

Downsell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103044
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	376803
Inspection dates	13–14 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Barbara Atcheson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	695
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Mitchell
Headteacher	Terrence Nairne
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 March 2009
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 29 lessons taught by 21 teachers. They also held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at school policies, including those relating to safeguarding, minutes of governing body meetings, planning documents, pupils' work and questionnaires returned from 86 parents and carers and those returned by staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Pupils' progress and in particular the progress of pupils in Years 3 to 6, pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and girls.
- Whether the quality of teaching and learning and the rigour and accuracy of assessment is good enough to ensure that all pupils are challenged at the right level and make good progress.
- The effectiveness of all leaders in monitoring and evaluating attainment, progress and the quality of teaching and learning and the accuracy of self-evaluation.
- How well the new leadership team and governors have secured the continued improvement of the school.

Information about the school

This primary school is much larger than average. The pupils come from a wide variety of minority ethnic groups, the largest group being Asian British Pakistani. Three quarters of the pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. A large majority of these pupils speak Urdu in addition to learning English. Just under half of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals; this is a higher than average proportion. Just under half of the pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities; this is a higher than average proportion. Their needs mainly relate to speech, language and social communication difficulties and emotional behavioural difficulties. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage into a two form Nursery and three Reception classes. The school gained the Healthy Schools award in March 2011, the Quality Mark in July 2011 and the International School Award in September 2010. There is a breakfast club on the school site which is managed by the governing body. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2011.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The care, guidance and support that pupils receive are good. As a consequence, pupils behave well, have good relationships with adults and other pupils and respect each other's achievements. It is a cohesive community which provides a warm, welcoming environment where pupils feel cared for, safe, secure and ready to learn.

The school is successfully emerging from a period of uncertainty. Before the new headteacher was appointed, the deputy headteacher, in her capacity as acting headteacher, implemented a secure interim leadership team who understood their roles and responsibilities. This gave the school a stable platform for continuous improvement. Important measures were taken to reduce persistent absence and the introduction of pupil progress meetings provided an important overview on pupils' learning. Since his arrival, the new headteacher has inspired confidence, renewed energy and motivated staff. He has quickly formed an accurate view of the school and got to grips with what needs to be done. Effectively supported by members of the governing body, senior leaders and the staff, he has engendered an infectious enthusiasm which has united the school in its quest to accelerate progress and raise attainment. Although successful actions have already been taken to address deficiencies and ensure continuing improvement, accurate self-evaluation recognises that more has to be done to accelerate the rate of progress and improve achievement even further. All of this confirms the school's satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

Children make satisfactory progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage to enter Year 1 below the expected level. Although a lack of consistency in the quality of teaching means that progress varies from year to year, pupils make satisfactory progress through the school to reach average levels of attainment at the end of Year 6. Teaching is satisfactory overall. There is some good teaching but it is not enough to ensure that all pupils make good rather than satisfactory progress. Progress dips when assessment information is not used well enough to plan lessons in which tasks accurately match pupils' different needs. While some teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do, this is not always the case and pupils are not always suitably challenged. Where teachers provide practical opportunities, pupils quickly become confident learners, but where they do not have these opportunities, pupils' progress slows. Some teachers talk for too long and this limits opportunities for pupils to work independently and use their initiative.

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Although senior leaders carry out a comprehensive programme of monitoring and evaluation, it has not always been sufficiently rigorous to ensure that assessment is used effectively across the school, that expectations in all lessons are high and progress is good. With the successful appointment of the new headteacher, members of the governing body are keen to increase their level of involvement in the work of the school at a strategic level. Middle managers are conscientious and hard working but a lack of clarity about their roles and responsibilities and training in leadership and management skills means that they are not always effective in driving improvement forward at a fast enough rate.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2012, increase the proportion of good teaching so that there is consistently good progress in all year groups by ensuring that:
 - teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are raised so that all groups are suitably challenged
 - teachers do not talk for too long in lessons and that there are increased opportunities for pupils to work independently and use their initiative
 - all teachers use assessment accurately on a day-to-day basis to identify potential underachievement at an earlier stage and plan effectively for the full range of pupils' abilities.
- By July 2012, improve leadership and management by:
 - developing the roles and responsibilities of middle managers
 - developing the active involvement of the governing body in the work of the school
 - ensuring that senior leaders rigorously monitor the expectations for learning in lessons, the rate of progress and the use of assessment, providing feedback to teachers and points for action.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils enjoy learning and the majority achieve satisfactorily. Progress accelerates where teaching is good. For example, in a literacy lesson, Year 5 pupils enjoyed the challenge to identify features of recounts because the work was set at the right level for each group of pupils. Their rate of learning increased each time the teacher stopped them to ask probing questions because it made them re-evaluate where they were and if they were on the right track. In an outstanding Year 4 music lesson a combination of high expectation, a high level of enthusiastic pupil involvement and intervention by the teacher ensured that new learning was practised, reinforced and perfected.

