and safety routines and risk assessments are fully in place. Good induction and transfer arrangements help pupils to settle quickly into new routines, and pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and the small number from minority ethnic backgrounds, receive an effective level of support.

The school now monitors the progress of individual pupils. However, this information is not used consistently by teachers when planning further work. As a result, work provided for pupils is not always matched to individual abilities, especially for more able pupils, and this affects the progress they make.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher is an effective leader who has built up a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has developed a vision of what the school needs to do in order to improve. The initiatives he has introduced have already led to an improvement in reading throughout the school, although tactics to raise achievement in writing, through, for example, improving the use of monitoring of pupils' work, have yet to have a positive effect.

The governing body has satisfactory links with the school. However, although the governing body is helpful, it is not sufficiently critical in its support. The role of the school's leadership team has improved since the last inspection and it is now beginning to play a more active role in school affairs. The school works closely with parents, regularly seeking and taking account of their views. Links with external agencies such as the health services support pupils' learning well, particularly those with learning difficulties and disabilities, so that they make the same progress as other groups of pupils. Resources are satisfactory and are used efficiently.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Thank you for making us feel very welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our two days at Dymchurch Primary School and especially enjoyed talking to some of you about what you most enjoyed about school and seeing you work in lessons.

Here are some of the things we particularly like about your school:

- We were impressed by how friendly and well behaved you are.
- We were also impressed by how much you seem to enjoy school.
- We like how your headteacher and teachers take good care of you. We think your headteacher and teachers can do some things to make your school even better. We have asked them to:
 - try to make sure you make better progress in writing
 - try to give you work to do that matches your different abilities and experiences
 - make sure that when they mark your work it gives you an idea of how to improve it.

You can help your school to get even better by continuing to work hard in lessons.

We wish you the very best for the future.