

Darlinghurst School

Pavilion Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 3JS

Inspection dates

13–14 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- School leaders have not ensured that all pupils achieve well enough. Outcomes achieved by the end of key stage 2 in 2016 were low.
- Leaders do not monitor effectively the progress made by disadvantaged pupils or the impact of additional funding the school receives to support these pupils.
- Leadership is inconsistent across key stage 2. Recent changes made to improve this are not fully established.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is too generous. Information is not used coherently to inform plans for improvement.
- Teaching is inconsistent. Not all teachers have high expectations of pupils, so some work is not hard enough, especially in mathematics.
- Poorly presented work is left unchallenged by some teachers.
- The quality and quantity of pupils' work varies within and across year groups.
- Not all teaching assistants are used well enough to aid pupils' learning.
- Assessment procedures are not firmly embedded throughout key stage 2.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the early years foundation stage get off to a great start. They continue to make good progress throughout key stage 1.
- Teaching in key stage 1, and in pockets in key stage 2, is good.
- The school provides a friendly, caring and nurturing environment in which pupils feel happy and safe.
- Safeguarding is effective.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good support.
- Pupils' behaviour and attendance are good.
- A wide range of outdoor learning, physical education, sport and the arts enriches the curriculum.
- The Legra Trust provides a clear, strategic direction for the school's further development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good throughout key stage 2 by:
 - evaluating accurately the quality of teaching and putting in place clear plans to improve it where it is not regularly good
 - raising expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving and checking that they are provided with suitably challenging work to do, especially in mathematics
 - checking that the quality and quantity of work in pupils' books matches the expectations of school leaders
 - deploying teaching assistants effectively to teach and support pupils' learning.
- Raise achievement in key stage 2 by:
 - ensuring that newly introduced procedures to assess how well pupils are progressing become firmly established
 - monitoring systematically the quality of teaching of mathematics and the impact of recent training to improve it has on accelerating pupils' progress
 - placing far greater emphasis on measuring the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in all classes.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management in key stage 2 by:
 - demonstrating far greater urgency in securing rapid improvements to the outcomes achieved by pupils
 - evaluating thoroughly the school's effectiveness and using this information to inform concise and coherent plans for improvement
 - holding senior leaders fully accountable for the outcomes achieved by pupils by the end of year 6
 - raising expectations of all those responsible for leading year groups
 - providing further training for new leaders and monitoring the impact this has on improving their performance
 - holding governors and the Legra Trust fully accountable for using pupil premium funding far more effectively by ensuring that they demonstrate that this funding makes a significant difference to the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Interim changes in leadership in recent years have limited the school's capacity to sustain improvements. Since then, a new, substantive principal has stabilised the school. However, her actions, and those of her team of senior leaders, have not led to widespread improvements.
- Although several aspects of the school's work are strong, many pupils in Year 6 underachieved in 2016. Leaders acknowledge that generally results in key stage 2 were much lower than national averages and that urgent improvement is required. This has prompted much closer scrutiny of the school's leadership by the Department for Education.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's work is inaccurate. They feel teaching and the impact this has on pupils' achievement is good, even though outcomes achieved at the end of key stage 2 were not high enough. Inspectors found that the quality of teaching is inconsistent within and across year groups, and this contributes to the variable rates of progress made by pupils.
- Leaders' plans for rapid improvement lack coherence. They are not sufficiently focused on improving teaching, learning and assessment. Plans lack measurable targets and milestones to check the rate of improvements made.
- Leaders' analysis of pupils' progress does not focus well enough on disadvantaged pupils. The spending of pupil premium funding made little difference to the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in year 6 this year. Recent changes have been made. However, plans do not show clearly what this money will be used for, or the expected impact this will have.
- Recent changes made to bolster the leadership of year 6 are beginning to lead to improvements in mathematics and in pupils' reading. However, this has weakened the leadership of other year groups in key stage 2 because the effectiveness of all leaders is too variable.
- Leaders' assessments of pupils' progress in year 6 this term are more rigorous. Test papers used to gauge pupils' prior learning provide a baseline for further testing to ensure that all pupils learn well and those at risk of underachieving are spotted early. These procedures are new and not firmly established.
- Leadership and management in key stage 1 are good. Leaders ensure that pupils build on the good start they make in nursery and Reception, and achieve well by the end of Year 2. Leaders use their knowledge and experience effectively to support and develop new and inexperienced staff.
- Senior leaders have developed a broad curriculum that maximises the school's good facilities and stimulates pupils to learn. Core subjects are complemented well by specialist teaching in art and physical education, and outdoor learning. Pupils engage fully the extensive extra-curricular programme provided for them.
- Links between school and parents are well established. The large majority of parents and staff who responded to Ofsted by questionnaire and free-text during the inspection praised the school's leadership.

