

Darenth Community Primary School

Green Street Green Road, Dartford, DA2 8DH

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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.

- Most pupils make good progress and achieve good standards.
- Disadvantaged pupils and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children often make better progress than these groups of children nationally.
- Many lessons start with something to grab the pupils' interest. As a result, pupils are often engrossed in their learning and work hard to develop new skills in lessons.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive, and pupils make good progress because they are eager to learn. They are keen to develop speaking and listening skills through the opportunities they are given to talk about their learning with other pupils and with their teachers.
- Children behave well and show respect for each other and their school. The school carefully monitors pupil behaviour, and analyses it to see what trends there are and how behaviour is improving.
- The leadership of the headteacher has been the key to the improvements in the school. She has focused on improving the quality of teaching and has raised the expectations of all.
- The governing body now challenges leaders in the school and holds them to account for how well children do.
- The school provides a safe and secure learning environment in which children can flourish.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all pupils are making good or better progress in all subjects. Pupils do not get enough opportunities to write in all subjects, and marking does not always help them to improve their work.
- The attendance of some pupils is not high enough for them to make good progress. Links with parents are not strong and the school has not been able to engage with some parents.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited seven lessons, as well as making shorter visits to some classes and observing support for small groups of children. Some of the lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and all senior leaders in the school.
- In addition, informal meetings were held with parents and groups of children on the playground. There were only seven responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, which did not meet the minimum required for publication. However, the information from the school's recent parental questionnaire was reviewed.
- The inspector considered the work children had done in their books, during lessons and also at other times during the inspection.
- The inspector also studied a range of written evidence provided by the school. This included the school's own checks on how well it is doing, teachers' timetables and planning, the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings and the headteacher's report to the governing body. The inspector looked at safeguarding documentation and the school's own records on the quality of teaching. In addition, the school's records of how well pupils are doing and the progress they are making were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Martyn Kitson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school. Some year groups have very small numbers, which can affect any comparison of pupils' standards and progress.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after) is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from White British backgrounds has fallen below 50%, with the largest other group being Gypsy, Roma and Traveller. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children make up almost half the school population.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average.
- Pupil mobility is very high, with most of it being from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.
- In 2014, the school met the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school does not have a nursery. Reception children attend the school full time.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, particularly in writing, by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length and in all subjects that they are taught
 - ensuring that marking informs pupils of what they need to do to improve and that pupils are given the opportunity to feed back to the teacher on their own work
 - improving attendance levels so that pupils have more time in school for learning.
- Improve links with parents to help them to be better able to support their children's learning by:
 - providing opportunities for parents to learn about the subjects their children are being taught
 - ensuring that there is clear communication between the school and home about key events at the school
 - providing more opportunities for parents to engage with, and visit, the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The strong leadership of the headteacher has been instrumental in the improvements that the school has made. Since her arrival, she has raised the expectations of all for the school. There is now a clear understanding of what the school is trying to achieve and this is shared by staff and the governing body.
- The headteacher is ably supported by the senior leadership team who, although newly formed, is being held to account for the achievement of children in the school. The members have a clear understanding of their role and are relishing the opportunity to fulfil it. Similarly, middle managers are making an increasing contribution to leadership and management of the school.
- The headteacher effectively monitors the quality of teaching in the school through a programme of observations, reviews of children's work, and meetings with teachers. She is accurate in her judgement of teaching. The school has introduced a robust programme for performance management and uses it effectively to make judgements about pay.
- The school has a detailed improvement plan that accurately identifies where the school needs to improve. This is produced by the headteacher in conjunction with her staff, followed by input from the governing body.
- The school has worked hard to develop parental links, but these are still in their early stages. However, the school's own questionnaire shows strong parental support for the school, although some parents say that they are not always told about events at the school.
- The school is innovative in the way that it has developed its curriculum so that children are excited by it. It has introduced a new way of measuring how well pupils are progressing and whether they are achieving as well as they should. This helps the school plan tasks at the right level for pupils. Opportunities are sometimes missed to help parents learn about what their children are taught and how they are taught.
- The school provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with their social and moral development having a positive impact on their learning. Activities, such as mock elections on election day, help pupils to learn about life in modern Britain. There is a strong focus on fairness and tolerance and, consequently, any types of discrimination are rare. This is supported by a strong focus on treating all children equally, which helps to develop the positive relationships in the school.
- The extra money provided to support disadvantaged pupils is well used to provide additional staff, so that these pupils make good progress. The school accurately accounts for this and reports on it.
- The additional funding for physical education and sport is being successfully used to improve the skills of teachers by having them work alongside qualified coaches. It is also helping to provide more sporting opportunities for pupils.
- The many improvements that have taken place, together with the leadership's clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, show that the school has a good capacity for improvement.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school and has had a significant role in the improvements that have taken place.
- All statutory requirements for safeguarding are met, with the school providing a safe and secure environment for all children.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There has been a significant improvement in the work of the governing body since the last inspection. Governors are now aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and regularly challenge senior leaders on these. There is a clear committee structure and governors understand their role within it.
 - Governors are fully aware of the results of the performance management of staff and have exercised their responsibility in managing pay increases.
 - They have a good knowledge of how the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used and the effect it has, and also of how the additional funding for physical education and sport is used.
 - Governors are beginning to be involved in the production of the school's plans for improvement and are challenging school leaders on these plans.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils display positive attitudes towards their learning. Most are keen to learn and are enthusiastic about

