

Dunmow St Mary's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115299
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338556
Inspection dates	17-18 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Joanna Beckford-Hall HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	433
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs K Hepper
Headteacher	Mrs Val White
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2007
School address	High Stile Great Dunmow Dunmow Essex CM6 1EB
Telephone number	01371 872340
Fax number	01371 875144
Email address	admin@dsmprimary.essex.sch.uk

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, observed two assemblies and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, reviewed policy documents, minutes of governors' meetings, looked at pupils' work and pupil questionnaires, and 155 parental questionnaires. Staff questionnaires were also reviewed.

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

- how effectively the school cares for pupils, especially those joining the school throughout the year and those who speak English as an additional language
- evidence that current attainment and progress is good
- the impact of teachers use of assessment to plan learning matched to the needs of all pupils
- how effectively monitoring and evaluation of school improvement by leaders and governors, leads to better outcomes for all pupils.

Information about the school

Dunmow St Mary's Primary School is an oversubscribed, larger than average primary school. The school is located close to Stansted airport, area where the expansion of housing and business enterprise is leading to an increasingly mobile pupil population. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average but numbers have been rising over the last three years. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average and those pupils entitled to free school meals, remains below national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is increasing and is just above the national average.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage provision in Reception class. Privately operated breakfast and after school clubs operate from the school and have been inspected separately.

The school gained Training School status in 2001.

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 popular and friendly school where all pupils receive a good education. Pupils told inspectors that no one feels left out because pupils know how to learn and play together. Pupils have very strong moral, spiritual and cultural values which reflect efforts of all staff in helping pupils respect difference, creating an inclusive school community. Comments from parents reflect this; 'we believe this to be a strongly led, highly creative school which allows children to reach their potential and flourish'. Another parent commented the school has 'a huge sense of community spirit'.

Attendance is good and pupils enjoy school. Pupils feel safe and well looked after knowing they can share any concerns they have with staff. One pupil said 'our teachers really know us'. This is a key strength in the good care and support that pupils and families receive. The school takes time to get to know each pupil to make sure that none slip through the net.

A celebrated feature of the outstanding curriculum is pupils first hand experiences in learning about different cultures in British society, an improvement since the last inspection. Through increased topic based work and links with local businesses and places of worship, pupils understand many cultures and their respective traditions. One pupil eloquently explained how pupils learn about racism and was pleased that at school everyone gets along. Inspectors observed two assemblies which effectively engaged pupils in discussion about the meaning of prayer, why people pray and symbols representing different faiths.

Pupils achieve well at the school. By the time they leave in Year 6 attainment is above the national average. School data and lesson observations reveal that most progress is made during Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 1 pupils attain standards in mathematics and reading that are above average and pupils make most progress in their reading. Children who join the Early Years Foundation Stage receive a good start to their schooling and make good progress.

Teaching often has a good pace, good use of questions to probe and assess what pupils are learning, and good use of information and communication technology (ICT). In outstanding teaching the buzz of fast paced learning, high expectations and clarity of explanations helps pupils quickly grasp new concepts. These features of good and outstanding teaching are not consistently embedded in teaching across the whole school. Senior leaders rightly recognise this as needing further development to drive all teaching to an outstanding level.

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Leaders and managers have good insight into strengths and areas for development. Monitoring over time has been responsive to the changing needs of the pupils and families. Leaders have good understanding of local community issues and work hard to make sure that the inclusive environment in the school extends into the wider local community, taking account of how the school can continue to build partnerships to sustain the rich curriculum and pupils understanding of local, national and global issues. There is good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Share and embed the already good and outstanding aspects of teaching in the school so that:
 - the percentage of consistently good and outstanding teaching increases across the whole school by July 2010
 - all lessons consistently give much greater challenge to the most able and gifted and talented pupils, leading to outstanding progress
- Persistently use the now detailed tracking and assessment information to:
 - Keep pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 well informed of their targets so that they know what to aim for and understand the learning expectations as they move through the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Unvalidated test results for Year 6 pupils who left in 2009 show pupils attained significantly above average standards in English, mathematics and science. This is an improvement on 2008 results which dipped slightly from significantly above average results in 2007. Pupils develop good speaking and listening skills and the school has worked hard to keep improving pupils' writing skills.

