

# East Stour Primary School

Earlsworth Road, South Willesborough, Ashford, TN24 0DW

**Inspection dates** 1–2 July 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils are keen to learn and work hard. They make good progress in all year groups in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, standards are rising throughout the school.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and plan work that interests and motivates them. They make frequent checks on pupils' learning and act quickly to provide more support for those who need it.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils know what is expected of them and most manage their own behaviour well.
- The school has excellent arrangements for keeping pupils safe.
- Leaders and governors have taken decisive and effective action to improve teaching and learning across the school. They are committed to providing the best education possible for all groups of pupils.
- Rigorous checks on the quality of teaching help leaders continue to make improvements. They ensure that all staff receive essential training to improve their practice.
- High quality care and support for pupils with a wide range of additional needs ensure they make good progress in learning, as well as developing confidence and resilience.
- Good teaching and well-planned provision ensure children make good progress in the early years.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop reasoning and analytical skills by solving a variety of mathematical problems.
- There are inconsistencies between classes in the effectiveness of teachers' marking.
- Teachers do not always ensure that pupils check and correct their own spellings.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all 15 classes. Three observations and a learning walk were undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors examined the work in pupils' books in Years 1 to 6. The headteacher looked at books alongside one of the inspectors. Inspectors also looked at the records of children's learning in the early years, as well as work on display around the school.
- Inspectors talked to pupils informally in lessons and at break times. They also met with two groups of pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders and with some middle leaders who have responsibility for aspects of the curriculum. The lead inspector met with two members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority. Another inspector held a telephone conversation with the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including information about pupils' progress, the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school improvement plan, records of governing body meetings, information about pupils' behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account the 25 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the school's most recent survey of parents' views. They also spoke to parents as they arrived at school with their children at the start of the school day. Thirty responses to the staff questionnaire were taken into account.

## Inspection team

Carole Skinner, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Westall	Additional Inspector
Maureen Okoye	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- East Stour is larger than the average-sized primary school. It has two classes in each year group, as well as part-time nursery provision. Reception children attend full time.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is similar to the national average, as is the proportion who speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is much higher than average. The large majority of these pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties. Roughly a fifth of them have behaviour, social and emotional difficulties.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is much higher than average. This includes pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- A higher than average number of pupils join and leave the school part way through a school year or key stage. Some pupils only stay a short time before moving to another school.
- In 2014, the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their posts in January 2013.
- The school provides a breakfast club, which an inspector visited. There is also an after-school club. This is run by an external provider and is inspected separately by Ofsted.

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

- Improve teaching and achievement further by:
  - making sure pupils take more care over the accuracy of spelling in their independent written work
  - planning a wider range of opportunities for pupils to develop reasoning and analytical skills in solving a variety of mathematical problems
  - ensuring that teachers' marking is consistently helpful to pupils in showing them how to improve their work and that pupils have time to put teachers' suggestions into practice.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders and governors are very ambitious for the school and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and their academic achievement. They have firmly established consistent approaches to teaching and behaviour management that ensure good learning and progress across the school.
- Parents value greatly the school's friendly family atmosphere and feel comfortable to approach staff if they have concerns.
- Rigorous checks on the quality of teaching enable leaders to identify the individual needs of staff and to organise training to improve their practice. When introducing initiatives such as the system for teaching phonics (letters and the sounds they make), leaders provide effective training for teachers and teaching assistants which ensures consistent approaches throughout the school.
- Leaders set challenging targets for teachers to achieve that relate to the achievement of the pupils in their class. They take account of how well teachers have met these targets when making decisions about pay and promotion.
- Senior leaders have successfully developed the skills of middle leaders. Despite some having been in post for a relatively short time, they are having a good impact on raising pupils' achievement. For example, they make thorough checks on teachers' planning and pupils' work to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.
- The school has rigorous procedures for checking pupils' attainment and progress throughout the year. By meeting six times a year to review this information, teachers and leaders identify quickly any pupils who could be doing better and organise additional support where required.
- Pupils enjoy learning because the well-planned curriculum interests and motivates them. Collaborative planning in year groups ensures consistency and allows teachers to share ideas and expertise for the benefit of the pupils.
- One of the school's greatest strengths is the excellent pastoral care it provides for pupils and their families. The work of the family liaison officer and the learning mentor makes a valuable contribution to this. The school places strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal qualities, as well as their academic achievement. This prepares them well for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders and staff have in-depth knowledge of pupils' individual needs and any potential barriers to good learning. They are relentless in seeking ways to help pupils overcome these. Consequently, the school promotes equality of opportunity effectively and fosters good relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff.
- Through the curriculum and daily assemblies, the school nurtures pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including tolerance and respect for different faiths and cultures. Pupils learn about democracy and the laws that govern British society, for example by taking part in elections and discussing a wide range of issues relevant to their own future lives. Pupils are well prepared to take their place in modern Britain.
- Pupils benefit greatly from many visitors who share their knowledge and expertise, and from a variety of visits to places of interest, locally and further afield. For example, pupils visited Canterbury and learned about the murder of Thomas à Becket.
- The school makes effective use of the additional funding to develop physical education and sports. Teachers have benefited from specialist coaching to raise the quality of physical educational lessons. The range of extra-curricular sports clubs has increased, and the number of pupils who participate in them has more than doubled in a year.
- Leaders ensure that the pupil premium funding is used effectively to enable eligible pupils to overcome any barriers to learning. These pupils' progress has accelerated significantly in the last year. As a result, the gaps between their attainment and that of their classmates are narrowing rapidly.
- The school's procedures for ensuring pupils' safety are exceptionally thorough and highly effective. Child protection procedures are robust and record keeping is meticulous. Pupils' well-being is given the highest priority and the school works very closely with outside agencies to address serious concerns.
- The local authority provides effective support for the school, for example by checking leaders' judgements about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body has a wide range of expertise and shares senior leaders' high aspirations for the pupils. Governors are kept well informed about the school's performance by the headteacher as well as through their own visits, discussions with staff and learning walks to gather first-hand information.

