

# Dedham C of E Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115076
<b>Local Authority</b>	ESSEX LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	311815
<b>Inspection date</b>	31 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ruth Frith

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>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	171
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Chris Bailey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Heather Tetchner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 October 2004
<b>School address</b>	Parsons Field Dedham Colchester Essex CO7 6BZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01206322242
<b>Fax number</b>	01206322689

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards in writing, particularly at Key Stage 2; the impact of improved provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form, lesson observations, discussions with staff, the chair of governors and pupils, information that the school keeps on how well pupils are doing, the school improvement plan and an analysis of the parents' questionnaire responses. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a broadly average size primary school which serves the village of Dedham and several others nearby. The socio-economic backgrounds of pupils are generally favourable and the percentage of pupils receiving free school meals is well below average. Typically, pupils enter school with knowledge and skills above those usually seen in children of that age. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion with a statement of educational need. Nearly all pupils have White British backgrounds and a small proportion of others come from a range of ethnic origins. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post for half a term and the deputy headteacher post was vacant. In recognition of its work, the school has received the National Healthy School Award, the Active Sports Award, the Basic Skills Award and the Bronze Eco Award.

## 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 where pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding and standards are typically exceptionally high. The school's success stems from good leadership, management and governance, which over many years has maintained many successful, traditional aspects of education. Good systems and routines ensure that the school runs smoothly, as can be seen during recent months when there was no permanent headteacher. The new headteacher has quickly established herself and is gaining the confidence of pupils, staff, parents and governors. She has an exceptionally clear vision for the school that combines aspects of the school's successful practice with new developments to enhance the quality of education and maintain high standards. Staff share the headteacher's vision and, within a caring and sensitive atmosphere, work well as a strong team doing the best for the children in their care. Middle managers provide good leadership. They have improved ways of checking how well pupils are doing and consequently are able to identify quickly what is going well and what needs to be improved. The focus on developing mathematics has brought about significant improvements and higher standards, particularly for the younger pupils. Staff and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, although at times the evaluation of their work is rather modest. The effective work of staff and governors ensures that the school has good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well because they are very keen to learn and teaching is consistently good. The good progress made in the Foundation Stage is built upon well, so that by Year 2 standards are frequently significantly above average. Learning continues to develop positively throughout Key Stage 2 and by the time pupils leave school they reach exceptionally high standards and are particularly well prepared for secondary education and beyond. Standards in reading are extremely good. They reflect the importance staff place on teaching children to read and the good support that many parents give at home. Staff are never complacent. They are improving the ways pupils are encouraged to write and some exciting lessons were seen which maintained pupils' interest throughout and indicated that they were achieving particularly well. The school met its targets last year and is currently reviewing those for Year 6 pupils to ensure that they are equally challenging.

A key feature of the good teaching is the consistency of approach adopted by staff. Expectations of work and behaviour are high and pupils rise to the challenges set. Lessons are planned well. Teachers have a clear understanding of what they want pupils to learn and share this with them. Consequently, all pupils are clear about what they should learn and do. Activities match the range of abilities within each class so pupils are confident to tackle the work and feel able to succeed. This feeling of success supports their significant interest in learning. Those pupils who find learning difficult are supported well by teachers and teaching assistants so they, too, make good progress towards their targets. Recent developments in provision for more capable pupils ensure that they receive challenging work and achieve as well as they can. The improved provision of ICT and training of staff have helped to widen the range of teaching styles and learning activities. Pupils respond well and enjoy using computers. Staff are enthusiastic to improve this area even further and have a clear action plan for development and training. The curriculum is effective in ensuring that pupils thoroughly enjoy learning, want to come to school and achieve well. However, staff recognise that there is still more to be done so that links between subjects are made more frequently and learning becomes more creative. As the chair of governors stated, 'We need to continue to open windows for these children ... we must not

limit their ability to fly'. Pastoral care and support are particularly good but staff also recognise that they could improve pupils' academic guidance by developing and strengthening their marking of pupils' work.

