

Ditton Church of England Junior School

New Road, Aylesford, Kent ME20 6AE

Inspection dates 8–9 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Senior leaders and governors have taken robust action to tackle past weaknesses. This has led to significant improvements in teaching and achievement since the last inspection.
- Standards are now above average. Writing is a significant strength. Pupils now make rapid progress in the development of their writing skills.
- The school works hard to meet the needs of all pupils. Gypsy/Roma pupils are supported well, both socially and academically.
- Provision to support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is consistently good.
- Teaching is good. Pupils are appropriately challenged to make good progress. Teachers are very ambitious for pupils to succeed. Systems for checking pupils' progress, particularly in writing, are well established.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils feel safe. They have very positive attitudes to learning. They behave well and produce good-quality written work. Attendance is well above the national average.
- Governors are well informed about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching, and are increasingly effective in supporting school improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although the achievement of disadvantaged pupils has improved, these pupils do not always make rapid enough progress.
- While pupils achieve well in literacy and numeracy, their achievement in other subjects, particularly science, is not as strong. Not enough time is given to developing skills and understanding in the wider curriculum.
- Current good practice in the marking of writing is not consistently evident in the marking of work in other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, five of which were seen jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked closely at pupils' written work for the current school year. They listened to some pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, the school's senior leaders and with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 22 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 22 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also looked at the results of a survey of parents conducted by the school in the last term.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documents, including plans for improvement and records of the school's checks on the quality of teaching. They also considered local authority review reports, the governing body minutes and records relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and the systems used to track pupils' progress.

Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Doug Stroud

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ditton Church of England Junior School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. A small number of pupils are of Gypsy/Roma heritage.
- About one in every six pupils is disabled or has special educational needs. This is around the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after) is about one in every six pupils. This is below the national average.
- The school shares a site with its main feeder infant school. This is managed and inspected separately.
- The school offers an after-school care club. This is also managed and inspected separately.
- From September 2012 until July 2014, this school was in informal collaboration with Ditton Infant School. The headteacher of Ditton Infant School was the executive headteacher with oversight of both schools.
- The current headteacher joined the school on an interim basis in September 2014. Governors are seeking to make a permanent appointment to the headship from September 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is closely monitored to ensure that the remaining inconsistencies are eliminated and that the gap in achievement is further reduced across the school.
- Ensure that sufficient time and priority is given to subjects other than literacy and numeracy, so that pupils' achievement, particularly in science, is significantly increased.
- Ensure that the current strengths in the marking of writing, where pupils receive clear guidance as to what they need to do to improve, are also deployed in other subjects of the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Early indications at the last inspection that improved leadership was beginning to drive significant changes in the school have proved to be accurate. In the ensuing two years, there have been considerable improvements in teaching and, more recently, in pupils' achievement. Despite the subsequent, recent changes in senior leadership, the school has maintained a steady course of improvement.
 - The school's self-evaluation is realistic and accurate. Data on pupils' achievement are analysed rigorously and known to all staff. The priorities in the school improvement plan are appropriate.
 - Despite recent changes, the expectations of subject leaders are high and this contributes to increased leadership capacity. Key subject leaders are knowledgeable and increasingly effective in monitoring and supporting their colleagues. They are clear as to where further improvements are needed.
 - The school accurately evaluates the quality of teaching and has ensured significant improvements so that almost all teaching is now good, with some that is outstanding. Teachers receive accurate feedback about their teaching and appropriate support to help them improve.
 - Systems to manage teachers' performance are effective. Targets are closely linked to what pupils need to achieve. Staff become eligible for higher salary payments only if they demonstrate a significant impact upon pupils' achievement. Teachers use performance data well to plan challenging lessons.
 - Effective use of additional funding is ensuring a mostly positive impact on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school. Some variations still exist, although, broadly, the gap in achievement is closing.
 - School leaders successfully promote pupils' personal and social development. Consequently, pupils are kept safe and behave well. Safeguarding requirements are met. Leaders promote a positive ethos which encourages good behaviour and care for others.
 - Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Although the community is not ethnically diverse, pupils are generally well-prepared for life in contemporary British society. They visit a range of places of worship and learn about democratic institutions such as the parliamentary and local government systems.
 - The structure and content of the curriculum is consistent with recent changes nationally. The revisions were agreed jointly with the infant school. Initial evaluations suggest, however, that further work is needed. There is not enough focused teaching of science, for example, to allow pupils to acquire the desirable depth of knowledge and skills. The school has identified a modified assessment system to replace levels as these are phased out and is evaluating the extent to which the system adopted is fit for purpose.
 - Activities funded through the primary school sport funding have increased pupils' participation in football clubs and gymnastics. The school aims to sustain the impact of this funding through good-quality staff training. As yet, however, opportunities for involvement in competitive sport are not extensive.
 - The school has received good support from the local authority in order to support improvement. While relationships with most parents are positive overall, the school recognises the importance of improving communication and parental involvement. The school engages particularly well with the parents of Gypsy/Roma pupils so that these families have a generally positive commitment to education.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The strengths in governance identified at the last inspection have been developed further. Governors have updated their training and bring good skills and experience to their role. They have a presence in the school, provide significant challenge to school leaders and play a major role in driving improvement. Governors understand how the school's performance compares with that of schools nationally. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaker aspects of teaching. Governors ensure that pay increases properly reflect individual teachers' effectiveness. Governors ensure that the school promotes tolerance, provides equality of opportunity and tackles any discrimination. They evaluate the impact of additional funding on gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others. Alongside senior leaders, they ensure that statutory duties are met, including those for the safeguarding of pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning are a key strength. Pupils work well individually and in small groups. They sustain their attention and effort for extended periods. Written work, particularly in Years 5 and 6, is produced to a high standard.
- Pupils undertake many duties, so enabling the school to run efficiently. All older pupils have particular responsibilities. Some are playground leaders, supporting both infant and junior school pupils. Others act as buddies, or take responsibility for keeping parts of the school tidy.
- Low-level disruption or time-wasting is rare. There have been no recent exclusions. Behaviour is well managed both in class and around the school. Relationships are very good. Pupils understand the potential impact of their actions upon others. Most pupils and parents feel that behaviour is good.
- The school has effective systems to promote regular attendance. Levels of attendance are well above average for most pupils.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school site is secure and entry procedures are monitored well. Risk assessments are thorough. Staff recruitment procedures are thorough. Safeguarding arrangements, and staff training, meet national requirements.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They look out for each other and know that help from staff is always available.
- The school provides regular updates on road safety and on the risks arising from the internet, social networking sites and cyber-bullying.
- Pupils recognise the risks of bullying and are aware that these may take different forms. Pupils feel, however, that incidents in this school are rare.

