

Inspection of Doddinghurst Infant School

Church Lane, Doddinghurst, Brentwood, Essex CM15 0NJ

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Outstanding
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This school was last inspected 13 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time. From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a kind word and a friendly smile for everyone at this happy village school. Pupils are eager to play and learn together.

Bullying is very rare. Pupils say that adults stop any unkindness straight away. Pupils feel safe in school. They use their 'worry monsters' to let adults know when they need help. Pupils are confident that any adult in school will help them when they need it.

In lessons, pupils rise to the high expectations of their teachers. They listen carefully and settle quickly to tasks. From the early years, they reflect on their learning and share their ideas sensibly. Across the school, pupils develop independence and resilience. Older pupils are proud of their learning. They say, 'Practice, practice, practice helps them get better, better, better!'

Pupils have many opportunities to experience the world beyond the classroom. In outdoor sessions, they explore nature and learn new skills. They are proud of their teamwork and successes in sporting events. Pupils in choir raise money for charity and sing in the local church on Remembrance Day. Pupils develop links with the local community; they write 'thank you' letters for donations and collect items for the local foodbank.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

In many subjects, leaders have identified the most important knowledge and skills for pupils to learn. They ensure that teachers put in place the small steps of learning that enable pupils to achieve well. In these subjects, teachers have the expertise they need to teach new ideas clearly. They regularly check pupils' understanding during lessons and in pupils' books. Teachers act quickly to address errors. In a few subjects, leaders' curriculum thinking is less well developed. Teachers are less clear about how to develop pupils' knowledge over time. In these subjects, some pupils develop misconceptions and do not achieve as well as they do in the rest of the curriculum.

Children learn to read from the start of Reception. They practise their new writing skills in stimulating activities in the classroom and outdoors. This is built on in other year groups. Well-matched books provide plenty of practice and most pupils quickly learn to read well. Regular checks ensure that pupils who fall behind with reading get the extra help they need. Books and stories are at the heart of the curriculum from the early years. Pupils talk with great enthusiasm about familiar authors and the books they read.

Pupils are keen to learn. In lessons, they think about what they already know when tackling new ideas. They are confident to share their ideas with a partner or the whole class. Pupils are supported to take responsibility for their learning and develop

independence. Sensible behaviour across the school means that no learning time is lost.

Leaders aim to build pupils' resilience and collaboration. There are many opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility in the school, such as house captains and eco warriors. The school council meets regularly. They have effectively included the views of pupils in school decisions, such as playground rules. As a result, pupils say the rules are fair and help to keep them safe. Pupils know how to stay safe online. They understand the importance of good friends and relationships. Events such as 'odd sock day' in anti-bullying week help pupils to understand that everyone is different and special. They learn to be healthy through sensible food choices and exercise. From the early years, pupils take time to reflect and be still. In outdoor sessions, pupils learn to be mindful and appreciate nature.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities get the extra help they need in lessons and at playtimes. Leaders use information from assessments and parents to identify pupils who need extra help. They take external advice into account when setting and reviewing targets. Teachers adjust lessons to include all pupils and enable them to achieve well.

Staff appreciate the support of leaders for their well-being. There is a real 'family' feel, which includes parents and carers. Regular workshops to understand the curriculum and 'sharing hours' enable families to support their children. The work of the governing body has been disrupted by turnover of members and remote working. They do not know the school as well as they could and are over reliant on the headteacher for the information they receive. As a result, while they are supportive of the school, they do not always provide the challenge and strategic leadership that is part of their role.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established strong systems to keep pupils safe. Teachers know their pupils well and are vigilant for any signs that pupils or their families need help. Pupils can use worry boxes and 'colour monsters' to share their concerns with staff. Staff record all safeguarding concerns promptly. Leaders check these records and act swiftly when required.

Leaders work effectively with external agencies to ensure that pupils are safe. They signpost families to services which can provide the help they need. Effective systems are in place for safe recruitment of staff. Governors review the records of safe recruitment checks regularly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders have not identified precisely enough the most important learning. In these subjects, some pupils develop misconceptions and do not achieve as well as they do in the rest of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that they clearly identify and set out the knowledge and skills to be learned and that staff have the expertise to put these in place in all subjects.
- The work of the governing body has been disrupted by turnover and remote working. Governors are not clear about some of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are too reliant on, and do not always challenge, the information provided to them by school leaders. Governors should ensure that they have appropriate strategies and systems in place so that they have an accurate strategic understanding of leaders' work and how this contributes to improving the school.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	114969
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10255036
Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sian Farrelly
Headteacher	Ingrid Nicholson
Website	www.doddinghurstinfantschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 March 2009, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not currently use any off-site providers of alternative education.
- This is a two-form entry infant school, having previously been a three-form entry infant school.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and teachers, including subject leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in four subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education and religious education. For each deep dive inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, met with pupils to speak about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and other staff to discuss safeguarding.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation during the inspection, including school development plans, safeguarding and behaviour records.
- The inspectors considered the 43 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 34 free-text comments. They also considered 20 responses to the staff survey and 45 responses to the pupil survey.
- The inspectors spoke to groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school. They also observed the behaviour of pupils at breaktimes and around the school.

Inspection team

Lynne Williams, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lisa Massey

Ofsted Inspector

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