Underpinning the good achievement and excellent results is the very effective work which helps to develop pupils socially and emotionally. This is a key strength of Dedham school and its success can be seen clearly throughout the school day in a number of spontaneous acts of kindness from staff to pupils and between pupils themselves. In addition, formal structures encourage older pupils to care for others, for example, through the 'reading buddies' scheme or when they escort the younger pupils from assembly back to their class to get ready for playtime. Pupils are very aware of the impact of their actions on others and behaviour is exceptionally good. Staff give good additional support to the few pupils who find it difficult to readily respond to their high expectations and pupils, too, encourage good behaviour. Pupils' understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the school community and beyond is particularly well developed. This results in a caring school ethos and harmonious community. Groups such as the school council and the eco-committee are supported and valued so that pupils feel that they can put forward their ideas, contribute to school improvements, and also take part in practical activities such as recycling. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy and this influences what they do.

Parents are pleased with what the school offers as the following comments indicate; 'This is a friendly and welcoming school ... this is partly due to the high standard of caring and kindness that is expected of all children', 'Both my children are, and always have been, happy and well taught' and 'Dedham is a good all round school with excellent principles'. These strengths are also recognised by the pupils, who are proud of their school and appreciate what it offers. As one pupil simply summed it up, 'It's nice to be here'.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children make a good start in the reception class because they are interested in the activities provided and routines and expectations are clear. Consequently, children's learning and development are good in relation to their starting points. By the time they enter Year 1, they usually exceed the standards expected for their age and are well prepared for more formal work in the National Curriculum. There is a good focus on developing children's communication and social skills, for example, as they learn how to give others a drink, reply with thanks and then talk about their work. This supports the school's high expectations of caring for others and being polite. It also helps children to become self-assured so they are able to put forward their views and ask questions confidently. A good balance is achieved between the amount of time children work closely with the teacher, and when they follow up their own interests and work independently. Good planning ensures that children are challenged well by the activities provided and thoroughly enjoy their learning, for instance, when discovering how to move 'rockets' using balloons for propulsion. Good assessments of what children have achieved are recorded well, and help to build a comprehensive profile of their learning. The Foundation Stage manager has high aspirations, and expectations of what children can do are high.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Build on the good curriculum by further developing links between subjects and focusing more on extending the creative aspects.

- Develop the marking of pupils' work to bring about greater consistency, and ensure that all pupils are able to understand what they have done well and what could be improved.

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## Annex A

## 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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

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

<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 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	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

2 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Dedham C of E Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Dedham, Colchester CO7 6BZ

You probably remember that I recently visited your school to see what you were learning. Thank you for making me feel so welcome. I really enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn and play. I think you go to a good school and have listed below some of the things I particularly like.

- You try hard and work very well so that you achieve exceptionally high standards by the time you leave school.
- All staff work very well together as a team and teaching is good.
- You thoroughly enjoy school and behave particularly well.
- You go to school regularly so you do not miss lessons. Well done!
- You get on well with each other and cheerfully make good friends. I was particularly pleased to see several examples of kindness and caring for others as I went about my work.
- You know such a lot about how to stay healthy and safe. You spend your play and lunchtimes very well by getting lots of exercise and keeping fit.
- You are proud of your school and support it, and the local community, particularly well.
- You feel safe in school. I was pleased to hear that you know what to do if you had problems.

Mrs Tetchner is new to the school and has made a very good start. She is helped a lot by staff and governors who have agreed that they will develop the curriculum so that you do even more exciting and creative work. Also, teachers will improve the way they mark your work so that you have a clearer idea of what you have done well, and what you could improve. Perhaps you could help them with this by explaining what would be helpful to you. I know you will respond well to their efforts and try as hard as you can.

I left your school confident that it will improve further and wish you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Frith

Additional Inspector