school. They cooperate with each other and want to move their learning forward. There are few cases of low-level disruption in school and pupils are able to get on with their learning.

- The playground is a happy place and pupils make full use of the spacious areas available to them. They play well together and recognise the benefits of having a number of adults available at lunchtime to provide different activities for them. Relationships between adults and pupils are friendly, always courteous and polite, and pupils move around the school safely and respectfully.
- The school carefully tracks incidents of poor behaviour and analyses these in terms of type of incident, when it occurred and in which year group. This shows that the number of such incidents has been steadily falling over the past year. During this time, the school has issued a small number of short, fixed term exclusions but no permanent exclusions.
- Pupils are proud of their school and take care of it. They say that bullying is rare but, that when it does occur, adults quickly deal with it. They are aware of the safe use of computers and understand cyber bullying, although none of them had experienced it.
- Attendance is below average, but is slowly improving. The attendance of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children has an impact on this, but even the attendance of children who are not Gypsy, Roma or Traveller children is below the national average. This is one reason why behaviour is not outstanding. Many pupils both leave and join the school at times other than the beginning or end of the school year, and the school keeps detailed records of this. The school has introduced a number of strategies to improve attendance, but these have had only limited impact. The family liaison officer has provided good support in this area.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- The school site is safe and secure and the school ensures that all adults who come into contact with children are appropriately vetted. Pupils are well versed in e-safety and know what the school does to protect them in this area.
- Pupils feel safe at school, but if they were to have any concerns they would be comfortable in approaching a teacher or a teaching assistant at school about them.

The quality of teaching

is good

- There have been significant changes in the complement of teaching staff at the school, but the present staff are well placed to further develop the quality of teaching. Most children make good progress because of the good teaching they receive. The teaching of reading is particularly successful, with high standards reached by many pupils.
- Teachers work hard to ensure that there are good relationships between all pupils in the school. Pupils are engaged in their learning and demonstrate positive attitudes towards it. Pupils are managed effectively by teachers. Lessons are not affected by even low level disruption and this enables pupils to learn well and make good progress. Teachers base their planning on accurate assessments of how well their pupils are learning, to make sure that they provide them with suitably challenging work.
- Teachers are effective in giving pupils opportunities to discuss and talk about their learning, and many pupils are eager to do this in front of the whole class. Careful questioning helps pupils to get the most out of lessons. Pupils demonstrate the high quality of their learning through being given opportunities to explain the different ways of solving a problem in mathematics and why they chose a particular method.
- Innovative and exciting ways are often used to introduce ideas. In a Year 2 class, the teacher used a letter on parchment from Captain Hook as a way to get pupils interested in writing a persuasive letter to choose a new pirate king. This resulted in pupils producing a well written and convincing letter.
- Some teachers encourage the pupils to choose the topic and then the teacher uses this topic to teach particular skills. In a Year 3 class, pupils wanted to learn about Charlie Chaplin and the teacher used this effectively to develop writing skills. As a result of watching a video, pupils were able to write sympathetically about Charlie Chaplin's character.
- Teachers are sensitive to pupils' needs and step in quickly to support pupils where necessary. Teaching assistants provide good support when working with groups of children.
- Some teachers do not ensure that writing is taught sufficiently often and in enough subjects to enable all pupils to make good progress in this area.
- There are some inconsistencies in the way pupils' work is marked in the school. In some classes, pupils are not always given opportunities to respond to the teachers' marking, and the marking of some teachers does not always tell pupils what they need to do to improve.

