

Dallington Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 114498 |
| Local Authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 311627 |
| Inspection date | 1 July 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Susan Orpin |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 104 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Bobbie Steel |
| Headteacher | Shirley Frankis |
| Date of previous school inspection | 26 April 2004 |
| School address | East Street Dallington Heathfield TN21 9NH |
| Telephone number | 01435 830335 |
| Fax number | 01435 831163 |

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|--------------------------|-------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Dallington is a small village primary school. Pupils are mainly White British. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above average, most of these pupils having difficulties with language. The amount of movement of pupils in and out of the school other than at the usual times of joining or leaving is above average. A new headteacher has been at the school for six months.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Some aspects of its work are satisfactory, rather than good, and it is improving these less effective areas. Pupils' achievement is good by the end of Year 6 and standards are above average. However, pupils with learning difficulties do not always do as well as they could in English because work is not always matched closely enough to their needs. Pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 is only satisfactory because teaching is not consistently good in these years. The school recognises that standards in reading and writing in Year 2 need to be raised. Currently, pupils in Years 1 and 2 are doing better in mathematics than in reading and writing.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They are confident and readily express their opinions in an honest and thoughtful way. Interesting lessons and exciting activities in most classes mean that pupils thoroughly enjoy school and want to learn. Pupils' good enjoyment is reflected in the improved attendance rate, which is now above average. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they work and play together well. Relationships between adults and pupils, and among pupils, are welcoming and caring, so bullying is rare. Pupils are proud of their school, feel very safe and know how to keep healthy. They have many varied opportunities to take responsibility, which they eagerly undertake. They contribute well to the wider community, organising local events and raising funds for a wide variety of charities.

Pupils are enthusiastic and keen to work because most lessons capture their imagination and interest. In a Year 5 and 6 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils were engrossed in a complex, fun task using their number skills, which fully challenged them despite their differing abilities. Pupils' progress in mathematics and science has improved recently because subject leaders have successfully encouraged teachers to use more investigational and problem-solving tasks. Pupils progress well through Years 3 to 6 because teaching is good. However, pupils' progress through Years 1 and 2 is less smooth because the teaching is less consistent and at times lessons are insufficiently interesting and well paced and are lacking in challenge. The good curriculum helps stimulate pupils, through special events such as Arts week and links between subjects, which make work more relevant. Good care, guidance and support ensure pupils feel safe, secure and valued. Academic guidance for pupils is generally good, but less effective in ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties are always fully supported.

Leadership and management is good overall. There have been good developments in mathematics and science that have led to improved standards and the curriculum has become more interesting. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and this is beginning to ensure that pupils who need extra help with their learning are identified and given extra support. However, planning for school improvement does not involve all staff and other interested parties, including governors, as much as is necessary to move on the pace of improvement even more quickly. Given the school's current effectiveness and its track record of improvement, it has good capacity to become more effective.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Adults' secure knowledge and understanding of the needs of this age group are evident in the good teaching, well-planned curriculum and stimulating environment, all of which are managed well. Children make good progress in all areas of learning from a starting point that is broadly

similar to that of other children of their age. Most children currently in the Reception Year are on track to exceed expected levels by the time they move into Year 1. They are making particularly good progress in their personal development, communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development, providing a good start for their future education. Teaching is exciting and makes sure all children are fully involved. The indoor space is cramped, but a good outdoor area that is used well compensates for this.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching in Years 1 and 2 is always well paced and challenging enough for all pupils, in particular to raise standards in reading and writing.
- Make sure that work for pupils with learning difficulties is always closely matched to their needs, particularly in English.
- Fully involve all stakeholders, particularly staff and governors, in the process of improvement planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' overall achievement is good but there is some variation in how well they do at each key stage. After the good start in the Reception Year, pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. Currently, standards in Year 2 are average overall, representing satisfactory progress, given the different starting points for these pupils. Standards in mathematics are above average and pupils make better progress in mathematics than in reading and writing because teaching has improved in this subject. Standards in writing are below average and pupils make slower, but satisfactory, progress because there are a few pupils with language difficulties who are slightly less well supported.

Standards in Year 6 are above average, representing good progress for these pupils, and reflecting the good value added by the school for its pupils over the full time that they spend in the school. Standards are not as high in English as in mathematics and science in Year 6 at the moment because, as is the case lower down the school, there are a few pupils with language difficulties who are slightly less well supported. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are confident and articulate. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They respect the Christian ethos of the school, have a strong sense of right and wrong, relate well with others and have a good understanding of their own culture. However, their understanding of the cultural diversity of Britain is less well developed. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, in lessons and around the school, and bullying is rare. They thoroughly enjoy school and value the exciting experiences, the many interesting lessons and the very caring atmosphere in the school.