The quality of teaching is good

- Improvements in teaching in the last two years have contributed strongly to more rapid learning in English and mathematics. Teachers are united in their commitment to make the school even better, building upon the many recent improvements. Pupils experience mostly good teaching in literacy and mathematics, with some that is outstanding. Teachers provide appropriate levels of challenge so that learning is good. This was evident in a very successful Year 6 literacy lesson where pupils were improving a first-person narrative which they had drafted earlier. Pupils of all abilities had produced completed work of good quality. They approached the editing task with enthusiasm, commitment and maturity, demonstrating a high level of engagement.
- While teachers are skilled at promoting increasingly high standards in literacy and numeracy, they have not yet been as effective in ensuring that standards are consistently high in other subjects. This is largely because the time given to these subjects is not sufficient for pupils to acquire as substantial a depth of knowledge as in English and mathematics.
- Most disadvantaged pupils achieve well because their progress is carefully tracked and they receive effective support, although some inconsistencies remain. Additional support is carefully planned, with learning support staff successfully promoting the learning of small groups and individuals.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) is effective. Additional support is provided for pupils who have not made sufficiently rapid progress. Pupils have some opportunities to practise their reading across the curriculum, so extending their skills and understanding of language.
- The school has effective systems for checking and improving pupils' progress. Teachers' marking, particularly of writing, is thorough and shows clearly what pupils have to do next. These good skills are only inconsistently evident in the marking of other subjects. A new system of individual targets is being trialled.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Since the last inspection, achievement has improved considerably, consistent with significant improvements in teaching. In 2011, standards were significantly below average. In 2014, they were significantly above. The improvement was particularly evident in writing, where standards were significantly above average in 2014. This resulted from an intensive focus on the development of pupils'

writing skills. Standards in mathematics and in English grammar, punctuation and spelling were also above average. The emerging strengths in writing remain evident in the mature writing of current pupils.

- The school has shown determination in responding to slightly weaker outcomes in reading in 2014, so that progress in reading is now good and standards are securely above average. Pupils' knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is good and any weaknesses are addressed in Year 3. Most pupils are very competent readers.
- For many years, pupils had typically made inconsistent, often slow, progress. As a result of improvements in teaching, progress has improved steadily over the last two years. Pupils' progress in writing by the end of Year 6 has improved particularly well. Progress within year groups, from above average starting points on entry to Year 3, is now good, and improving year-on-year. This is clearly reflected in pupils' books. Current data, and evidence in lessons, indicate that the significant improvement in 2014 is likely to be sustained.
- Standards in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics are more variable. For example, too little time is given to the teaching of science, so pupils have limited opportunity to develop skills and knowledge in depth.
- In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 was around three terms behind the others in the year group in mathematics and reading, and just over two terms behind them in writing. They were three terms behind other pupils nationally in all three subjects. For other year groups, the gap was more variable, although numbers were often low. These pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of.
- Provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is managed with considerable skill. Additional teaching to meet the needs of these pupils is very effective, so that they make similar good progress to the others.
- The most able pupils are now learning more rapidly. An increasing proportion of Year 6 pupils are working towards the challenging Level 6, particularly in mathematics and reading. Almost one third of the current Year 6 pupils - a high proportion - have gained entry to secondary grammar schools.
- The achievement of pupils from Gypsy/Roma families is variable. Some attain standards at least at the national average. Others, particularly where attendance is more erratic, attain less well, particularly in reading and writing.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118854
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	453639

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr John Wainwright
Headteacher	Robert Worth
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2013
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