

Ditchling (St Margaret's) Church of England Primary School

Lewes Road, Ditchling, East Sussex BN6 8TU

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2017

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Outstanding |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides effective and inspiring leadership. Parents appreciate the many improvements she has made, with governors and other leaders, to teaching, learning and the curriculum.
- Governors share the headteacher's ambition to provide the very best. Well-targeted training has ensured that staff have good subject knowledge so that lessons motivate pupils.
- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well. Teachers' effective questioning and guidance deepens pupils' understanding.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years and are well prepared for Year 1. They make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders make effective use of the extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. However, systems to check the difference it makes are new and are not yet embedded.
- Pupils are kept very safe in school and have an excellent understanding of how to manage risk. They have a mature understanding of challenges faced by our modern society.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are considerate, thoughtful and highly committed to learning. Respect for others underpins everyone's experiences at this school.
- Pupils benefit from a rich and engaging curriculum. They thrive on the motivating opportunities staff organise.
- Sport and physical education greatly enrich school life. Pupils know how to stay healthy and show a keen interest in their diet and mental health.
- Many leaders are new to post and have not yet developed precise enough plans for improvement. Their systems to measure progress lack rigour.
- Pupils achieve well by the end of key stage 2 particularly in reading. However, pupils' spelling and reasoning skills have weaknesses.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge in most subjects. However, some teachers lack confidence in teaching the new computing curriculum.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, so that key stage 2 pupils make faster progress by:
 - sharpening pupils' reasoning skills and helping them to be more systematic when completing mathematical calculations
 - giving greater attention to pupils' spelling so that they spell with increased accuracy
 - developing teachers' knowledge and skills of the computing curriculum.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the improvement plans for English and mathematics help leaders and governors to accurately measure and evaluate the impact of these plans on pupils' progress
 - new systems to measure the impact of extra support for the most vulnerable pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are embedded.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher's strong leadership and unswerving determination have steered the school effectively through a period of considerable change. Together with her new leadership team and staff, she has reinvigorated the school, placing it at the heart of its local community. Leaders' effective actions have improved pupils' outcomes.
- The headteacher has secured the confidence of parents, staff and governors. Parental comments such as, 'The new leadership team: headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors set high standards for the school' are typical.
- The headteacher's vision, ambition and aspiration underpin staff confidence and pride in the school. Teachers value the training they receive to strengthen their skills and knowledge. Governors rightly prioritise this work.
- Effective systems are in place for managing staff performance. Leaders regularly monitor the quality of teachers' work and provide incisive feedback to improve teaching further. Leaders address any underperformance swiftly.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Self-evaluation is rooted in robust evidence and leads to timely improvements. Leaders, including governors, make effective use of external advice and value their strong working partnership with the local authority.
- Leaders create an environment that promotes a sense of trust, responsibility and commitment from pupils. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is catered for well. They skilfully debate and reflect on issues, so that they gain a good understanding of tolerance, democracy and respect for equality and diversity. Pupils' understanding of British values is secure.
- The curriculum provides rich and varied learning opportunities for pupils. 'Stunning starts' create a motivating launch for new topics and capture pupils' attention and interest. Themed weeks and weekly enrichment sessions, such as cookery, help pupils to develop curiosity and observe, talk about and test their ideas in different contexts.
- The school is never dull; there is always something interesting going on. There is a good mix of activities offered through clubs, including those to promote well-being and mental health. As one parent remarked, 'The range of extra-curricular activities on offer is amazing and so varied – young authors, karate, singing, drama, rugby and many more.'
- Leaders have made very effective use of sports funding, links with other schools and the Brighton and Hove Albion football club to develop strong sports opportunities. An increasing proportion of pupils represent their school in competitive sports. Inspiring speakers and visits, for example to the World Para Athletic Championship London 2017, enable pupils to contemplate and value disability sports.
- The English and mathematics leaders are knowledgeable and ambitious. However, their plans are not yet sharp enough to help them to evaluate the impact of their planned actions on accelerating pupils' progress.