Pupils have a good knowledge of how to stay healthy and keep safe, which can be seen in their lunchtime choices, their energetic participation in physical activities and their concern for the well-being of others. They make a very good contribution to the school community through the very wide range of responsibilities they undertake, such as those of playground 'buddies' who care for others, library monitors and members of the very active school council. They

contribute well to local events, especially through strong links with the church and raising funds for a variety of charities. Despite pupils' eagerness to undertake responsibility, in some lessons they are not well enough involved in taking responsibility for their learning. Pupils' ability to work constructively with others and their good progress in literacy and numeracy mean they are well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching has a good influence on pupils' progress overall. It is most effective in the Reception Year and in promoting significant progress by the end of Year 6 in relation to pupils' starting points in Year 3. In most lessons, teachers plan stimulating activities, so pupils are motivated and interested. For example, in a Year 3 and 4 science lesson, pupils were testing how much water plants need and measuring their results. Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive and productive and teachers manage their pupils well. Teachers make good use of practical and real-life activities to promote learning, such as the involvement of pupils in Years 5 and 6 in a project to improve the playground. Teachers make good use of stimulating strategies, such as 'talk partners' where pupils discuss their ideas in pairs before having a wider discussion. However, teaching is not consistently good, so in a few lessons the pace of work and the challenge of activities are not as effective as in better lessons. At times, teachers' questions are not searching enough to enable them to monitor pupils' understanding closely. Although teachers prepare work for pupils of different ages within their lesson, occasionally they do not ensure that the work is well matched to the needs of those with learning difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is exciting and interesting, so pupils are mostly inspired and enjoy learning. Planning for mathematics and science has improved recently, ensuring that these subjects are practical and involve pupils in developing their skills in investigating and problem solving. As a result of the increased opportunities for hands-on learning, standards have improved in these subjects. Pupils also benefit from the productive use of links between subjects, but these do not yet have sufficient impact on improving pupils' writing in all years. There are themed weeks, such as Book week, Arts week and Science week, when learning is fun. Visitors and trips, such as the residential week for pupils in Years 5 and 6, are a highlight and make a very good contribution to pupils' progress and personal development. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good for a small school. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their skills in information and communication technology and they readily use these skills to help them learn in other subjects. There is a good programme of personal, social and health education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a safe, caring, family atmosphere, where pupils feel secure and happy. Pupils know who to go to if they have any worries and they are confident to do so. Procedures to ensure their safety are robust and regular safety checks are made. Pastoral support for pupils is particularly strong, so pupils develop confidence. There are good links with other agencies, for example, leading to improved attendance. There are very good procedures to ensure pupils

settle into school, especially when they are joining after the beginning of the Reception Year, and to ease their transition to secondary education. Older pupils know their targets for literacy and numeracy, and use them to improve their progress. Pupils' progress is regularly assessed and this information is used to provide additional help for those who need it, although pupils with learning difficulties do not always benefit from a suitable level of work. Teachers' marking of pupils' work sometimes misses opportunities to inform them about how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a good understanding of the school and has sensitively begun to increase the effectiveness of teamwork. Subject leaders are making a good contribution to developments that have led to improved achievement and standards in mathematics and science. The curriculum is being developed and the rigorous system for tracking pupils' progress is beginning to show where further priorities lie, for example, in supporting pupils with learning difficulties. The monitoring of lessons has begun to show areas for development, and the school recognises the need to sharpen the effectiveness of monitoring further to improve teaching to a consistently good level. Improvement planning is detailed, but does not yet sufficiently involve all staff or the views of other stakeholders. The school works well with parents, who are overwhelmingly supportive of its work. Satisfactory governance provides good support, but does not provide sufficient challenge to help school leaders improve the school further.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| 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 | 3 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| 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

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| 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 | 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 |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dallington CE Primary School, Heathfield TN21 9NH

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school. We enjoyed talking with you and were very impressed by how friendly, polite and confident you are. Your school is giving you a good education. These are some of the good points we found out about your school.

- You make good progress throughout the school and reach above average standards by the time you leave. You do particularly well in mathematics and science.
- You thoroughly enjoy school, especially events such as Arts week.
- Your behaviour is outstanding and you all work and play together well.
- You are proud of your school and know how to stay healthy and keep safe.
- You contribute well to your school and local community, for example, by being playground 'buddies', library monitors or school councillors.
- You are taught well and adults take good care of you.
- The topics you learn are interesting and exciting.
- The adults are making some important improvements, for example, so that you have more practical and hands-on learning experiences.

To help your school get even better, we have asked the adults to:

- Make sure that all your lessons are as well paced and challenging as the best, in particular, to help you with reading and writing in Years 1 and 2.
- Make sure that those of you who need extra help with learning are always given suitable activities, especially to help you with your work in English.
- Involve all the staff, governors and other people interested in the school more in planning how to make it better.

You can help by making sure you always do your best and that you think for yourselves in lessons. Keep being friendly and behaving well too!

Yours sincerely

Sue Orpin Lead inspector



2 July 2008

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Lead inspector