

Epsom Downs Primary School and Children's Centre

St Leonard's Road, Epsom Downs, Surrey, KT18 5RJ

Inspection dates 2–3 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- The headteacher provides very strong leadership for the school, supported ably by the highly effective leadership team.
- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well, particularly in writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1, and in grammar, spelling and punctuation at Key Stage 2. Lessons are well planned and organised, helping pupils to learn effectively.
- School leaders and governors have a deep understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school. Leaders know how well the school is doing.
- The curriculum is exciting and matched closely to the needs and interests of the pupils. Enrichment activities are especially good.
- Provision in the early years is good, with some outstanding practice. Children, regardless of their starting points, make good progress through a stimulating and varied curriculum and consistently good teaching and effective care and support.
- Governors have extensive knowledge of the school. They use this to support but also challenge the school to improve further.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite and courteous and take great pride in their school.
- All adults in the school work well together as a team, providing a nurturing environment where pupils feel safe and want to learn.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not sufficiently challenge the most able pupils to enable them to achieve at the highest levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Some pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, require more help to improve their writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons, four of which were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed an assembly, heard pupils reading and discussed their reading progress with them. Meetings were held with two groups of pupils. Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work in all year groups to gain a view of teaching.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, other staff with significant responsibilities, three representatives of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of 30 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, a recent survey carried out by the school and responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors received one letter from a parent.
- Inspectors looked at a number of school documents, including the school's own information on pupils' current progress, teachers' planning, records showing leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

Fiona Bridger-Wilkinson, Lead inspector

Seconded inspector

Nigel Duncan

Additional inspector

Janet Pearce

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Epsom Downs Primary School is larger than average. It has a children's centre and day nursery on site which provide integrated care and support.
- There are breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs which are managed by the governors.
- The 'nurture group' which opened in 2012 provides support for pupils in Reception and Key Stage 1 from this school and other schools in the area.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage but an increasing number are from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, including Asian, African and Caribbean.
- A minority of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, for which the school receives additional funding (pupil premium), is broadly average, although higher in some year groups.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is higher than that found nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Pupils come from an area with higher-than-average levels of deprivation.
- Higher-than-typical numbers of pupils enter the school part-way through their education.
- The school has developed a farm and allotment area to enhance its curriculum provision.
- The school holds a number of awards, including: Artsmark, Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Green Flag Eco Award, Gold Geography Quality Mark and Gold International School Award.
- Year 6 pupils were away from school on a residential visit during the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and achievement so that they are typically outstanding by ensuring that:
 - the most able pupils are challenged sufficiently to enable them to achieve at the highest levels in reading, writing and mathematics
 - pupils with special educational needs are given help to write well and improve their handwriting.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides very strong leadership for the school. She has a clear vision and the drive and ambition to enable the school to continue to improve and progress. The headteacher has established a strong and effective staff team that is focused on effective teaching and all pupils making at least good progress through an exciting yet nurturing curriculum.
- Attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection. It is now just below that of primary schools nationally. The attendance rate of disadvantaged pupils in receipt of additional funding is particularly carefully monitored and the school has been successful in improving their attendance significantly. The school uses a raft of incentives to encourage good attendance, including certificates, points and prizes. The school works with the local authority staff to try and resolve concerns about attendance.
- Leadership is well developed at all levels. Phase and subject leaders are given real responsibility to shape learning and curriculum developments. They are having a positive impact on improving standards by ensuring good opportunities are in place for developing computing skills.
- Leaders have a robust system of monitoring in place which includes regular visits to classrooms to monitor teaching, learning and behaviour and looking at pupils' work. They have a clear picture of strengths and areas for improvement.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. The school prioritises the needs of disadvantaged pupils carefully, implements effective strategies, monitors academic, social and emotional progress rigorously and measures the impact of support against agreed criteria.
- The school's use of sports funding is exemplary. The subject leader has embedded a culture of sports participation for all within the school. Staff have benefited from training to increase their skills, for example in supporting pupils with special educational needs with sport and midday staff trained to support skipping. Links have been forged with local clubs such as Cobham gymnastics club and Sutton and Epsom rugby club. A strong focus has been on making sure activities are sustainable. Participation in sport has increased threefold. This initiative has improved pupils' health and fitness and has also supported positive behaviour in day-to-day school activities.
- Performance management and salary progression are linked closely and effectively to the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and exciting. It is planned around the needs and interests of the pupils in the school. Pupils benefit greatly from the enrichment opportunities, including the school farm, cookery, pottery, outdoor learning and educational visits. Personal, social and emotional development is a particular strength. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain through opportunities to collaborate using 'talk partners', and pupil enterprise through selling eggs from the farm. The curriculum promotes equality of opportunity, tolerance and respect for other faiths and cultures through themed weeks and visits such as to a Buddhist temple
- Newly qualified teachers are well supported to develop their teaching skills through planning with more experienced colleagues. Regular mentoring provides guidance and advice on all aspects of teaching.
- The school works very effectively with parents. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, feeling that communication is 'absolutely brilliant' and valuing the opportunity to come into school to see 'teaching in action'. Parents say that pupils gain a lot from all the extra-curricular opportunities.
- The local authority provides support appropriate to the school's needs. The leadership sensibly work collaboratively with other schools locally to further develop teaching and learning and to help them check their assessments of how well pupils are doing.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are thorough and meet all statutory requirements. School leaders ensure that all staff and governors are suitably trained and understand their responsibilities for ensuring that pupils are safe.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is an asset to the school. It is highly effective, challenging and supporting the school with its broad knowledge and expertise. It is not afraid to hold the school to account. Governors closely check pupils' achievement, including that of pupils for whom additional funding is received. They are aware of the impact of both pupil premium and sports funding. They understand the quality of teaching in the school and the actions being taken to improve achievement. Governors oversee the performance of staff, ensure that teachers are set high targets and reward staff when this is