- Governors have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and know that all teachers have challenging targets that relate to the progress made by pupils in their class. They know that decisions about salary increases rest on whether teachers meet these targets.
- At governing body meetings, members discuss a range of information about pupils' progress, including data about the achievement of vulnerable groups. They challenge senior leaders appropriately to satisfy themselves that pupils who may be falling behind are receiving the necessary support to catch up. They ensure that all current statutory regulations, including those for safeguarding, are fully met

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

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school because teachers make their expectations clear. They are keen to please the adults and delight in sharing their achievements with the headteacher.
- Inspectors saw exemplary behaviour at times, such as at the breakfast club and in a whole-school assembly.
- Occasionally, the few pupils who find it difficult to behave well fall short of the high standards the school demands. The school has an effective system of rewards and sanctions that is applied consistently by all adults. This has greatly reduced the number of exclusions over the past 12 months.
- Most pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and always try to do their best. They complete work in the time allotted and take pride in it. This helps them to make good progress.
- Pupils show respect for others and are polite and helpful. They enjoy taking responsibility for a variety of jobs around the school, such as sports leaders and playground buddies. Pupils get on well together and playtime disagreements are usually sorted out amicably without the need for adult intervention.
- The school has successfully raised attendance levels and reduced the number of persistent absentees. The family liaison officer plays a key role in promoting the importance of regular attendance and encouraging families to get children to school on time. Despite the school's rigorous efforts, a small number of parents continue to take their children on holiday in term time.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Safeguarding arrangements are exceptionally rigorous. As a result, pupils say they feel very safe and parents agree that the school takes very good care of their children.
- Pupils were keen to point out that bullying is rare at school. They are very well informed about the different types of bullying, such as name calling, physical aggression and cyber bullying, and know what to do should it occur. All are confident that staff would deal with any incidents immediately.
- The school is exceptionally diligent in making pupils aware of the dangers they may face in the outside world. Pupils gain a good understanding about road and water safety and 'stranger danger', as well as how to keep safe on the internet and when using mobile phones.
- In the exceptionally hot weather during the inspection, staff ensured that pupils were protected from the sun and that they drank plenty of water.

## **The quality of teaching** is good

- Improvements in the assessment of pupils' learning have enabled teachers to plan more precisely work that builds effectively on pupils' previous learning. This has helped to improve pupils' understanding and their acquisition of basic skills.
- In mathematics, teachers ensure that pupils have fully mastered new concepts and skills before moving them on to new work. They reinforce learning well through giving pupils problems to solve, such as those expressed in words. However, some older pupils do not always have enough opportunities to tackle more complex mathematical problems that demand the use of reasoning and analytical skills.
- The teaching of phonics has improved considerably from Nursery onwards. The impact can be seen in the improved standards in Reception and Year 1 in particular.
- Teachers build on this good start by giving pupils plenty of opportunities to read aloud to an adult and to each other in guided reading sessions. They develop older pupils' skills in making deductions from a text and reading for information, whether in non-fiction books or using the internet for research.
- The teaching of writing is equally effective. Teachers often use a well-known story, author or novel to

inspire pupils to write in a particular style and to use adventurous vocabulary. Teachers also capitalise on visits to places of interest to provide a stimulus for pupils' writing.