- Additional funding for the few disadvantaged pupils across the school has contributed well to pupils' well-being and inclusion. As a result of the good support they receive, most of these pupils make good progress. Leaders are rightly refocusing their attention on the impact of targeted funding so that it accelerates progress.
- New leadership is re-energising the school's focus on pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Improved staff knowledge and careful use of funding are ensuring that these pupils are now making stronger progress than in the past. Leaders are revising their monitoring systems so that they have a better oversight of the impact of their work.
- Middle leadership is a developing strength in the school. Consequently, improved teaching in a wide range of subjects is helping pupils to achieve well. However, some subject areas, such as computing, are at an earlier stage of development and teachers' subject knowledge is less secure.

Governance of the school

- Governance is good and continuing to improve. Governors have successfully strengthened the leadership of the school and continually seek to improve their work through the use of external evaluation.
- Governors are involved in school development planning and hold leaders to account fully, for example through their probing questioning. Governors' contributions help leaders to evaluate the school accurately.
- Governors' regular visits to the school help them to understand the school's priorities. They attend regular training and carry out their responsibilities well, such as ensuring that the school's safeguarding procedures are robust.
- Governors have increased and widened the skills that they bring to the school through the careful appointment of new governors.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors have established a culture throughout the school in which all staff are committed to keeping pupils safe. Timely training ensures that staff have a good understanding of all aspects of safeguarding. As a result, staff are vigilant and act swiftly to disclose any concerns to leaders. Leaders maintain effective systems for recording and referring on any concerns, when needed, to external agencies.
- The school nurtures families and pupils well. The school's value of compassion guides pupils to reflect carefully on their behaviours. They are taught to act with great respect for the views and lifestyles of others.
- Leaders ensure that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Older pupils have a good understanding of how to avoid the risks posed when online. They speak about the risks of hacking and are vigilant about not sharing personal information. Parents appreciate and participate in opportunities to learn about this too. Pupils say they are safe in school and parents overwhelmingly support this view.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils engage well in activities because teachers ensure that these capture their interest. Teachers and support staff foster positive relationships with their pupils, creating a constructive 'can do' learning ethos. Lessons are well organised and purposeful. Pupils work hard and learn well.
- Teachers ask effective questions to heighten pupils' interest. Pupils debate and think hard to justify their opinions. For example, in a Year 3 class, pupils confidently shaped their ideas and debated the merits of the Stone Age versus modern lifestyles. The teacher skilfully drew pupils' attention to persuasive language and encouraged them to justify their views.
- Teachers and support staff are quick to ensure that pupils understand the task at hand. They provide useful guidance to help pupils know how to approach their work before they start, so that they are clear about what to do. Pupils appreciate this.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported in their learning by adults who guide them well, for example reinforcing vocabulary, and by using suitable apparatus in mathematics.
- The effective teaching of phonics ensures that younger pupils are able to sound out unfamiliar words with confidence and build their fluency.
- Reading is a developing strength at key stage 2. Pupils say that they enjoy reading widely and are motivated by their 'ravenous reader' rewards, which help them to appreciate and compare different genres such as fantasy, science fiction and adventure. They benefit from inspirational visits by successful authors such as the children's laureate, Chris Riddell, which have promoted reading at home.
- Teachers set regular homework in line with the school's policy. Pupils say that they welcome the recently introduced spellings for them to practise at home, as they know that they need to improve their spelling. Wider home-learning projects inspire pupils' interest and encourage families to get involved and support their children's learning.
- Pupils' quality of handwriting, sentence structure and vocabulary is of a good standard. However, at times, pupils make simple errors and some are careless with their spellings. This prevents some pupils from making stronger progress in their writing.
- Number and calculation skills are taught effectively across the school and pupils achieve well in mathematics. However, their reasoning skills are not as well developed and some are less confident in this aspect of their mathematics. On occasions, pupils do not present their work systematically to enable them to see mathematical connections readily and so deepen their thinking.
- Teachers plan exciting opportunities for pupils to learn about the work of great artists. For example, Year 4 pupils eagerly drew on their knowledge of surrealists when constructing collages. Pupils appreciate the opportunities they are given to expand their knowledge of different cultures. They are also motivated well by the community projects led jointly with the local museum. These inspire pupils to create high-quality, large-scale pieces of work, such as the steam prints on display in the school hall.