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Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress as a result of the well-targeted support that they receive from their teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language also benefit from accurately targeted support which helps them to achieve as well as their classmates. Progress tracking data, introduced by the new headteacher, clearly show that Pakistani pupils, who are the largest ethnic group, make satisfactory progress and that writing and mathematics are their strongest areas. Asian pupils, particularly Bangladeshi pupils, are the highest performing groups, although Black Africans in the current Year 6 also perform well. White British heritage pupils often do least well, but there are only a very few of these pupils. There is no discrepancy in the achievement of boys and girls or those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are not.

A positive ethos results from the good care that pupils receive. This contributes effectively to the development of pupils’ personal qualities. Pupils work and play harmoniously, come to school regularly and their behaviour is good. They say there is very little bullying and know that there will always be someone who will listen to them. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to stay safe and know what they must do to lead healthy lifestyles, particularly as they have gained the Healthy Schools award. They enjoy a healthy choice at lunchtime and fruit for their break. They are proud to be members of the school council and of the part they played in selecting a new headteacher. Pupils’ social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Pupils know right from wrong. They are caring and considerate to each other as well as courteous and polite. As a result, they form strong relationships both with each other and with adults. They have a good understanding of cultural diversity gained through the curriculum, community cohesion and their work for the International School Award.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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contribute to their future economic well-being	
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and support them well so that pupils want to learn and do their best. Where teaching is good, the learning is accurately matched to pupils' ability and teachers use their own good subject knowledge and understanding effectively to deepen and extend pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 1 literacy lesson, pupils made good progress in their reading because the work was set at the right level. The teacher had high expectations and communicated these clearly at regular intervals. This, together with well-targeted support by the teaching assistant ensured that all pupils were actively engaged in their learning. However, in other lessons pupils, who are well behaved at all times, sit passively while the teacher talks at length to the whole class. There is often too little time left for them to carry out their own tasks. Pupil interviews revealed that there are pupils who find school boring and the work too easy.

The curriculum supports learning appropriately. Links across subject areas make learning enjoyable, although these have yet to be fully developed. Teachers make good use of the locality. The school's proximity to the Olympic Arena is providing valuable material for a whole-school topic. Specialist teaching in music provides pupils with a rich learning experience. Pupils enjoy extra-curricular activities such as the multi-sports club and basket ball, which help them to adopt healthy lifestyles, as well as opportunities to do cookery, gardening and drama. They have also enjoyed the work and projects they have undertaken to gain the Healthy Schools award and the International Schools award.

Pupils feel happy and secure because they know that there is a good level of care, guidance and support and that there is always someone there to listen, help or advise. Pupils who face challenges in their lives benefit from this nurturing environment which provides them with effective support well tailored to their needs. The popular breakfast club has had a good impact on improving pupils' attendance and punctuality and provides a good opportunity for social interaction. Pupils also enjoy the activities which provide an informal but valuable variety of learning experiences.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where	3

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relevant, through partnerships	
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher has an accurate view of the school. Senior leaders share his vision and staff welcome the new thinking that he has brought. They say that he has instilled confidence and motivated them to redouble their efforts to foster improvement. Senior leaders recognise that a more focused improvement plan together with further development of the roles and responsibilities of middle managers will channel this enthusiasm more effectively and accelerate the rate of improvement. Members of the governing body are very committed and work hard. Their role in the life and work of the school has been limited but they are keen to play a more active role. At present, there are a few governors who do not yet have all of the training or necessary knowledge to enable them to do so.

Provision to secure equal opportunities and tackle discrimination is satisfactory. An accurate tracking system highlights the underperformance of individuals. Consequently, the school recognises that progress is not consistently good across the school. However, the headteacher’s precise data analysis of the progress made by different groups has added a new and important dimension to the quick identification of underachievement and a stronger focus on developing the achievement of different groups of pupils.