- A strong focus on talk helps pupils to form and clarify their ideas before committing them to paper. In addition, teachers model good writing for pupils so they know what they are aiming for. However, teachers do not always ensure that pupils check their own spellings carefully while they are working.
- Teachers and teaching assistants question pupils skilfully to assess their understanding and to develop their use of appropriate language in each subject. They often encourage pupils to explain their ideas more fully rather than accepting a simple response.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and knowledgeable. They make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, both in classrooms and when providing intensive support for individuals and small groups outside of lessons.
- The school has a clear marking policy which pupils understand. Many pupils say teachers' marking helps them to improve their work. However, a few inconsistencies remain, as teachers do not always give pupils specific guidance on how to improve their work or enough time to follow it up.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- Leaders have tackled successfully the weaknesses that caused some pupils to underachieve in past years. Attainment is rising strongly as improved teaching strategies and the new curriculum have become more firmly embedded. These have accelerated pupils' progress throughout the school, so that all groups of pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- As a result of better phonics teaching, pupils are able to sound out unfamiliar words accurately. They develop good reading skills as they move through the school. By the time they leave, many are avid readers.
- Pupils' writing skills develop well throughout the school. They learn to use interesting vocabulary and their understanding of grammar and punctuation has improved considerably due to more focused teaching. Although the strong drive to improve spelling has brought many improvements, some pupils still make errors in their work because they do not check their writing carefully enough once it is completed.
- In mathematics, pupils have well-developed skills in mental and written calculation and can apply their knowledge to solve a variety of everyday problems. They do not always have enough opportunities to investigate more complex problems that require a higher level of analysis and reasoning. Younger pupils use a good range of apparatus to help them count, calculate, measure and solve problems. This helps them to work things out for themselves and to develop a deeper understanding of mathematical ideas.
- The most able pupils make good progress. This was seen in the high quality writing in pupils' books and their confident and expressive reading. In Year 6, the proportion of pupils who are on track to reach at least Level 5 is much higher than last year in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who join the school at different times during the course of a school year or key stage receive good support to help them make up for learning they have missed, especially those who have moved schools more than once. This helps them to gain confidence and most achieve well, although they do not always reach the levels expected by the end of each year group.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well because teachers check their learning carefully and organise additional support to deal with the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive effective support, both in class and through extra tuition, if required. This helps them to develop a good grasp of English in general and of the vocabulary that is specific to each subject.
- In 2014, pupils eligible for the pupil premium were about a term and a half behind their classmates in mathematics, a year behind in reading and two terms in writing. In comparison with other pupils nationally, they were about four and a half terms behind in mathematics, just under four terms behind in reading and about a year behind in writing. The school's information shows that gaps have narrowed further this year and pupils' books confirm that these pupils are making good progress across the school.

### **The early years provision** is good

- Many children start school with skills that are less well developed than is typical for their age. This is particularly the case in language and communication, reading and writing. Children make good progress during their time in Nursery and Reception in all areas of learning. Attainment has risen year on year and

is close to the national average by the end of Reception. Children are well prepared for Year 1.

- Teachers plan a wide variety of activities around central themes and topics that interest children and help to build their confidence and independence. They achieve a good balance between teaching children essential knowledge and skills and giving them plenty of opportunities to learn through play and investigation, both in the classroom and the very well equipped outdoor area.
- All adults support learning well by asking children questions that make them think things through for themselves. This helps to deepen children's understanding.
- Teachers explain new ideas very clearly and make effective use of resources that children can see and manipulate to reinforce their understanding. For example, one teacher helped children to understand the basic principles of division by giving them the chance to share biscuits 'fairly' between a number of aliens and explain the different ways they could do this.
- Occasionally, teachers do not ensure that children fully understand what they are expected to do and learn from activities that they undertake on their own. This limits the learning that takes place.
- Children thoroughly enjoy learning and are eager to contribute by answering adults' questions and explaining their own ideas.
- Behaviour in the early years is consistently good. Staff have high expectations and children generally respond well to these. Occasionally, children call out answers despite the teacher's reminders to let others have a turn.
- Staff are vigilant in ensuring children's safety in classrooms and outside. They took every precaution to protect children from the sun on an exceptionally hot day.
- Leadership of the early years is strongly rooted in good experience and expertise in how young children learn. Rigorous assessments of children's learning and effective systems for tracking their progress give leaders a clear picture of the effectiveness of teaching. This ensures that they identify the right priorities to promote continuous improvement.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118367
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	448821

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	442
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Robert Cooke
<b>Headteacher</b>	Margaret Steward
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26–27 May 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01233630820
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