

Downe Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101614
Local Authority	Borough Of Bromley
Inspection number	376601
Inspection dates	18–19 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Grant
Headteacher	Sandra Fuller
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 10 lessons taught by four staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, and pupils' workbooks; they held discussions with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, including the Chair and Vice-Chair, and senior staff. Questionnaires from 45 parents and carers, 13 staff and 38 from pupils were analysed.

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

- How well children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve, particularly in their communication, language, literacy and outdoor learning.
- Whether teaching takes account of mixed ages in class, especially in pupils' writing, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) work.
- How well senior leaders use self-evaluation to identify areas for further improvement.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than most. The new headteacher joined the school just over a year ago. The Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in one Reception class. Their outside area is a short distance from the classroom. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than found nationally. There are a few pupils from minority ethnic heritages and the proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Downe Primary is a good school. Pupils, staff, parents and carers appreciate the school's happy, family-like ethos. It prepares pupils well for their learning and personal development, which in turn fosters their good academic achievement. One parent's comment, typical of many, was that 'Downe is a fabulous school - my daughter enjoys it and doesn't realise that she's learning so much in the process.'

- In the Reception class, children get off to a good start and make good progress in their basic writing, reading and language work. Activities in the outside area are not as enticing as those planned within the classrooms as some of the resources are in need of replacement or refurbishment.
- Pupils' attainment is above average by the time they leave and they achieve well. All pupils reached at least the expected levels in the last national tests, with many exceeding them. While mathematics results were also above average, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to use their good calculation skills or mathematical knowledge in 'real life' applications. Pupils do not use their ICT skills frequently enough in everyday activities to extend their learning.
- Good levels of care, supported by clear guidance policies, ensure pupils feel secure and extremely safe. The small nature of the school is appreciated and pupils say they like the fact that 'everybody knows everybody' and no-one feels left out. Pupils are very kind, friendly and their behaviour is excellent. Their work as members of the school council, play leaders or when raising money for their partner school in Malawi demonstrates their commitment to the life of the school, the local community and beyond. Attendance levels are above average.
- Typically good teaching and a broad curriculum, which caters effectively for mixed-age classes, are positive factors in promoting pupils' good levels of achievement, including artistic and sporting. Pupils write with flair and imagination, and complete project work to high standards. Lessons are normally well planned and teaching assistants help those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to take a full part within lessons and to progress at the same good rate as their peers. In otherwise well-taught lessons, pupils sometimes make slower progress when teachers' explanations are too long and when a small number of pupils are unclear of their targets to guide improvement.

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- Underpinning the school's continued effectiveness since the previous inspection are the high expectations of the headteacher, supported by other staff and members of the governing body. Priorities for improvement are informed by accurate school self-evaluation, which takes on board comments from other stakeholders, particularly of parents and carers, as excellent links exist between them and the school. Staff and governors recognise that pupils' knowledge of the range of faiths, cultures and lifestyles in this country, although satisfactory, is not secure enough. Given that the school has maintained the good aspects noted in its previous inspection, and has secured further improvement in pupils' attainment and aspects of their personal development, the school has good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' learning through the school this academic year to help raise attainment still further by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to apply their number skills in investigative activities that relate to 'real life' examples
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to use their ICT skills in their day-to-day work
 - ensuring that where necessary, teachers' explanations are shorter so pupils can start their activities sooner, and that they are all familiar with their targets
 - improving the quality of outdoor resources for the children in Reception class.
- Improve pupils' awareness of the wide range of backgrounds, beliefs and lifestyles of communities in contrasting localities of the United Kingdom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils enjoy their learning and readily talk about the activities they like best. Past work revolving around the life of Charles Darwin, projects on Henry VIII and studies on ancient Greek life and architecture all figured highly in displays and discussions with pupils. In lessons, they respond well to activities, as relationships are good between staff and pupils. Older pupils particularly enjoyed discovering what life was like in school at the start of the Second World War using extracts from the old school log books. This fostered their research and enquiry skills well. In another class, younger pupils were highly motivated to sequence a story, prompted by a storybook containing some imaginary lions and dragons. Practical activities form part of daily lessons, and pupils in a Year 3/4 class appreciated going onto the playground to carry out activities that helped extend their mathematical understanding. Most children with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from tailored activities for their needs, often within the class but also in small one-to-one and small group activities in adjacent workspaces. The very small number of pupils at the early

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stages of learning English are supported well so that they keep pace with their classmates.