Procedures for safeguarding are good and ensure that all pupils feel safe and that their emotional and social needs are met. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are thorough and child protection arrangements are secure and updated regularly. Although the school has a generally positive relationship with parents and carers most communications take place on an informal basis. At present, the school does not have a formal programme of events that will provide parents and carers with the skills to help their children.

Community cohesion is promoted well. The rich diversity of the school’s own population is celebrated and a wide range of international projects and return visits by foreign students to Downsell broaden pupils’ appreciation of the wider world. However, senior leaders recognise that the next step for them is to monitor how effectively this strategy strengthens the school’s contribution to community cohesion and reinforces the work done within the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the	3

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school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly into the welcoming atmosphere because personal development is good, relationships are strong and they are safe and well cared for. Staff foster positive attitudes to learning and, as a result, children behave well, are confident and learning to sustain their concentration. The outside area gives children plenty of space to enjoy activities such as balancing, water play and climbing under, over and through the climbing frame. However, it does not cover all areas of learning as well as the indoor areas. Regular assessment ensures that teachers have an appropriate understanding of the learning and development needs of the children. This enables staff to plan activities which build upon what children already know, understand and can do. Teaching assistants provide well-targeted support for vulnerable children, children who are learning to speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leadership and management are satisfactory. They know where areas of weakness lie and work hard to ensure that these are tackled effectively. They make sure that all staff are appropriately focused on helping children to make better progress, on promoting their welfare, and ensuring that children are well cared for, and safeguarding procedures are secure.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

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Views of parents and carers

In a return, which was well below average, the majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were positive about all aspects of school life. This view was supported by those who spoke to inspectors at the school gate. Evidence from the inspection supports parents' and carers' views that children enjoy school, and that care for their health and safety is good. Parents and carers are happy with the teaching that their children receive and the way in which the school meets their needs and keeps them informed about their children's progress. A large majority say they are happy with their child's experience at the school. A few indicated that they did not think that their child was making enough progress. Evidence from the inspection shows that the quality of teaching and the use of assessment and level of challenge are inconsistent and this means that pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress. A few felt that the school did not take account of parents' and carers' concerns and suggestions. Evidence from the inspection shows that although there is a parents' forum, the number of developments that reflect the views of parents and carers is limited. A few felt that the school does not help them support their children's learning. The school recognises this and plans to organise workshops to address this. While a few said that they were unhappy with their child's experience of school there were those who commented that they 'would highly recommend this school to anyone' and that 'Downsell School is the best school in Waltham Forest'. A large majority said they were happy with the leadership and management of the school, but a few reflected the uncertainty that comes with changes in leadership. Evidence from the inspection shows that staff, senior leaders and members of the governing body share the new headteacher's focus on the acceleration of improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Downsell Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 86 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 695 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	36	50	58	2	2	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	28	33	51	59	6	7	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	21	24	53	62	9	10	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	26	42	49	17	20	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	19	22	53	62	12	14	1	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	21	24	46	53	16	19	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	21	58	67	6	7	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	22	26	43	50	10	12	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	17	20	52	60	10	12	3	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	22	43	50	10	12	5	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	14	40	47	14	16	4	5
The school is led and managed effectively	18	21	41	48	12	14	4	5
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	24	28	41	48	15	17	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Downsell Primary School, London E15 2BS

Thank you for being so friendly when we came to your school. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to you. You were very helpful, polite and friendly. Your school gives you a satisfactory standard of education and there are a lot of things your school does well.

You told us that you enjoy school and that you feel very safe. We found that everybody in school looks after you well, especially those of you who have difficulties from time to time. We were impressed with your good behaviour and your clear understanding and knowledge of how to keep healthy. We were pleased to see that most of you understand how important it is to come to school regularly. We could see that you get on well with each other and help the school to run smoothly.

Your headteacher and other staff know that there is still work to be done to make the school even better. We have asked the school to do two things.

- It should make sure that teachers give you the right level of work to help you improve and only expect your very best work. It should also make sure that you have plenty of time to do your own work in lessons. We have asked senior leaders to check that all this is happening.
- It should make sure that those teachers who are in charge of subject areas and members of the governing body are clear about the part they have to play in making your school even better.

We hope that you will all continue to enjoy coming to school and try your hardest to do your very best all the time so that you are even more successful in the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Atcheson
Lead inspector

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