

# 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>	338435
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 November 2009
<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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	127
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Catherine Gransden
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Margaret Miller
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 May 2007
<b>School address</b>	Kirby Hall Road Castle Hedingham Essex
<b>Telephone number</b>	01787 460237
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons or parts of lessons, two of them jointly with the headteacher, and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation which included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school's improvement plan, policies and pupils' work. In addition, the questionnaires returned by 29 parents, 66 pupils and 14 members of staff were analysed and their comments taken into account.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- achievement and progress across the school, particularly of boys, girls and more able pupils to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging, especially in writing
- the effectiveness of recent developments to sustain improved standards in mathematics
- the quality of the curriculum
- the accuracy of the school's monitoring and self-evaluation with reference to the school's capacity for sustained improvement.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller than average sized primary school situated in a rural location. There are four mixed-age classes and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in an additional Reception class. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average but the proportion with a statement of special educational need is broadly average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The school has both the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. The Chair of Governors had been appointed three days before the inspection.

There is a privately managed Nursery on site which is inspected separately.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?****2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

## Main findings

This is a good school where pupils enjoy their learning and do well. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and has been successful in building a team of staff who share her determination to provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities that develop their learning and well-being. Pupils quickly develop good attitudes and enjoy school. This is reflected in their above average rate of attendance. Pupils' behaviour is good and this provides a very good foundation for their learning. It also helps to create an enthusiastic and harmonious atmosphere. Pupils are well cared for and supported. Staff work well with parents and a range of agencies to ensure additional support is given to those that need it so that they, too, develop well. Pupils new to the school quickly settle because, as one pupil stated, 'It's a very homely school and pupils are very friendly to each other'.

All the positive features mentioned above remove any possible barriers to learning so pupils achieve well and make good progress. Academic standards are improving as a result of the continuous drive by staff to improve the quality of their work. Children make a good start in Reception and this is successfully built upon in Key Stage 1. For the past two years, results of the national assessments in Year 2 have been significantly above average. In the 2009 national assessments for Year 6 pupils, standards were the best they had been for many years and show a significant improvement from the previous year, particularly in mathematics. Standards are frequently above average as seen in the pupils' current work. Strategies to promote equality of opportunity and meet the learning needs of all pupils are helping to narrow any differences in performance between groups of pupils. Recent strategies to improve standards in writing have, in part, been effective. The school has adopted different ways of encouraging pupils to write and this is proving particularly effective in gaining the interest of boys and challenging the more able pupils. Insufficient time has passed to see the full impact of this work but early signs are promising.

Teaching is good throughout the school because teachers present work which is interesting and learning moves at a good pace. Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant improvement in the curriculum which ensures that pupils' skills are developed systematically over time. Work is planned to match the range of age and ability in each class and higher attaining pupils and those who experience difficulty with their learning receive additional challenge or support. On entering a lesson, frequently there is a buzz of excitement as pupils rise to the challenges set by teachers and become very involved in the practical nature of their learning.

Monitoring and self-evaluation are generally good. A regular and accurate review of teaching, together with effective support for staff, has helped to maintain good learning

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and progress. Staff and governors are aware of the school's strengths and there is a clear programme for improvement. Governors are very supportive of the school but do not systematically become involved in the school's self-evaluation and policy review. There is no formal way of evaluating the effectiveness of the school's work to promote community cohesion, particularly beyond the school. However, the new Chair of Governors is keen to ensure that governors and staff work closely together to improve what they do. Recent improvements, effective provision and pupils' good progress, ensure the school has good capacity for continuous improvement. Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils are good and staff manage the school's resources well. Consequently, the school provides good value for money.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure standards in writing continue to improve by firmly embedding the new initiatives and evaluating their effectiveness.
  - Extend the school's work in promoting community cohesion, particularly beyond the school, and evaluate its impact.
  - Ensure senior managers work closely with governors to develop their work in school evaluation and policy review.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Observations during lessons, an analysis of assessment data and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that pupils are making good progress and generally working at levels above those expected for their age. Pupils did much better in 2009, particularly in mathematics. This is, in part, due to the provision of more practical mathematics activities and improvements in the way pupils' progress is monitored and evaluated. In addition, the curriculum encourages teachers to provide opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical skills across a range of subjects. Many pupils now say they enjoy writing and this can be seen in the way they approach their work and the recent improving standards. Due to good identification of need and effective support, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and the few speaking English as an additional language frequently achieve levels of attainment above those seen in similar pupils nationally.