Particularly good moral and social development helps playtimes be 'fun times', according to pupils, and their spiritual awareness is also good. Their cultural understanding develops well through art and musical activities such as samba band. They enjoy a wide range of activities which helps keep them fit and active and complements their good understanding of how to eat sensibly. Play leaders take their role seriously and keep their eyes peeled for anyone who happens to be at the 'friendship bus stop' so they can befriend them. Pupils' contribution to the school and wider community is good. Pupils enjoyed telling others in assembly about the range of fund-raising activities, such as a 'Cutie cake stall' and 'who can build the tallest tower in a minute challenge', taking place at the end of the week to raise money for their partner school in Malawi. Pupils' good awareness of their own locality is not matched with a similar level of understanding of others' contrasting backgrounds and beliefs within communities in other regions of this country. Pupils' good level of achievement, combined with their mature attitudes and willingness to work, prepares them well for the next stages of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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 contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Consistently good teaching through the school is an underlying factor in pupils' good progress and good academic achievement. Lessons are usually planned to include practical activities, particularly in art, history, geography and music. Basic skills are

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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taught systematically, which results in well-developed writing, speaking and listening skills. Pupils' accurate and quick number skills are fostered by daily practice activities and pupils in Years 5/6 particularly like the opportunity to improve upon their 'personal best' performance when practising their times table. These good mathematical skills, however, are not always put to the test in regular investigative work to help pupils apply their knowledge and understanding. Teachers use interactive whiteboards to make learning fun, for example showing video clips, pictures or displaying graphical information. Although pupils' past work indicates that they use ICT skills within their work, opportunities are not frequent enough to extend their familiarity with using ICT within everyday learning. Teachers' marking is regular and helpful in guiding pupils in improving their work and most pupils are able to recall their personal targets for improvement. However, not all are sufficiently aware of their targets and this lack of awareness occasionally slows progress for some. The broad and balanced curriculum caters well for pupils in mixed-age classes. It is enhanced by projects which revolve around different themes and often include studies on Downe village's most famous former inhabitant, Charles Darwin. Displays reflect a good range of work; art displays, models and pupils' writing point to their enthusiasm for their work and learning. Extra-curricular clubs help broaden pupils' horizons and extend their activity levels effectively.

Good levels of care, guidance and support result in pupils that are mature, thoughtful and supportive of each other. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are particularly well catered for, often by well-briefed and skilful teaching assistants. They enable pupils to take a full and active part within lessons, despite some needing a high level of support with their particular need. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from well-chosen activities to meet their needs, and good links with agencies beyond the school provide additional advice, guidance and support when needed. Links with secondary schools are well developed to aid transition for the oldest pupils in the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

In the comparatively short time since the headteacher teacher joined the school, she has won the support of parents, carers and the staff. Staff say that morale is high and all are committed to ongoing improvement. Good teamwork is the essence of success of the school in driving up standards and in maintaining the good ethos recognised by pupils, parents and carers. Senior staff monitor teaching regularly and

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usually to good effect, although the frequency is sometimes limited by difficulties in releasing senior staff or coordinators to monitor the work of others. There are excellent links with parents and carers through regular meetings, events and regular questionnaires to seek their views. The vast majority who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire spoke very positively about the work of the school. Partnerships with other local small schools enable a good level of professional development for staff, and partnerships with local secondary schools, although having reduced recently, nonetheless provide additional opportunities for pupils, for example in helping those with musical talents to develop these more fully.