appropriate. Governors are clear about their responsibility for safeguarding and ensure that all policies and practices related to keeping pupils safe are fully implemented.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite and respectful to adults and to each other. In the playground, pupils play well together, sharing equipment. At lunchtimes Key Stage 2 pupils take part in organised games which are well supported by staff, who are good role models. Staff join in with play and demonstrate caring relationships with pupils.
- There is a calm friendly atmosphere in the hall at lunchtimes. Pupils show good manners while eating.
- The school works hard to help pupils to behave well. There are good schemes to support this, such as tokens which pupils earn. Pupils are pleased when they receive tokens and feel it encourages their good behaviour.
- Lessons flow smoothly because teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. On the few occasions when pupils become distracted or lose concentration, teachers take prompt action to correct their behaviour.
- Pupils are proud to have 'jobs', such as being on the school council. Key Stage 1 pupils talk animatedly about how they are helping to make the school better and more enjoyable for everyone.
- Pupils nearly always work hard and show commitment to their learning. However, on a very few occasions, when more-able pupils finish their work, they often sit quietly and wait for their teacher's attention, rather than seeking out additional challenges.
- Parents are confident that behaviour is good, and pupils agree. Pupils are proud to wear their school uniform. In assemblies they listen attentively to a visitor and reflect quietly when asked. Pupils move quickly and without fuss when changing from one activity to another.
- Any incidents of poor behaviour are appropriately recorded. School leaders can point to significant improvements in some pupils' behaviour as a result of extra programmes of support and involvement of parents. However, school leaders have missed opportunities to develop pupils' outstanding behaviour because they do not analyse trends or patterns of behaviour sufficiently systematically.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. The school has effective systems in place; all staff are well trained and make safety a high priority. Pupils say they feel safe and parents report that they are confident that the school keeps their children secure and well looked after.
- When talking to inspectors, pupils showed a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils could explain the school rules on using the internet and they knew where posters about safe internet usage were located.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and feel sure that it is dealt with effectively when it occurs. They are confident that often they can use the school guidelines to resolve incidents for themselves but that if they need to ask for help, staff will deal with concerns successfully.
- The school actively promotes pupil safety through 'anti-bullying' weeks and through their involvement in an annual survey on school safety.
- The school is rightly proud of its timely and sensitive work to support families in need of extra help. Strong partnerships with external agencies, courses at the children's centre for parents and pupil sessions in the nurture room help pupils to gain confidence and build self-esteem.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching, including in English and mathematics, and in the early years, is typically good, with some examples of outstanding practice. Teachers have good subject knowledge and convey high expectations.
- In the past there was some poor teaching but this has been eradicated. Consistently good teaching has raised standards. Teaching of mathematics is strong. Teachers consistently use appropriate mathematical vocabulary and effective questioning to reinforce learning.
- The teaching of reading and writing is effective overall. Examples of lively engaging writing were seen in books. For example, pupils in Year 2 produced some compelling extended writing on the theme of poppies, based on their study of the First World War.
- The provision of reading, writing and number 'mats' is a helpful strategy used by the school to help pupils know their individual targets and what they need to do next to improve their work.
- Work is well marked with helpful corrections. Pupils are given time each day to respond to marking,

ensuring that they are able to use the feedback from teachers to improve their work.

