

Dymchurch Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118565
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339244
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Alison Cartlidge

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Bateman
Headteacher	Mark Fisher
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2010
School address	New Hall Close Romney Marsh TN29 0LE
Telephone number	01303 872377
Fax number	01303 873909
Email address	headteacher@dymchurch.kent.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors saw 10 teachers at work in 11 lessons. They held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, information on pupils' progress, safeguarding and other documents. Questionnaires from 48 parents and carers, 16 members of staff and 75 pupils were scrutinised.

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

- learning and progress across the school, especially in writing
- how well teachers meet pupils' differing needs
- how the school supports pupils in enjoying school
- the impact of all leaders, including the governors, on provision and pupils' progress.

Information about the school

Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The school has a broadly average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Several new teachers have joined the school in the last three years, and three are temporary appointments due to a falling school roll. The school has received several awards, including the Activemark.

The nursery and breakfast and after-school clubs are run by outside providers and were not part of this inspection.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Children make a sound start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but teaching from Years 1 to 6 is not ensuring that pupils build consistently on what they already know. There is too much teaching that is barely satisfactory and not enough that is good. Often, the pace of learning is too slow because the planned activities do not match the needs and capabilities of different groups of pupils. This is because teachers do not always use assessment information rigorously enough when planning the next steps in learning for each pupil. As a result, attainment is low by the end of Year 6. In English, pupils use limited vocabulary in their writing and opportunities are missed to develop pupils' writing skills through other subjects. In mathematics, pupils find it difficult to apply what they have learnt to real situations; in science some topics are not covered in sufficient depth and pupils do not use their scientific knowledge when drawing conclusions from their observations. The curriculum is not planned carefully enough to ensure progression in learning for all groups of pupils.

Pupils enjoy coming to this welcoming and happy school and told inspectors 'school is fun.' Pupils say that they feel safe at school because of the good care members of staff provide. As one pupil put it, 'teachers are kind and care about us'. Pupils are good at taking responsibility for a wide range of tasks around school and are especially proud about helping each other and those in need. Pupils are good at keeping healthy by taking exercise.

Despite a willingness from members of staff to develop the school, the capacity to improve is inadequate. Procedures for self-evaluation are not sufficiently robust to ensure that all leaders are equipped to help improve the school. Recent strategies to increase pupils' progress are beginning to lead to some signs of improvement but it is too soon, and the signs are too patchy, for this to demonstrate that the decline in attainment since the last inspection has been halted. Leaders are aware that provision across the school is not consistent enough to ensure that pupils always make enough progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English, mathematics and science by:

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- extending pupils? use of vocabulary in their writing across the curriculum
- increasing opportunities for pupils to use calculations to solve mathematical problems in real situations
- strengthening the depth of pupils? knowledge across the science curriculum and ensuring that they use this knowledge to help explain the conclusions they have made during investigations.
- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring teachers take more responsibility for checking how well pupils are learning and use this information more rigorously to plan work that meets pupils? differing needs
 - making sure that pupils are consistently challenged throughout lessons so that learning moves forward swiftly.
- Increase the impact of subject leaders and governors on pupils? learning by ensuring that leaders have a sharper understanding of provision and progress across the school and greater involvement in driving improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Pupils? progress, including those with special educational needs, is inadequate. The result is that attainment is low by the end of Year 6, and pupils are not prepared well enough for the next stage of their education and later life. Pupils make inadequate progress in the lessons in which all pupils complete the same or a similar task, and learning is not moved on swiftly enough. This causes some pupils to become frustrated. When teachers meet pupils? needs well, pupils are inspired to try hard and learn quickly. For example, in a good literacy lesson in Year 6, pupils were challenged to do their best work and were keen to share their ideas about when instructions are needed.

Good relationships between staff and pupils have resulted in behaviour being mostly good in lessons, although pupils can become a little noisy and become distracted when they are insufficiently engaged in their learning. A minority of pupils express concerns over the behaviour of others and feel that ?behaviour should be improved?. Pupils enjoy coming to school and cooperate with each other well when working in small groups or pairs. For example, younger pupils shared ideas sensibly about how to improve their poems about tigers, although their participation was limited by working in slightly too large groups. Pupils are happy that the school handles their concerns well.

Pupils? sound spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is demonstrated in their thoughtful responses in lessons and assemblies and in how they show consideration for the needs and views of others. Pupils? understanding of cultures other than their own is developing satisfactorily through links with schools in contrasting locations. Pupils contribute to the community well by taking on various responsibilities in school. The school council is proud of raising considerable funds to support the Haiti appeal. Pupils are right to be proud of the Activemark, because they are keen to take part in sports clubs and shake-up and wake-up activities. They understand the benefit of eating

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healthy foods, although they do not always follow this advice.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

While no individual lessons were judged to be inadequate during the inspection, several were only satisfactory and only one was judged to be good. The overall impact of the teaching on pupils' progress is not good enough. The work in pupils' books confirms this. Teachers are enthusiastic and keen to improve their practice but are not considering the wide range of differing needs in their classes well enough when planning work. They do not make sufficiently rigorous use of the information gained from assessments of pupils' learning and progress to ensure that planned activities build consistently on each pupil's previous learning. Teachers often plan activities that engage pupils well and that they enjoy, as when pupils played 'shape bingo' in a mathematics lesson. However, the pace of learning is not rapid enough in many lessons and this leads to an accumulation of underachievement over time. Rates of progress vary too much between classes and subjects.