The achievement of pupils is good

- In 2015, Year 6 pupils achieved levels that are in line with national expectations. They made progress that was at or above national figures in all areas, apart from writing which had dipped in 2014. Even so, results in the previous two years show that pupils achieved standards in reading, writing and mathematics that were at or above the national average. The school's assessments of pupils currently in the school and the work in their books show that the 2014 writing results were an exception and that pupils are again making good progress.
- Children's skills and abilities are below levels typical for their age when they enter the school. They make good progress in the Reception class and this has led to their standards improving well. Their levels of development are now close to national figures.
- In the past, pupils' standards at the end of Year 2 have been significantly below national expectations. However, as a result of improvements in teaching, the school's accurate assessments of current pupils show that standards are now in line with the national average and pupils are making good progress. Pupils who are registered at the school for the whole of Years 1 and 2 do particularly well.
- The standards in reading, writing and mathematics reached by disadvantaged pupils are similar to those achieved by other pupils nationally. They make good progress from their different starting points compared with other pupils nationally and other pupils in the school. This is due to the way the school uses the additional expenditure made available through additional government funding. This is spent on additional staff to provide these pupils with more intensive support.
- Pupils from other ethnic groups also make good progress, but sometimes from very different starting points. The large group of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children achieves better than this group achieves nationally, and the gap between the results for these children and all other children in the school is narrowing.
- Disabled pupils and those with special needs make similar progress to all other pupils because of the strong support that is given to them through working in small groups. The most able pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics because of the opportunities given to them in these subjects.
- In mathematics lessons, pupils are able to choose from a range of ways of solving problems and can explain why they have chosen a particular method. In English, they are able to compare and contrast characters in a text with a view to successfully writing a letter to persuade someone to state a preference for one of the characters.
- The school's new approach to checking how well pupils are doing has enabled the school to measure more accurately the progress pupils are making. This helps teachers to plan work that is suitably challenging for their pupils.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding because not enough pupils are making that advanced level of rapid progress in developing their reading and mathematics skills, and particularly in developing their writing skills.

The early years provision is good

- Children enter the school with levels of development that are below what is typical for their age, but with particular weaknesses in the areas of writing, speaking and listening, and communication. They make good progress in the early years, so that when they enter Year 1 they have reached a level of development close to national figures.
- The children make good progress because of the quality of teaching they now receive, which ensures that they have a range of activities available to them and a variety of hands-on resources to use.
- The teacher has detailed and thorough methods for checking how well the children are doing and is able to respond to the specific needs of each child. Children are kept safe and secure at all times.
- Children's behaviour in the early years is good because of the clear routines and rules the teacher has established. Children know what is expected of them and behave well.
- Children are given many opportunities to talk about what they are learning and enjoy telling the whole class about this. The outdoor area is well used to extend the way the school is able to interest the children in their learning.
- The early years is well led by the newly appointed leader, with the class teacher giving strong support.

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	118245
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	462400

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frank Mendl
Headteacher	Jo Cerullo
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 May 2013
Telephone number	01474703178
Fax number	01474709419
Email address	Headteacher@darenth.kent.sch.uk

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