Pupils are interested in their lessons and thoroughly enjoy taking part in the wide range of opportunities provided. Pupils say they feel safe at all times and this view is supported by the vast majority of parents. Pupils have a very good understanding of issues such as bullying and say that in the unlikely event that something were to happen, it would be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately. As one pupil said, 'There are odd little niggles but it gets sorted out'. Pupils know their views and ideas are taken seriously and acted upon, for example, through the school council. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities and all work together well for the benefit of the community. They develop good personal qualities which contribute positively to their future economic well-being. Pupils have a good understanding of how healthy eating and

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exercise impacts positively on their lives. They are also aware of how the school helps them with this. For example, 'The catering manager makes sure that we eat what the government thinks we should'.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively enhanced through assemblies, the curriculum and day-to-day interaction with staff. Pupils come together as a community to celebrate their achievements both in and outside school and are keen to show others their developing skills such as ballroom dancing. Pupils' moral and social development and the high expectations of staff result in pupils' positive and polite attitudes to others and good behaviour. Pupils gain a thorough understanding of their own culture and also learn about a range of different beliefs, religions and lifestyles. Staff are correctly aware of the need to develop further pupils' understanding of the diverse nature of modern Britain as shown through pupils visiting a museum in East London.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is very effective in ensuring that pupils are engaged in their learning and well

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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motivated. Pupils' interest and enjoyment are captured well because teachers plan lessons which are stimulating and meet pupils' needs. Teachers use good subject knowledge and information from accurately assessing pupils' work to plan lessons which build systematically on previous learning. Pupils have individual targets but sometimes these are written in language which they find difficult to understand. Staff use questioning well to develop pupils' thinking, for example in mathematics, and to assess whether they have understood the key learning points. They make useful comments to encourage pupils' progress during lessons and when marking their work. The expertise of teaching assistants is used effectively to support pupils, particularly those who find learning difficult or need additional challenge. Staff and pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) well throughout the day to stimulate teaching and aid learning.

The curriculum is well organised, imaginative and effective in providing learning opportunities which sustain pupils' interests. Effective links between subjects, and teaching through a 'theme' help to make learning more relevant for pupils. The curriculum is beginning to meet the pupils' needs in relation to improving their writing skills. Success in gaining national recognition for sports, and healthy schools status reflect good provision which develops pupils' understanding of how to live healthy, active lives. Visits and visitors successfully enrich the curriculum and capture pupils' interests. There is a good range of popular clubs and activities for a school of this size.

The particularly good relationships evident throughout the school and the well-organised arrangements for the care of all pupils contribute to their good development, well-being and learning. The effective monitoring of pupils' progress identifies those in danger of falling behind or who have special educational needs. Effective support is given to ensure that they develop confidence as learners and consequently make good progress. Good links with the secondary school ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team and other leaders and managers are well motivated and committed to bringing about improvement. Appropriate priorities have been identified and a common vision for improvement shared with all staff, such as the recent introduction of initiatives to improve the teaching of writing and thereby raise standards.

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Staff are encouraged to be innovative, as can be seen by the successful strategies put into place to improve standards in mathematics, and morale is high. They effectively monitor pupils' progress and set challenging targets based on a realistic evaluation of what individual pupils can achieve. This reflects the school's drive for improvement.

