

# Date Valley School Trust

Mitcham Court, Cricket Green, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 4LB

## Inspection dates

5–7 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. There is too much inconsistency in the quality of education.
- Teachers' questioning and the work they set do not challenge pupils enough.
- Outcomes require improvement. Pupils in some year groups, and the most able pupils, do not make the progress they should. Pupils' handwriting in the English language is not well developed.
- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement. They sometimes lose focus in lessons because of weaknesses in teachers' planning.
- Pupils' attendance is below the national average, although it has improved in this academic year.
- The early years provision requires improvement because assessment is not used effectively to plan children's next steps.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's expert and skilled leadership has started to improve the school and raise standards. All the independent school standards are met.
- The school's ethos of 'respect, resilience, reflect' has a positive impact on pupils' personal development and welfare.
- Pupils collaborate well in lessons and at playtime. They are kind and helpful to each other.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is orderly and polite.
- Pupils make strong progress in Year 3 and Year 4 in a range of subjects.
- Leaders communicate very effectively with parents and carers and involve them in school life.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils are well cared for.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - strong early years leadership is secured to increase the capacity of the senior team to drive forward further improvements across the school
  - variation in the quality of teaching is reduced so that all teaching is consistently good.
- Improve teaching, learning and outcomes for all pupils, including in the early years, by ensuring that:
  - teachers and other adults pitch work at the right level to challenge pupils, particularly the most able pupils, so that they make strong progress
  - teachers ask pupils questions which deepen their learning
  - pupils improve their handwriting in English.
- Improve pupils' behaviour in lessons by ensuring that:
  - teachers plan, sequence and deliver activities so that pupils stay focused on their learning
  - pupils' attendance continues to improve.
- Improve the early years provision by ensuring that:
  - early years leadership makes sure that effective strategies for teaching, questioning and assessment are in place
  - adults plan activities which match children's learning and development needs
  - adults evaluate children's work accurately
  - there is a greater range of activities to develop pupils' understanding of the world.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because there are weaknesses in teaching and the early years provision. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- The headteacher has started to improve the school. She has a strength of purpose and professional knowledge about how pupils learn, which is having positive impact on pupils' experience.
- All the independent school standards are met. However, at present, capacity for further improvement is limited by the lack of a full-time leader for the early years. The headteacher and the proprietor plan to address this.
- The headteacher has led the development of the school's ethos and its core values of respect, resilience and reflect. These values permeate every aspect of school life for staff and pupils. The ethos of the school has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and well-being. As a result, morale throughout the school community is high.
- Leaders have reviewed the curriculum and ensured that it covers all the required areas of learning. This year, leaders have focused on developing pupils' writing in English and in the foundation subjects, which are taught regularly. The curriculum includes a range of activities which broaden pupils' knowledge about the world. Pupils learn about other cultures through, for example, art, food, geography and history. Pupils learn about their own and other faiths.
- The headteacher has implemented a rigorous process for observing teaching and scrutinising pupils' work. Staff are set targets and get regular feedback so that they can improve. They are very positive about the support they get to develop their teaching. However, this level of monitoring and professional challenge is new to the school and so the quality of education is not consistently strong.
- The school has strong links with parents. The headteacher has ensured that parents are consulted on, and involved in, the school's progress against its action plan, as well as holding social and information events. During the inspection, parents visited the school for World Book Day and participated in activities. A high proportion of parents responded to Parent View, the online survey, during the inspection. Those that did were unanimous in their praise for the school and the leadership of the headteacher. One parent commented, typical of many, 'The headteacher has made so many differences – all positive. The communication with parents is amazing.'

### The school's progress towards meeting standards that were not met at the previous inspection

- The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to carry out a progress monitoring inspection as part of this standard inspection. The standards relating to teaching and leadership and management are met.