- Teachers develop pupils' enjoyment and appreciation of music through well-structured lessons. They guide pupils and ask precise questions to ensure that pupils listen carefully and refine performance skills, for example when playing xylophones in Year 3. These opportunities also help pupils to learn about musical notation. Pupils extend their learning by improvising their own music.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge in science helps them to plan demanding work. As a result, pupils are encouraged to ask questions, use scientific vocabulary and set up their own simple practical enquiries in order to test their ideas and deepen their understanding. Pupils appreciate the weekly enrichment opportunities where they apply these skills.
- Some teachers report they are less confident in their knowledge of computing. As a result, older pupils do not develop a full range of relevant knowledge, skills and understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are looked after and cared for extremely well at the school. Relationships between teachers and pupils provide a culture of mutual trust and respect.
- Excellent support is provided for pupils' social and emotional development, as well as their academic achievement. Pupils speak highly of the school's opportunity for quiet, calm reflection, which helps them to be mindful, overcome their worries and prepare them for learning. They reflect on a wide range of issues regularly, so that they develop open and enquiring minds and understand contrasting points of view.
- Pupils benefit from the school's strong commitment to support others by community and charity work. They learn compassion and responsibility through fundraising and talk proudly about these acts of kindness. They are alert to examples of inequality and discrimination, and debate how to take simple actions to prevent these.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of democracy. They thrive on the responsibilities they undertake. They have a strong sense of commitment and do not want to let anyone down. Play leaders sensitively oversee games, caring for younger children, promoting forgiveness and demonstrating a high regard for personal safety.
- Procedures for successfully settling in new children and preparing older pupils for their next schools are very well managed. Pupils are well equipped for change as teachers ensure that they have as much information as possible.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Around the school, pupils behave extremely well. They show considerable respect for others and have excellent manners. For example, in the dinner hall, pupils wait patiently and show high regard for each other over lunch. Pupils covet the 'Ditchling

Diamond' that they can receive for showing exemplary behaviours.

- In lessons, pupils demonstrate highly positive attitudes to learning. They listen carefully to teachers and follow instructions quickly. Learning in lessons is enhanced by pupils' high levels of commitment. As one parent noted, 'Children are polite, courteous and a lovely hum comes from the class from children focused on their learning.'
- Pupils feel very safe and all parents agree that their children are safe at school. Bullying is very rare. Parents unanimously agree that pupils develop into well-rounded young people. Everyone is closely involved in helping each other to understand risks, such as those posed online.
- Pupils are excited about coming to school and speak positively about their experiences. Attendance is above the national average. Leaders are swift to address any attendance issues. They remind parents of the impact of any absence, including holidays taken in term time, on their child's achievement.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2017, the proportion of pupils who met the Year 1 phonics check was above that seen nationally. Pupils develop their early reading skills quickly and many of them become fluent and avid readers by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils in key stage 1 achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders invest in staff training wisely and standards continue to improve. In 2017, key stage 1 standards were above those seen nationally. Pupils typically make good progress across the majority of the subjects they study.
- In both 2016 and 2017, the most able pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics were above the national average. This reflects leaders' accurate views of the good teaching seen across classes.
- The school's own information, and robust checks on pupils' work, show that rates of progress have improved over the past two years at key stage 2. As a result, in 2017, pupils' combined attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was above that seen nationally.
- In 2017, pupils' attainment in grammar, punctuation and spelling improved to above that seen nationally. However, leaders rightly identify this as a continued focus for their work so that progress in writing can improve further.
- Pupils with SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress across the school in English and mathematics. However, the small and varying size of this group prevents meaningful comparisons over time.
- Pupils achieve well across a wide range of subjects they study, including science. Opportunities for pupils to study computing on the school's curriculum have, recently, been too limited for the oldest pupils to make strong progress. Leaders have identified this as an area where teaching is not effective enough to enable these pupils to achieve consistently well.