Impact of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is monitored regularly leading to good progress. The same is true for pupils with medical and social and behavioural needs. Astute use of teaching and support assistants helps these particular pupil groups make good progress. Pupils at an early stage of learning English are carefully assessed and the learning support they receive helps them to make at least satisfactory progress.

Behaviour for assemblies is exemplary and around school it is good. Pupils told inspectors that because they understand rules and rewards everyone tries hard to behave well. They know why getting along with each other is important and can describe how they learn about respecting difference and resolving occasional playground conflict. Inspectors observed good behaviour in lessons helping pupils

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concentrate on learning. Where inspectors observed satisfactory progress in a few lessons it was because these lessons did not fully cater for the levels of ability in the class, work was too simple and pupils lost concentration.

Pupils' understanding of a healthy diet and why fitness is important is outstanding. They talk confidently about how the body works and responds to different food types. This combined with high participation in sports clubs, is very impressive.

Pupils hold the school council in high regard. They feel really positive about school leaders responding to their ideas. Pupils are very active in fundraising and relish the chance to take part in community events, such as the choir performing at the carnival and the steel band playing at the local fete or raising money for a school in Kenya.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In lessons where teaching was good or outstanding inspectors saw the following characteristics to help pupils make good progress:

- energetic and stimulating teaching that sustained good pace
- very good use of peer assessment to help pupils question and learn by watching and evaluating
- well planned activities matching the needs of most learners
- clear explanations so that pupils could follow the lesson objectives and create

¹ 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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their own success criteria

- very good use of talk and discussion to deepen learning.

Processes for assessment and tracking of pupils are systematic and most class teachers have a clear picture of pupils' attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities enjoy one to one learning opportunities and the school data shows how much these sessions help pupils particularly with their phonics work and with their reading. This is because assessment information underpins day to day practice. Use of assessment data to plan lessons for gifted and talented and more able pupils is less effective and they do not receive sufficient challenge. Marking in Key Stage 1 does not always help pupils know what levels they are working at or how to meet their targets. Pupils told inspectors they need more help with this and inspectors agree.

Leaders effectively monitor the curriculum to make sure it is outstanding. One pupil said 'we love what we can do at school because we get trips and projects to help us to understand more about what we learn in school'. Different types of learning built into the curriculum give pupils time to apply their literacy, numeracy and reading skills in projects. The pumpkin soup café requires Year 2 pupils to use numeracy skills in running their own enterprise. Workshops for gifted and talented pupils with local schools extend learning in team work and practical ways. Pupils also say how much they enjoy learning French from Year 1.

Care, guidance and support is good because staff make sure that barriers to learning are removed by working closely with families and carers. Deployment of resources is well matched to need. Work with external agencies is effective in caring for vulnerable pupils and those with medical, behavioural or social difficulties. Parents are positive about pastoral support their children receive but some pupils said on their questionnaires they would like more help when they change classes through the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides effective leadership and is well supported by senior and middle leaders. There is cohesion and good team spirit because everyone is engaged in leading parts of whole school improvement. Staff questionnaires were

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overwhelmingly positive. A longer term aspirational vision for the school to move from good to outstanding is less vividly captured in school action plans.

There is an assured sense of purpose to raise the quality of teaching and learning. Appropriate use of team teaching and observations by leaders generates understanding of good and outstanding classroom practice, although high aspirational targets for pupils are not consistently used by all staff. The impact of recent tracking work has given leaders a clear picture of levels of achievement. Senior leaders recognise that systematic and more rigorous interrogation of data to plan differentiated activities for the more able pupils, and informing pupils of their targets at Key Stage 1, warrants even further development.

Promoting equality of opportunity amongst different groups of pupils is good. Leaders monitor attainment and progress to address emergent gaps between different pupil groups, particularly between boys and girls and those with statements of special educational need.

The impact of Training School status is evident in reputable work with trainees, enriching the mentoring skills of staff and in the successful recruitment of trainees into staffing positions at the school.

Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. The school meets its statutory duty in the safe vetting and checking of the school workforce. Staff training in child protection is up to date and there is a secure understanding of child protection policy.

Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school action plan. Governor attachment to classes helps governors assess progress of pupils and keep a close eye on the quality of teaching and learning. Governors require leaders to set challenging targets and support the headteacher in her drive to raise achievement. Despite these strengths governors lack urgency in addressing some key issues. Some issues have lingered for too long resulting less action being taken than would be desirable. Governors acknowledge that urgent decisions need more vigorous pace.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and the school ensures there are secure transition arrangements for children and parents from playgroups and nursery schools. Through visits and a well focused induction, with children visiting the school, there are good relationships with parents. Parent comments were very positive about transition arrangements creating a warm welcome at the school.

Children happily play, learn together and get to know each other quickly. They relate well to the adults who care and learn with them each day. There is good regard for statutory health and safety requirements and children show good understanding of hygiene and safe play. After gardening activities children knew they had to wash their hands and did so independently. Classrooms and outdoor play areas are well resourced and vibrant. A 'writing cave' encourages children's literacy and creative skills.

Behaviour is generally good. Children listen and learn. On occasion, too much teacher talk keeps children sitting for too long and a few become restless and lose concentration.

Teaching is generally good and gives opportunities for children to make choices and plan their own learning. Weekly and daily planning does take account of all the areas of learning but some planning remains too unstructured. Tracking of children against learning goals is predominantly secure but use of this to match learning objectives to outcomes for every child needs to be sharper.

Children entering Reception have a wide range of skill level from those with skills and knowledge below age related expectations to those who are broadly in line with expectations. A few are above expectations. From these diverse starting points children make good progress. By the time they leave Reception and move into Year 1 they have reached or exceeded goals expected for their age, although writing remains a less successful area of achievement.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were pleased with the schools work. Parent views show that key strengths include how the school is led and most parents feel that teaching is good. However, a number of parents expressed concern that there are instances of unruly or bullying behaviour that is not dealt with quickly enough by staff. Pupils feel that bullying is dealt with satisfactorily by teaching staff and leaders. Inspectors saw good behaviour in lessons although boisterous behaviour at lunchtimes was commented on by a few pupils. Some parents requested more information about their child's progress and inspectors agree that this would help both the children and parents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dunmow St Mary's 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 155 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection.

In total, there are 433 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	96	62%	57	37%	0	0%	1	1%
The school keeps my child safe	95	61%	57	37%	2	1%	0	0%
The school informs me about my child's progress	56	80%	80	52%	9	6%	1	1%
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	38%	73	47%	10	6%	1	1%
The teaching is good at this school	93	60%	56	36%	2	1%	1	1%
The school helps me to support my child's learning	68	44%	74	48%	6	4%	2	1%
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	93	60%	60	39%	2	1%	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)	69	45%	71	46%	2	1%	1	1%
The school meets my child's particular needs	72	46%	67	43%	9	6%	3	1%
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	33%	71	46%	17	11%	4	3%
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	54	35%	80	52%	5	3%	2	1%
The school is led and managed effectively	91	59%	59	38%	2	1%	1	1%
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	102	49%	102	49%	3	1%	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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

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>the following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



21 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dunmow St Mary's Primary School, Great Dunmow, CM6 1EB

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we came to visit your school. We enjoyed talking to you about your work, watching your lessons and hearing about the many different clubs and projects you enjoy at school. We have judged your school to be a good school.

We saw how you get along in lessons, working in pairs and groups to help each other learn and you listened well to ideas about prayer in your assemblies. We agree with you that your school is a good community because you feel safe and you know the difference between right and wrong. We are confident like you, that any disagreements are sorted out quickly.

We were very impressed with how much you know and how enthusiastic you are about being healthy and staying fit. Well done. This will help you to keep enjoying lots of sports activities and will mean you learn a lot more in school if you have lots of energy.

There are a few things we have asked your headteacher and her staff to make even better. Some of you said you would like more challenge in your lessons. We have asked your teachers to use the assessment information they have about your progress to plan activities to make you have to think hard about new things you are learning. Most of you enjoy your lessons but some of you told us that you do not know what targets you have to reach. We have asked that your teachers help more with this, especially in Years 1, 2 and 3.

We have asked that the really good teaching in your school continues to get even better so that by the time the inspectors visit again we see lots of outstanding teaching, giving everyone a really good chance of making even better progress from Reception to Year 6.

We wish you all a really happy and successful time at school.

Yours faithfully
Joanna Beckford- Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

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