## Governance

- The chair of trustees, who founded the school, has taken decisive action to start the journey of improvement. The governing body was dissolved, and the trustees are now responsible for governance. The chair of trustees continues to play an active and very direct role in quality assuring the work of leaders and the performance management of the headteacher.
- The chair of trustees knows the school very well. As a previous headteacher of the school, she brings knowledge and skills of teaching and learning and managing staff to the role. There is a detailed calendar for checking the work of school leaders and the trustees receive regular reports. Other trustees focus effectively on finance, human resources and the premises.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have started to develop a strong culture of safeguarding, underpinned by the new school ethos and core values. Training for staff and leaders is up to date. Training has recently been extended so that more leaders are qualified designated safeguarding leads and safer recruitment trained. Leaders engage with the local authority safeguarding team to support their training and share good practice.
- Staff are knowledgeable and clear about what to do if they have concerns. They apply their training well. They can identify local risks, including the online risks of radicalisation, and know what action to take. The school's child protection and safeguarding policy meets requirements and is available to parents on request. The recruitment checks on the suitability of staff and leaders to work with children are completed and recorded on the single central register.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. There are too many inconsistencies in teaching across year groups. Teachers do not pitch work at the right level to ensure that pupils, particularly the most able pupils, make strong progress. Teachers sometimes misunderstand how to challenge pupils effectively. For example, they rush through activities instead of using them to deepen pupils' understanding.
- At times, teachers sequence learning activities poorly and do not use resources effectively. As a result, pupils are left waiting and valuable learning time is lost. When this happens, pupils struggle to maintain concentration because they are bored. Some pupils start to misbehave and cause low-level disruption in the lesson.
- Teachers are starting to develop and extend their questioning skills. Pupils are keen to respond to teachers' questions and teachers increasingly use questions effectively to check pupils' understanding. However, teachers' use of questions to challenge pupils to think, explain and justify their opinion or reasoning is less well developed.
- The school's core values permeate all aspects of school life and positively influence how staff and pupils relate to each other. There are strong, respectful relationships between staff and pupils, which contribute to a positive learning environment. As a result, pupils

are reflective learners.

- Generally, pupils participate and engage in activities well. Teachers encourage teamwork, which is a key feature of pupils' learning. Pupils collaborate effectively, particularly in older year groups. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics class, pupils worked well together to find the difference in height between different trees.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders and teachers ensure that pupils fully understand the school's core values of respect, resilience and reflect. Pupils are proud of these values and talk about them spontaneously. They can describe how they use these to help their learning in class and their friendships.
- Leaders have introduced initiatives to develop pupil voice, including the Year 6 school council, and the appointments of a head girl and head boy. Pupils are involved by voting for the council, which has its own notice board to post the record of meetings and issues discussed. This has a positive impact on pupils' leadership skills and awareness of the democratic process.
- Younger year groups also have leadership roles. Year 3 peer mediators are proud of the work they do and are conscientious in their approach with other pupils. They use the school's core values to support pupils with friendship problems or other concerns. Some peer mediators run lunchtime activities for younger pupils.
- Pupils are confident about how to keep themselves safe. Pupils have identified their own set of trusted adults. All classrooms have a listening box, which teachers check regularly. Pupils feel safe from bullying and are aware of how to stay safe online.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- At times, pupils lose focus in lessons, fidget, find other distractions and chat to each other. This results from weaknesses in teachers' planning. Pupils stop concentrating when teachers do not provide them with the right level of challenge or enough opportunities to apply and extend their learning.
- Pupils' conduct and self-discipline around the school is a much stronger aspect of their behaviour. They move around the school in an orderly and mature way. They are polite and aware of others around them on the stairs and on the playground.
- Pupils' attendance has improved this academic year because of the headteacher's determination to reduce absence which has resulted in effective action being taken. However, pupils' attendance is still below the national average.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Requires improvement**

- Outcomes for pupils are inconsistent across year groups because of variation in the quality of teaching. Pupils in key stage 1 do not make the progress that they should from their starting points. Pupils make the strongest progress, across a range of subjects, in Years 3 and 4. However, the most able pupils do not make the progress they should because work does not provide enough challenge.
- Pupils' handwriting in English is inconsistent. Pupils' letter formation is erratic, and they do not lay out sentences on the page effectively. Pupils' handwriting in Arabic is much stronger. This is because teachers have higher expectations and explicitly enable pupils to practice letter formation.
- Pupils are starting to make better progress in writing. The headteacher has introduced opportunities for pupils to write in different genres, for example letters, stories and descriptions. Teachers link writing activities to class fiction texts so that pupils develop a love of reading alongside focused writing and grammar activities. Pupils write independently in science, art, history and geography in key stage 2. For example, they write about their science experiments, recount stories from the past and give their views on an artist's work.
- Pupils develop strong problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics by the end of key stage 2, particularly in number. In Year 6, pupils enjoy explaining why a sum is wrong or convincing the teacher why they are right.
- At the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment overall is broadly in line with, or just above, the national average. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