Early years provision

Good

- Children's good achievement and happy start to school mean that they are well prepared for Year 1. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development has been above that found nationally for the past four years. In addition, the most able children achieve well across all areas of learning.
- Effective phonics teaching ensures that children make strong progress in learning sounds. Adults show them how to combine sounds together and form letters. Children use their skills well to read and write, for example when recalling experiences of the zoo.
- Children have many opportunities to count and recognise numbers. For example, during the inspection children enjoyed investigating how many footsteps to fill an imaginary dinosaur print. Children were encouraged to estimate, investigate and notice the differences between their answers. These kinds of activities also help children to solve problems.
- All welfare requirements are met and safeguarding is effective. Children settle quickly into routines. Relationships with staff are strong, which enables children to feel happy, safe and well cared for.
- Children behave well and play sensibly and safely. They busy themselves, cooperating in a range of activities, such as setting up tracks with blocks and tyres, selecting equipment purposefully. Adults' skilful questioning helps children to think hard about their choices and develop their own ideas. This supports children's exceptionally strong personal development.
- Adults know children well and carry out regular and accurate assessments to plan children's next learning steps. As children tick off their 'challenge passports', adults sensitively prompt them to think hard about what they have learned and how this is helping them.
- Well-chosen resources promote children's curiosity and exploration. For example, children used rope to wind around their bicycles to make simple pulleys. They investigated what happened and talked about how to speed up or slow down by pulling the rope on their bikes.
- The leadership of the early years is good. Leaders have an accurate view of strengths and areas for further development. They identify appropriate priorities on their plans to guide them. They correctly identify the need to strengthen opportunities for children to read, write and count outdoors. Leaders use the extra funding wisely over time to give good support to the few disadvantaged pupils, and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Parents are pleased with how well their children have settled into school. They appreciate the way they are welcomed, for example, to join in with collective worship. Leaders' plans are refining ways to help parents contribute to their children's assessments, so that they can be more involved than they have in the past.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 114500 |
| Local authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 10037809 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 145 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mike Coward |
| Headteacher | Susan Thompson |
| Telephone number | 01273 844130 |
| Website | https://ditchlingprimary.co.uk/esussex/primary/ditchling |
| Email address | head@ditchling-ce-prim.e-sussex.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 3–4 July 2013 |

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most classes are organised in single-age groups. Years 5 and 6 are in a mixed-age class.
- Cohort sizes are very small and vary considerably from year to year.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of disadvantaged pupils.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant staff and leadership changes, including the appointment of a headteacher, who took up her substantive post in September 2016.
- In 2017, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the

minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in key stage 2.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other leaders with significant responsibilities. The lead inspector also met with five governors, including the chair, and with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector visited 10 lessons or part lessons, mostly with the headteacher.
- The inspector listened to four pupils read, including from Years 2 and 3, looked at work in pupils' books and discussed pupils' progress and attainment with leaders.
- The inspector spoke to pupils informally, and also met with eight pupils from Year 2 and key stage 2. She took account of the 41 views represented in Ofsted's online survey.
- Parents' views were taken into account through face-to-face informal discussions and the 73 responses to the online survey, Parent View, including 43 free-text comments. One parent met with the inspector.
- The inspector took account of 14 survey responses submitted by staff.
- The inspector checked records and documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, staff appraisals and records of monitoring and improvement.
- The inspector reviewed the checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.

Inspection team

Susan Aspland, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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