

Dartington Church of England Primary School

Shinners Bridge, Dartington, Totnes, Devon TQ9 6JU

Inspection dates	10–11 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has improved rapidly since the previous inspection. Staff share the headteacher's commitment to continuous improvement.
- Teaching has improved. Teachers have good opportunities to develop their expertise further.
- Attainment has risen to reach above-average standards. In particular, there has been an improvement in achievement in mathematics.
- Pupils are now much better prepared for the move to their next school at the age of 11.
- All groups of pupils now make good progress, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- Children in Nursery and Reception are taught well and are well prepared for Year 1.
- School leaders at all levels now check the quality of teaching and learning rigorously.
- Pupils behave well both in lessons and around the school. They enjoy learning, particularly the opportunities provided for outdoor learning in the Forest School. They love the range of clubs and other activities that the school provides.
- There is outstanding care and support for pupils, who consequently feel very safe. Several parents told inspectors that this is the greatest strength of the school.
- Governors are now more active, challenging and knowledgeable in their support for the school.
- Most parents praise the commitment and dedication of the staff in providing a good education for their children.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Work set for the most-able pupils is sometimes insufficiently challenging.
- Pupils' writing is not as well developed across the curriculum as it is in literacy lessons, with a consequent impact on standards in subjects such as history and geography.
- Attendance remains below average, despite the school's strenuous attempts to improve it.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, so that more of the good teaching becomes outstanding and raises achievement further, by:
 - making sure that the activities planned for the most-able pupils in lessons are always of sufficient challenge to enable them to learn to their full potential
 - ensuring that in lessons across the curriculum, pupils are expected to sustain the same quality of work in writing as is found in literacy lessons.

- Improve attendance by continuing the efforts to convince all parents of the importance of their children attending school regularly and punctually.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has shown great commitment and drive in improving the school's performance since the previous inspection. Most staff and parents recognise this, and are very supportive of the changes. The track record of ensuring better outcomes shows that the school has a strong capacity to improve further.
- Middle leaders support the senior leadership team in checking the quality of teaching and learning closely and encouraging staff to continue improving their expertise. There is increased accountability, with staff being given clear targets for pupils' achievement.
- School leaders know their school well. They evaluate its strengths and areas for improvement accurately. School plans for improvement are sufficiently challenging and focused on key priorities.
- The achievement of all groups of pupils has improved since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has also improved. At the same time, leaders have maintained previous strengths, for example in the standards of pupils' behaviour.
- Staff and pupils have coped remarkably well with the challenge of working for a substantial time in temporary school buildings without adversely affecting performance.
- Staff have worked hard to meet the challenges of the new curriculum and to develop new and effective methods of assessment. The core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics are taught well. There is a good range of enrichment activities such as music and outdoor learning, including the Forest School. Pupils of different ages work together effectively in 'forest families'.
- The school's Christian ethos has a high profile. Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. The school emphasises the principles of tolerance and valuing different faiths and cultures. Classroom displays highlight positive behaviour traits which lead to respect for, and appreciation of others. School productions explore cultural diversity.
- School leaders have used the pupil premium funding well to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. For example, the school has purchased new resources and provided more staff support to meet the individual needs of the pupils concerned. The school also gives good support to pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- The school uses the additional sports funding very effectively. Teachers have developed their skills and confidence in teaching physical education through working with sports specialists. Pupils have benefited from skilled coaching and more opportunities to take part in various sports, which have an increasingly important role in enriching the curriculum.
- There is a strong partnership with other local schools. Pupils use the facilities of the local secondary school, and staff have the opportunity to work closely with colleagues elsewhere. There are close links with the nearby special school.
- The school also benefits from overseas connections. Links with German universities have enabled the school to make use of trainee teachers to teach German. There have been visits from pupils and staff from a linked Spanish school. These links have helped to broaden pupils' horizons.
- Dartington Primary is a very inclusive school. It values equal opportunities for all, as shown by its successful commitment for all pupils to succeed. Staff are committed to the care and support of the several vulnerable pupils in the school. The school's work in providing strong emotional support for pupils is widely regarded as exemplary, and several other schools use Dartington as a model. All staff at Dartington are trained in developing pupils' social and emotional learning. Parents highlight the strength of this provision.
- The school has purchased consultant support to help develop staff expertise, for example in teaching mathematics. After the previous inspection, the local authority provided support for the school, and recognises the considerable improvements that have been made.
- Most parents are very appreciative of what the school provides. A typical comment from a parent was that the school 'is an exceptional school which caters for children from all backgrounds and abilities; the teachers are clearly dedicated to giving the children the best learning environment possible'. A few parents have questioned the effectiveness of communications between the school and home. Inspectors found that the school provides regular newsletters; parent representatives are linked to classes; and there is an open parents' forum that meets regularly with the headteacher.
- The school leadership is not complacent. It recognises that improvements are still necessary in some aspects, notably attendance, and devotes a lot of effort to tackling them.