Governance of the school

- The Legra Trust oversees effectively the strategic development of the school. They and the local governing body are much less effective in monitoring the use of pupil premium funding.
- They have increased their routine monitoring of the school's work, especially the quality of teaching it provides. Not all of this information is recorded systematically.
- Recently, trustees have joined the school's local governing body. This has strengthened governance. A newly appointed chair and his colleagues bring a range of knowledge and experience to the school.
- They show a broad understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and are fully aware of the need for urgent improvement. Minutes of their meetings show that governors have questioned the principal and asked for explanations about the underperformance of pupils in year 6 this year.
- Governors do not monitor and evaluate the use of the pupil premium well enough. They are unable to show how this significant annual budget is raising the achievement of pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All checks are carried out when recruiting new staff to work with children.
- A team of designated leaders for safeguarding are suitably trained to act on any concerns raised by staff, pupils or their parents. Detailed records are maintained of any disclosures, and these are followed up robustly. Links with local support agencies are well established.
- Pupils are kept safe on the school site. The site perimeter is secure. Entrances to the school are locked. At lunchtimes, a team of midday supervisors keep pupils safe outdoors.
- All staff training is up to date, including 'Prevent' duty training.
- Identifiable boxes in classrooms enable pupils to post any issues they wish to raise, including any concerns they may have about pupils' safety, radicalisation or extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching varies within and across year groups in key stage 2. Expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are not high enough. Planning does not provide all pupils with sufficiently challenging work. Pupils told inspectors that work in mathematics is often too easy.
- Teachers are developing 'mathematics mastery' to provide pupils with a thorough mathematical understanding and the confidence to apply their knowledge to a range of mathematical tasks. However, in doing so, some basic elements of effective teaching are lost. For example, in some lessons, lengthy introductions with limited involvement of pupils lead to some becoming passive or losing interest. Too much time is spent on tasks that pupils quickly understand. At times, tasks are left unfinished. Some marking does not challenge pupils when work is untidy or insufficient.

- Inspectors noted that the impact of teaching assistants varies. They found that in some lessons, their work with small groups or individuals aids pupils' understanding and helps them to progress when work becomes increasingly challenging. Some teaching assistants wander among pupils offering limited advice or spend too long simply listening to the teacher.
- The teaching of reading requires improvement. The teaching of phonics in Reception and throughout key stage 1 is very effective. However, in key stage 2, leaders have recognised the limitations of guided reading, using a carousel of activities, including reading with the teacher. New arrangements for all pupils to learn to read together are planned for next term.
- Pupils' reading records show that more able, confident readers read widely and often. They read a range of texts, often in their own time at home. Less able pupils are not always given suitably challenging books to read. Inspectors found that they could read fluently and cope with unexpected words, but, when asked, they could not explain their meaning.
- Writing is taught well. Younger pupils are shown how to form letters and words at an early age. Expectations of them during writing practice are high. All pupils are encouraged to 'write for 10' to develop their imaginative writing.
- Where teaching is most effective, learning is made meaningful and fun. For example, to help pupils understand the correct use of apostrophes, the teacher used good illustrations from signs displayed in everyday life. He encouraged pupils to discuss the use of apostrophes, before asking them to explain fully whether they thought it was right or wrong. All pupils engaged fully and gained from good-quality 'partner talk' about apostrophes.
- Teaching in key stage 1 is consistently strong. Staff have high expectations, good subject knowledge and good relations with pupils. They ask questions and expect pupils to explain their answers fully. This leads to busy classrooms with lots of learning taking place. Pupils are enthusiastic learners, keen to discuss their views. Teaching assistants are adept at supporting those in need of additional help.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils value the rich, stimulating environment provided for them. Displays in classrooms and corridors add significantly to the school's vibrancy. Well-chosen resources for learning outdoors help pupils to build friendships and learn how to keep safe in different settings.
- The 'Anchor Room' provides a safe haven for vulnerable pupils who need additional care and support. Experienced staff are experts in identifying pupils' emotional and behavioural needs and provide them with the support they need to engage fully in school life.
- Leaders have dealt with the concerns raised at the last monitoring inspection about pupils' punctuality and attendance. Records show that most pupils now arrive in school

on time. Thorough monitoring of pupils' attendance and targeting of those who are persistently absent from school have led to significant improvements. Overall attendance last year and, so far this year, is equal to that found nationally.

- Parents enthused about the safe, stimulating environment the school provides. One commented, 'A wonderful school that pays attention to the whole child and sets up a love of learning. We particularly value the outdoor learning programme as a complement to classroom learning, and the range of activities arranged by the school to bring the curriculum to life.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Inspectors found that in lessons and around school, pupils behave well. They are courteous, well-mannered and respectful towards others.
- Pupils say school is a friendly place. They enthused about learning and playing together in the outdoor facilities and enjoy the range of after-school clubs, sporting events and off-site visits provided for them.
- When asked, pupils told inspectors that behaviour is good and that they feel safe in school. They say that behaviour is managed well in lessons: 'One or two pupils can disrupt the learning of others, but when this happens, teachers deal with them.'
- Pupils feel that bullying is rare. They say that when it does happen, it is 'mostly name-calling because you look different to others' and that 'there is always an adult to talk to and they will help to stop it'.
- Records confirm these views. Incidents of bullying, poor behaviour and exclusion from school have reduced significantly over the last year.
- Topics in weekly assemblies are discussed further in lessons to promote pupils' understanding of fundamental British values. Themes such as 'standing together, teamwork, independence and mutual respect' add significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Leaders recognise that raising achievement in key stage 2 remains the school's top priority. Results in 2016 showed widespread underachievement. For example, less than half of all year 6 pupils met national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils did well in writing, but did not make enough progress in reading or in mathematics. This was partly due to some ineffective teaching in the past that left gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Ineffective assessment and monitoring led to these gaps remaining unfilled. Not all pupils were fully prepared for, or sufficiently confident in dealing with, national tests last year.
- Procedures have been strengthened this year. Current progress in Year 6 shows an improving picture. 'Before and after' tests in mathematics are providing senior leaders with a clearer view of pupils' individual progress.
- Current assessment information shows that Year 6 pupils are making improved progress, although progress in mathematics still lags behind reading and writing.