- Work planned for more-able pupils is not always sufficiently challenging for them. The school has identified this as a priority, but it is too soon to see the impact of actions taken on pupils' results.
- Provision within the 'Nest' (part of the Surrey cluster of nurture groups) is highly effective. The environment is calm yet stimulating and pupils make excellent progress. Work is well planned for each pupil and linked to their interests and experiences. Skilful teaching provides many opportunities for pupils to build confidence and social skills and to develop their listening and language skills. For example, pupils were encouraged to ask challenging questions about a mystery item in a box, which stimulated their curiosity, extended their thinking and developed their powers of concentration.
- A few pupils do not always present their work well. They are not given enough help to improve their handwriting or to write well. This is particularly true of the work of those with special educational needs.
- Teaching assistants are involved in assessing how well pupils understand their work, reinforcing learning, helping pupils to concentrate on tasks and managing behaviour. They effectively support learning.
- Staff who support disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs are making a strong contribution to improving standards in English, mathematics and personal and social development. Through the programmes of extra help, staff provide support so that these pupils can learn well alongside their classmates. They are well trained and know the needs of individual pupils, making them highly effective.
- Homework is a good mixture of regular spelling and reading tasks with opportunities to complete special projects as well. Home-learning diaries, which are used in lessons, help parents support pupils' learning at home.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most pupils, including those who enter the school with very low starting points, make rapid progress and attain results in mathematics, reading and writing that are in line with national figures.
- Achievement is not outstanding because a very few pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable and do not attain the highest levels, particularly in reading. For example, some planning for guided reading does not enable more-able pupils to explore the language and structure of texts in sufficient detail. School leaders have rightly identified this as an area for improvement. There are clear signs that more-able pupils' progress in reading is accelerating and that current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' achievement at the end of Key Stage 1 is generally good, with nearly all pupils making good or rapid progress and attaining expected levels in writing and mathematics.
- Reading at home is promoted well through incentive schemes such as 'reading rivers' which encourage pupils to record what they have read and win prizes.
- School records show that pupils in Year 4 and Year 5 with special educational needs are making accelerated progress. Achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, across the school is improving as a result of a strong focus on good teaching and appropriate programmes of extra help. However, a few pupils with special educational needs are not making enough progress in writing.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils achieved better than such pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. However, they did not achieve as well as their peers in school. Data shows that in Key Stage 1, disadvantaged pupils lag behind their peers by about one third of a year in reading, writing and mathematics. In Key Stage 2 the gap in reading, writing and mathematics is approximately six months. This gap is currently narrowing as disadvantaged pupils, of all ages, are now making accelerated progress.
- Children in the early years make a good start in phonics (learning about the sounds that letters make). The outcomes of the phonics screening check for pupils in Year 1 in 2014 were below those nationally but this was due to a high percentage of pupils with significant difficulties. A similar picture is true of pupils who re-took the check in Year 2. The school has a strong system to support pupils with phonics where needed in Year 3.

The early years provision**is good**

- Children start in the Rainbow Unit with a variety of levels of skills ranging from well below what would be expected to skills that are typical for their age. Children, regardless of their starting point, typically make good progress and start in Year 1 ready to take the next steps in learning.
- The Rainbow Unit is well resourced and provides a multitude of exciting opportunities for children to develop their learning both indoors and out. The carefully planned activities, based on the children's interests, encompass all the areas of learning. Children were observed developing their imagination by dressing up as Santa's elves to deliver presents. They carefully estimated how large a sheet of paper was needed to wrap up presents and used well-developed physical skills to cut sticky tape and secure the wrapping. Outside, children counted to numbers beyond ten using bundles of sticks to support their thinking.
- Opportunities for children to select activities are complemented by adult-led sessions. There is a good emphasis on the teaching of basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics, which has a positive impact on children's achievement. Teaching of early reading is well matched to children's ability and children make good progress in linking sounds to make words. Children are able to use skills they have learnt in adult-led sessions when they are selecting activities themselves, for example writing letters to Santa.
- Teaching is consistently good, with some being outstanding. Staff skilfully lead focused group sessions where children are encouraged to be active participants in learning, for example counting backwards from five as part of a counting rhyme. Staff are equally skilled at supporting children during play activities, encouraging them to extend their thinking.
- Leadership and management of the Early Years are very good. Teaching is regularly monitored to ensure it is of a high standard. Staff collaborate well to plan provision and benefit from wide-ranging training. The progress of children is rigorously tracked and the information used to determine whether any child needs additional help. Children's learning diaries contain useful assessments of progress and next steps. However, in a few cases, the next steps are vague or do not focus clearly enough on what needs to be learnt next.
- Children with English as an additional language are particularly well supported. Children are assessed to determine how best to help them benefit fully from their time in Early Years. Children are encouraged to share their home culture, language and foods with the school through 'magic carpet' rides. These have seen the setting up of a French café, serving croissants and sequencing cards explaining the journey of tea from bush to cup.
- Staff build a true partnership with parents from the careful process through which children join Early Years to the learning diaries that they are encouraged to contribute to. Parents are given frequent opportunities to come into school and learn alongside their child.
- Children are well cared for and procedures are in place to ensure that they are safeguarded effectively.

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

Unique reference number	125127
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	448854

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community School
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	424
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Barbara Wharton
Headteacher	Mrs Sally Leach
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2009
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