■ The governance of the school

- The previous inspection was critical of the effectiveness of governance. The school accepted the criticism and took the necessary steps to ensure that governance has improved significantly. For example, governors now talk more regularly to staff, discussing action plans for improvement, and checking pupils' progress. Governors have been trained to interpret school assessment data, and now know how well their pupils achieve in relation to pupils nationally. They also have a much better understanding than in the past of the strengths and areas for development in teaching.
- Governors work hard to engage with parents. They oversee the process by which staff performance is evaluated. They receive good training in order to carry out their responsibilities, such as ensuring good safeguarding. Governors regularly review and update school policies. The governing body is now more active and confident in using its knowledge to challenge the school leadership, for example about the effectiveness of initiatives to improve attainment and progress in mathematics. As a body, governors are much more incisive, both in supporting the school and helping it along the path to further improvement.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has detailed, recent and appropriate policies for key aspects such as child protection, health and safety, and equal opportunities. The school provides practical advice to staff on how to recognise and deal with potential issues such as radicalisation. Staff understand their responsibilities for safeguarding and were able to explain these to inspectors. The school gives due emphasis to specific concerns such as e-safety. Pupils are taught in lessons and in assemblies how to keep safe, as well as listening to advice from outsiders such as the fire and accident services.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. This is partly the result of more rigorous monitoring by senior and subject leaders. It has also resulted from more opportunities for staff to develop their skills, both within the school and from the support of external specialists. The improved teaching is evident from the leadership's records and from the improved quality of pupils' work. Teachers are now held more accountable for pupils' progress.
- Teaching assistants and other support staff have also benefited from more professional development opportunities. They have helped to improve the progress of pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- Teachers mark pupils' work well. Most of the time, they give constructive feedback on how pupils can improve their work further, in line with the school's marking policy.
- Teachers are skilled at using assessment data to tailor the planned work to the specific learning needs of individual pupils.
- The teaching of disadvantaged pupils has improved, so that gaps between their progress and that of other pupils have narrowed.
- Mathematics, reading and writing are well taught throughout the school in all phases.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have risen. This is evident, for example, in the pride that most pupils take in the presentation of their work.
- Occasionally teachers do not expect enough of the most-able pupils, so that the work they are given does not consistently allow them to learn as well as they might. Also, the written tasks that pupils attempt in subjects with a focus such as history, geography or science are not always of the same level of depth and challenge as teachers expect in literacy lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Parents, staff and pupils are all convinced that pupils feel very safe in school, whatever their backgrounds. A typical parental comment to inspectors was that 'the environment of the school is wonderful'. Completed staff questionnaires all agreed that the school's culture encourages calm and orderly conduct.

- One of the school's great successes has been its ability to integrate the considerable number of pupils who join the school other than at the usual starting points into a warm and welcoming atmosphere. These include children of Traveller families and also a number of vulnerable pupils, all of whom have thrived within the school's supportive ethos.
- The school is used as a model for the quality of its care. Staff from other schools visit the school to see the effective support, for example that offered within the school's 'Harbour' facility.
- The school successfully encourages pupils to take on responsibilities. There is an active school council. Pupils are trained for roles such as sports leaders, who play a prominent role in physical education lessons. Pupils also help in the school's market garden.
- Staff promote a family ethos through activities such as Forest School, which has a high profile in the curriculum.
- The long-standing breakfast club provides a popular start to the school day for pupils from all year groups.
- There are strong links with pre-schools, and programmes to smooth the transfer of pupils to their next school at the age of 11. The school also works closely with the nearby special school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils usually behave very well both in lessons and around the school. Not all parents and pupils believe that behaviour is exemplary, but they do not regard bullying as a problem, and there is a consensus that the school provides a very supportive and calm environment.
- School records show that there are very few untoward incidents. There have been no recent exclusions of pupils.
- The work in pupils' books confirms their good attitudes towards learning, as seen during the inspection. Most pupils take pride in their work.
- Attendance remains an issue for the school. Currently, and in recent years, it has remained below average, sometimes well below. The school works very hard to address this issue, with frequent communications home, invitations for parents to come into school, and close work with other agencies outside school. The school leadership has taken some firm decisions to enforce attendance, but the school recognises that it must continue to strive to convince all parents of the need for their children to attend school regularly and promptly if they are to get the best from their time in school.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' progress and attainment have improved rapidly and considerably since the previous inspection, when there were inconsistencies in pupils' achievement.
- The previous good progress in early years has been maintained. Pupils in Year 1 continue to attain above-average standards in the annual phonics check (which checks pupils' understanding of letters and the sounds they represent).
- There has been a rising trend of attainment for pupils in key stage 1, where results of assessments in 2014 and 2015 showed that attainment for boys and girls was significantly above average. This trend has been maintained.
- Attainment for key stage 2 pupils in 2015 was above average in reading and writing, but pupils underachieved in mathematics. Not enough of the most-able pupils achieved as well as they should. The school has rapidly addressed this weakness, especially in mathematics.
- Most pupils currently in the school make good progress. Where there were gaps between the rates of progress of different groups, they have been significantly reduced. They have not yet been completely eliminated, which is why achievement is not outstanding.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress, mainly because they get good support both within lessons and when supported outside the classroom.
- Disadvantaged pupils have benefited from good support. Many of these pupils now make better than expected progress, sometimes at a faster rate than other pupils in the school.
- The most-able pupils now make better progress overall than before. However, they do not achieve as well as they could in some individual lessons where the level of work is insufficiently challenging.