- Current progress in other years in key stage 2 varies widely. For example, pupils in Year 4 are already exceeding targets set for them, but pupils in Years 3 and 5 are making much less progress. This reflects some of the inconsistencies inspectors found in teaching throughout key stage 2.
- The proportion of more-able pupils learning in greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly similar to national averages. Current assessment information shows that this trend continues in most key stage 2 classes.
- Last year, leaders did not do enough to prevent disadvantaged pupils from underachieving. Only a small minority of them met national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Differences in their attainment compared to others in the school and all pupils nationally did not diminish.
- The school's current assessment data shows that resolving this remains a significant challenge. For example, none of the most able disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 are learning in greater depth in writing or mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils continue to make less progress than others in mathematics in Years 3 and 5.
- The smaller than average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Support staff know them well. They monitor their academic progress and personal welfare well. The school's inclusion manager attends progress meetings to gain information about all aspects of pupils' development. This information is used to inform individual support plans for those with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. The attendance of pupils with medical needs is carefully monitored to ensure that pupils attend as often as they can.
- Outcomes by the end of key stage 1 exceeded national averages in reading and writing last year. In mathematics, outcomes were average. Most-able pupils attained well in all three subjects. The percentage of pupils in Year 1 meeting expectations in national screening tests in phonics was higher than that found nationally, maintaining a three-year trend of improving results.
- Differences in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils compared to others are less significant in key stage 1. This reflects the better teaching seen in this key stage, which ensures that these pupils receive the additional support they need to achieve as well as others do.

Early years provision

Good

- Children joining the early years get off to a cracking start. They thrive in the setting's vibrant and stimulating indoor and outdoor environments. Staff quickly develop good relations with children, and make their days fun.
- In the Nursery class, children's safety and welfare are prioritised to help them settle quickly and enjoy school. They share the outside areas with pupils in Reception, playing and learning alongside each other well.
- Staff provide a good balance of child-led and teacher-led learning and play throughout all four reception classes. High-quality indoor areas such as the kitchen, the buggy park and shop provide excellent opportunities to play imaginatively.

- Children quickly grow in confidence. They were keen to share with inspectors their 3-D shape magic, castle-building and penguin slope. They worked enthusiastically using their fine motor skills to cut and stick icebergs onto their display.
- The outdoor area provides a rich learning environment. Children love visiting 'Hagrid's hut'. They gather around the wood burner for snack time and share their ideas and views. This provides great opportunities for children to learn how to listen together and celebrate other's successes.
- Teachers and support staff make regular assessments of pupils as they work and play. Their records show that most children make good progress. Outcomes are good. This year, a higher than average proportion of children achieved a good level of development by the time they joined the Year 1 class. Phonics is taught well so children quickly gain a good understanding of letters and sounds.
- The early years foundation stage is successful because it is well led. Parents value highly what staff do for their children. One commented, 'Our son started in Reception this year and we have been delighted with how well he has got on so far. His teachers are all lovely, welcoming him with seemingly unending enthusiasm each day; we have been very touched by the care and interest all of the lower-school staff have taken in his welfare and development. I would wholeheartedly recommend this school to any parent'.

School details

Unique reference number	140536
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10019174

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	682
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Franklin Hartle
Principal	Nicky Patrick
Telephone number	01702 478379
Website	www.darlinghurst.co.uk
Email address	pupilservices@darlinghurst.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about annual reports and accounts.
- The school converted to an academy in 2014. This was the first section 5 inspection for the school since conversion.
- The school is much larger than average.
- The majority of pupils are white British. Only a small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan, is below average.

- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The school received an Ofsted monitoring inspection in February 2015, due to concerns about pupils' behaviour and attendance. Leaders and managers were not taking effective action at this stage to improve this.
- A new principal joined the school in 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 lessons. They carried out learning walks to observe pupils' behaviour and the quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, a group of recently qualified teachers, the chair of the local governing body, two representatives of the Legra Trust and three groups of pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures, self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of governors' meetings, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance and other information provided by senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons. They considered 205 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 192 free texts sent by parents and carers, and a letter sent by a parent. They also considered 49 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire from staff.

Inspection team

John Mitcheson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rowena Simmons	Ofsted Inspector
John Crane	Ofsted Inspector
Joseph Figg	Ofsted Inspector
Keith Pullen	Ofsted Inspector

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