The curriculum is enriched well through clubs, especially in sport. Links between

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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subjects are developing, although pupils have too few opportunities to practise and extend their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Insufficient attention is given to monitoring the curriculum to ensure full coverage, and that provision meets the needs of all abilities well enough. Some intervention support, particularly for pupils with special educational needs, is starting to have a positive impact on learning. Members of staff provide good pastoral care for the pupils by praising and rewarding achievements and they manage pupils' behaviour well, resulting in most lessons being calm.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders are aware that the school is not good enough and have put into place strategies to help raise attainment and improve pupils' progress. It is too early to demonstrate that these developments will have a long-term impact. There have been several staff changes and a falling roll in recent years, slowing the pace of improvement. Subject leaders have received recent training to equip them to embed ambition and drive improvement in the subjects they manage, although it is as yet having insufficient impact. Teaching and learning are monitored with suitable frequency but the main weaknesses are not being tackled fast enough. The impact of self-evaluation is inadequate because not all leaders are aware of what they need to do to bring about rapid and sustained improvement. Recent developments remain too fragile to demonstrate a sound capacity to improve. The school has a strong commitment to equal opportunities and is tracking the progress of groups more closely than in the past, so that support can be given as needed. Strategies to increase the rate of progress for less able pupils and those with special educational needs are starting to show benefits. Governance is inadequate because, while statutory duties are met, the relatively newly formed governing body is not having enough impact on improving the school. This is because the governing body does not focus rigorously enough on what needs to be done to raise pupils' attainment.

At the time of the inspection, the school's safeguarding arrangements were found to be satisfactory. There are a few minor administrative weaknesses, but these are not putting pupils' safety at risk. Leaders have sound relationships with parents, carers and external agencies, enabling them to support pupils who are finding life difficult, and to ensure that there are no forms of discrimination. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily and has suitable links with schools in contrasting areas. Various cultures

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are celebrated and respected and the school has sound plans to extend pupils' knowledge further by increasing global links.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

The majority of children join the school with skills and abilities that are below those expected for their age group. They make at least satisfactory progress and attainment is broadly average by the time they enter Year 1, except in writing, where it is low. Teachers and teaching assistants have good relationships with the children, enabling them to settle into routines and gain confidence. Children behave well and are polite and friendly. They are keen to talk about their involvement in the fun activities linked to the common theme of dinosaurs. For example, they enjoyed matching the fossils hidden in the sand with a diagram. Interesting role play areas, such as the lost property office, are enjoyed by the children and support their speaking, listening and independence well. Members of staff ask good questions to promote and assess learning, especially when children are working at activities they have chosen for themselves. Occasionally during whole-class discussions, the pace of learning drops when children have been working on one task for too long or the purpose of the activity is not fully explained. When this happens, some children start to become restless and learning suffers as a result. Leaders have started to analyse information on children's progress more rigorously and to use it to help plan the curriculum. For example, this year they have included more opportunities for writing to help close this gap in the children's learning. The children particularly enjoy correcting 'Growly' the puppet's mistakes. Leaders have suitable plans to improve the outdoor area so that it can be used more flexibly during poor

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weather.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are pleased with the work of the school: they are particularly positive about the fact their children are kept safe and healthy, a conclusion with which the inspectors agreed. A small minority of parents and carers who replied to the Ofsted questionnaire expressed concerns about teaching, their child’s progress and the help they receive to support it, with which inspectors agree. Others were concerned about the way unacceptable behaviour is dealt with and the way the school informs them of their children’s progress. The school’s systems for managing behaviour were found to be effective in ensuring that most pupils behave well. Inspectors agreed with the majority views of parents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dymchurch 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 48 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 209 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	44	22	46	4	8	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	28	58	17	35	3	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	33	21	44	10	21	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	35	22	46	6	13	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	20	42	20	42	7	15	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	33	24	50	8	17	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	40	27	56	1	2	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)	16	33	24	50	6	13	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	33	27	56	3	6	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	29	20	42	8	17	5	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	40	21	44	5	10	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	22	46	22	46	3	6	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	44	22	46	4	8	1	2

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

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

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">■ 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 pupil's 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.



26 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dymchurch Primary School, Dymchurch TN29 0LE

Thank you for being so helpful during our visit. We are pleased that you enjoy coming to school. We found that your school needs some extra help to make sure that it improves quickly.

These are the best things about your school.

- You are good at helping each other and those in need.
- It is good that you are polite and friendly.
- We agree with you that your teachers care about you.
- Your headteacher and other leaders want to make the school better.

These are the things we have asked your school to do next.

- Help you to use a wider range of words in your writing in different subjects.
- Give you more opportunities to solve mathematical problems in real situations.
- Teach you more about science and how to use what you have learnt to explain things you find out during investigations.
- Help teachers to check how well you are learning and to use this information to plan work that is just right for each of you throughout your lessons.
- Help all leaders to understand how well teachers are helping you to learn in all classes so that they can help the school to improve quickly.

Thank you once again for talking with us about your school and showing us your work.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cartlidge

Lead inspector

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