- Pupils' progress and attainment in reading continue to improve. Pupils are proud of their reading records, and many read extensively. Inspectors heard pupils reading, often at a level above that expected for their age.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved significantly, as both staff and pupils have got to grips with the expectations of the new curriculum.
- Most pupils are now making more rapid progress in writing. Inspectors saw a good range of writing in all year groups, mostly in pupils' literacy books; the quality of writing is sometimes not sustained in other subjects, and this remains an area for further improvement.
- The improvement in pupils' achievement, which is recognised by staff, parents and the pupils themselves, means that pupils are now better prepared for their transfer to secondary school at the end of Year 6.

Early years provision

is good

- Children join Nursery and Reception with varying levels of knowledge and skills, although many are close to those levels typical for their age. They have consistently achieved well, with an above-average proportion making more than the expected progress by the time they leave Reception. Children are prepared well for entry into Year 1, although progress in language and communication skills is sometimes slower than in other areas of learning.
- Children make good progress because they are well taught and very well cared for. Their behaviour is good. Disadvantaged children make the same good progress as other children.
- Staff have high expectations of the children, whether children are working together as a class or following their own interests individually or in small groups.
- Inspectors observed good teaching of phonics, with children responding enthusiastically.
- Inspectors saw several examples of children developing their early writing skills well. For example, some children were creating an effective story with a beginning, middle and end.
- Children make good progress in their personal development. They learn to collaborate well and listen to each other. As a result, there is a warm and orderly learning environment. Many children can speak clearly and confidently to visitors.
- The early years provision benefits from a roomy and well-resourced learning environment, despite the temporary accommodation. Outdoor play and learning areas are well resourced.
- There is good leadership of early years. Staff are managed well. They regularly assess children's progress, as is evident in children's learning books, which show achievement in a range of activities.
- The children feel very safe and well cared for, as confirmed by parents. Children clearly enjoy their work and play. They learn about important elements of safety, such as fire safety, from visitors to the school.
- Staff maintain good links with pre-schools and pupils higher up the school. There are also very positive links with parents. Parents are given 'learning wheels', which outline areas of learning for the term. Staff encourage parents to contribute to children's workbooks, for example, by getting them to write about 'wow' experiences that their children have outside school, such as when on holiday.

School details

Unique reference number	113394
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10012354

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	295
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roy Gillard
Headteacher	Jill Mahon
Telephone number	01803 862357
Website	www.dartington.devon.sch.uk
Email address	admin@dartington.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 April 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium (additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority) is in line with the national average.
- The school takes in several children from Traveller families.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Children in Nursery attend in the mornings or afternoons. Children in Reception attend full time.
- Many more pupils than normal join the school other than at the usual starting points.
- The school operates a breakfast club.
- At the time of the inspection, the school occupied temporary premises, as the original school is in the process of being completely rebuilt.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in eight lessons. Several of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also visited several part-lessons.
- Inspectors looked extensively at pupils' work. They also heard pupils reading.
- Inspectors held meetings with several teachers and other staff. They also talked with pupils. The lead inspector met with nine governors. He also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. He met two parents.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings, the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school improvement plan, assessment data on pupils' current progress and information relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors analysed 48 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also analysed nine responses to an online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

John Laver, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Malcolm Willis	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Prince	Ofsted Inspector

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