Staff help parents and carers to support their children's learning by providing them with information about teaching and the curriculum, and by formally asking for their views and opinions through questionnaires. The school is highly committed to working in partnership with others. Good partnerships have been developed with local schools which help to extend opportunities for pupils' learning. Additional challenges are provided for the more capable pupils and older pupils join others from a local school to experience a popular residential visit.

The school is fully aware of the groups of pupils who may be subject to discrimination, and effective support and promotion of equality of opportunity ensure that they do well in school. Staff have a clear understanding of the school's religious, ethnic and socio-economic context but there is only limited evidence of its success in promoting community cohesion beyond the school. Formal procedures to protect pupils and keep them safe are satisfactory. Staff know which pupils are at risk and give priority to ensuring their welfare. Governors are effective in supporting the school but do not follow a formal cycle of self-evaluation and review in order to ensure that policies and procedures are fully up-to-date as part of their role in monitoring the school's progress.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

**Early Years Foundation Stage**



**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

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Excellent liaison with the Nursery and the welcoming and supportive approach of staff ensure that children settle quickly and enjoy their learning. Children achieve well and make good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Staff are aware of their below average skills in communication, language and literacy on entry and take every opportunity to improve these areas. By the time they enter Year 1, nearly all reach the levels expected for their age across all areas of learning. Staff have a good understanding of how young children learn and plan activities which are enjoyable and challenging. Opportunities are provided for children to explore through participating in a good range of adult-led activities, for example making a Christmas pudding. Activities take place outside the classroom but the use of this area is not fully effective in encouraging children to follow their own interests. Teaching is good. Activities encourage children to develop skills in learning alone and with others. Relationships are good and children keep themselves and others safe through their good behaviour. Effective assessment of the children's learning and interests is used to plan activities which promote the next small steps in learning. Parents are encouraged to contribute to this process by highlighting their child's achievements and what they have done out of school. Good leadership and management are focused on providing interesting and worthwhile experiences and children's learning and welfare are promoted well.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

**Views of parents and carers**

Nearly all of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are supportive of the school and the experiences it provides. They say that teaching is good and their children make good progress. They believe the school to be well led and managed and they are helped to support their child's learning. Whilst one or two raised issues across a few areas, inspectors found no evidence to support their concerns.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at De Vere Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 29 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 127 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	62	10	34	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	15	52	11	38	2	7	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	48	13	45	2	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	50	14	50	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	57	11	39	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	63	10	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	64	10	36	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	12	44	8	30	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	57	11	39	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	37	13	48	0	0	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	41	13	48	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	14	48	15	52	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	59	12	41	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



23 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of De Vere Primary School, Castle Hedingham CO9 3EA

You may remember that inspectors recently visited your school to look at lessons and see what you are learning. Thank you for making us feel so welcome. We really enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. We agree with you and your parents and think De Vere Primary is a good school. Here are some of the things we found out.

You do well so that by the time you leave school you are well prepared to continue learning at secondary school.

You enjoy learning because teaching is good and teachers make the lessons interesting. You are kind to each other and behave well. We like the way you enjoy working with each other in lessons.

All the adults look after you well so you feel really safe in school and know who to go to if you have a problem.

You understand what you need to do to stay fit and healthy and this is beginning to affect what you eat and how you exercise. Congratulations to the football team for playing well and to the ballroom dancers for learning those steps.

You attend school regularly so do not miss any valuable lessons. Well done!

Even in a good school such as yours, there are things which could be improved. We have spoken with the headteacher, staff and governors and they have agreed to do the following things.

They will continue to help you improve your writing so please try hard and write as much as you can, both in school and at home.

They will also try to find out how successful the school's work is in helping people to get on well together, both in school and the wider community.

A new Chair of Governors has been appointed and we have asked senior teachers to help her and the other governors to make sure they keep up to date with how the school is doing.

We hope you all keep on working hard and enjoy being at school.

Yours faithfully

Ruth Frith

Lead inspector

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