### Early years provision

### Requires improvement

- The early years provision requires improvement. Teaching is inconsistent, and assessment is not sufficiently sharply focused to ensure that children make strong progress. The quality of children's work does not always reflect adults' assessment of their progress. In addition, adults do not use the assessment outcomes precisely enough to plan children's next steps.
- Leaders have ensured that all the requirements of the early years statutory framework are met. However, temporary arrangements for the leadership of the early years are not sufficient to provide the staff development and raised expectations so that essential improvements are made. Consequently, the quality of the early years provision requires improvement.
- As in the main school provision, at times teachers' planning is not sequenced well enough to keep children focused on their learning. Sometimes, children are left waiting for something to do and become distracted.
- Leaders have ensured that curriculum plans give children a wide coverage of the required areas of learning, particularly of literacy, number and creative subjects. The provision is well resourced. However, children's understanding of the world could be further developed.
- Children's phonics skills are developed effectively. Creative writing has been introduced to give children more opportunities to apply their phonics knowledge. Children can count confidently, and adults take opportunities in a wide range of activities to reinforce children's number work. However, at times, the most able children are not sufficiently

challenged and so their progress is limited.

- There are positive relationships between adults and children, underpinned by the school's ethos. Children respond positively to adults and behave well. Pupils help each other and are kind. They share toys and invite each other in to their activities.
- Safeguarding is effective.
- There are strong links between the early years provision and parents. Parents say that adults communicate effectively, and they are confident that their child is well looked after.

## School details

Unique reference number	109774
DfE registration number	315/6588
Inspection number	10092462

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	154
Number of part-time pupils	10
Proprietor	Date Valley School Trust
Chair	Razina Karim
Headteacher	Neena Lone
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,152 to £5,202
Telephone number	020 8648 4647
Website	<a href="http://www.dvst.org.uk">www.dvst.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:headteacher@dvst.org.uk">headteacher@dvst.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	12–14 September 2017

## Information about this school

- Date Valley School Trust is an independent day school for boys and girls in the London Borough of Merton. The school has a Muslim ethos.
- The school was established in 2005 and is registered for up to 177 pupils between the ages of 3 to 11. There are currently 154 pupils on roll.
- The school is located in a large house on Mitcham Cricket Green, which has been converted for educational use. Pupils use the facilities at Canon's Leisure Centre for physical education. The school does not use any additional provision.
- A very small proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. None



is supported by an education, health and care plan.

- Since the previous inspection, there have been changes in leadership. The governing body was dissolved, and governance reverted to the trustees. A new headteacher took up her post in September 2018. The chair of the Date Valley School Trust is acting as the early years leader on a temporary part-time basis while the vacancy remains unfilled.
- The school's last standard inspection took place in September 2017, when the school was judged to be inadequate. Some independent school standards in parts 1 and 8 were unmet. The school had a progress monitoring inspection in June 2018. Some standards in part 1 were met but others remained unmet. At this inspection, March 2019, the remaining unmet standards are met.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classes in all year groups, including the early years provision. All of these visits were made jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the trust, representing the proprietor.
- The lead inspector gathered evidence from representatives of Merton local authority, including the designated officer for safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents from the 89 responses to the Ofsted online survey (Parent View) and talked informally to parents at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors considered the 21 responses to the Ofsted staff survey and met with a group of staff.
- Inspectors talked to pupils in classes and at breaktime, and met with three groups of pupils, including the school council and peer mediators. There were no responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation, including records relating to safeguarding, health and safety, the curriculum, teaching, and pupils' attendance and behaviour.

## Inspection team

Janet Hallett, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clementina Aina

Ofsted Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school now meets the following requirements**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school:
  - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
  - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time.

#### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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