The governing body supports the school well and ensures that its statutory responsibilities relating to safeguarding procedures, the vetting of staff and checks on health and safety are all carried out to a good standard. Governors visit the school regularly, although they recognise these visits could be targeted more closely to the school's current priorities for improvement. The school promotes equal opportunities well as it keeps a close eye on the progress of different groups of pupils and ensures that any variation is reducing. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated by staff and pupils say that they have equal access to clubs and to attend visits. The good level of harmonious relationships that exist within the school and in the local community support the school's satisfactory promotion of community cohesion.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get a good start and benefit from being within a small secure and friendly environment. From their starting points, which are generally in line with typical expectations, they all reach the expected levels, with many exceeding them, when

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they enter Year 1. They make particularly good progress in their personal and social development, along with their early writing, number and reading skills. They work well together, often supporting each other in activities, whether it is in the 'dark cave' in the corner of the classroom, or in making simple cards or painting symmetrical butterflies. Good levels of teaching help promote children's confidence to speak clearly and develop their knowledge of letter sounds and combinations to aid their early reading skills. Although the outside area is located a little distance from the classroom, this is managed effectively so that all children benefit from activities outside, albeit all of the class at once. Activities planned for outdoors are usually effective in covering different areas of learning, although these are not always as inviting or appealing as those inside the classroom due to the lack of new and up-to-date resources. This slightly detracts from children's potential enjoyment and extended learning. The class teacher has a good oversight and understanding of the different needs of the children, often modifying activities for individuals so that any children who may lag behind in their learning are quickly helped to get back on track. Links with parents and carers are well developed and procedures to help the children have a smooth start are well established to good effect.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a well above average rate of response to the Ofsted questionnaire. A small number contained comments and the majority of these were positive about the ethos of the school, the way children enjoy attending, and the good levels of academic achievement that are promoted. A very small number of parents and carers stated that they would like more frequent updates on their child's progress. Inspectors confirmed the positive views expressed by parents and carers, particularly in relation to the positive ethos and levels of pupils' behaviour. Inspectors investigated anonymously with the school the very small number of concerns and found that the communication with parents and carers was often more frequent than typically found in primary schools, particularly for individual pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Downe 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 45 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 75 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	76	10	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	82	8	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	26	58	17	38	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	56	18	40	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	67	15	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	31	69	12	27	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	64	16	36	0	0	0	0
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	49	13	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	26	58	16	36	3	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	64	14	31	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	60	16	36	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	73	10	22	2	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	33	73	10	22	2	4	0	0

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.



20 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Downe Primary School, Downe BR6 7JN

Many thanks for your welcome when we visited your school. We think yours is a good school which everyone is keen to keep improving. Here are some particular things we found out.

- You make good progress in your learning most of the time and your attainment in many subjects, especially English and mathematics, is above the level of most schools. We liked reading your stories and accounts, and I really liked your models, which were very detailed.
- You behave brilliantly and you told us you enjoy lessons.
- Your attendance levels are above average – keep it up and well done!
- The school cares for you well, particularly those who find learning hard.
- The school makes excellent links with your parents or carers.
- You are good at keeping healthy and keeping fit with exercise.
- Keep up your good fund-raising efforts for others - I hope it went well on the Friday after I left!
- Those we spoke to, and your questionnaires, told us that you all feel extremely safe in school.
- The headteacher, staff and governors like working at the school and are continuing to find other ways of improving it where possible.

We have asked the school to improve two particular aspects of the school to help it get even better by,

- Helping everyone make even faster progress, by letting you get down to work more quickly in lessons, ensuring you develop your ICT and investigative mathematics in lessons, and making sure that you all know your targets. We have also suggested making some improvements to resources in the outdoor area for children in the Reception class.
- Helping you understand more about others who live in different areas of this country, especially those who have different beliefs or lifestyles.

All of you can help, too, by trying to keep up your excellent behaviour and in giving your ideas about how the school can keep improving.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge
Lead inspector

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