

Charles Darwin Primary School

89–109 Rose Lane, Norwich, Norfolk NR1 1DJ

Inspection dates

25–26 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- School leaders and managers, supported by the Inspiration Trust and governors, have successfully established a culture of high ambitions for staff and pupils. Expectations, in all respects, are notably high.
- Leaders have constructed a curriculum that supports pupils' academic, personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Pupils develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to be successful learners and responsible citizens.
- An extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities (electives), trips and visiting speakers enhance pupils' classroom experiences and allow them to pursue and develop their personal interests.
- Teaching is highly effective. Teachers use their subject knowledge to plan interesting, purposeful activities that support pupils' learning extremely well and capitalise on pupils' highly positive attitudes to learning.
- Teachers match activities to the needs and capabilities of individual pupils very well. As a result, pupils, including the most able, those who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make strong and substantial progress.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding to very good effect. They carefully analyse the impact that it has on pupils' achievement and attendance. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' achievement and attendance are improving strongly.
- The trust and governors have a detailed understanding of the school. They provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge to school leaders. This has been instrumental in supporting leaders to provide a high quality of education and to improve achievement.
- Children get off to an excellent start to their education in the Reception classes. They quickly become confident, inquisitive learners and make very strong progress. Children are well prepared for learning in key stage 1.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Exceptional relationships between pupils and with adults contribute positively to pupils' self-confidence and learning.
- Absence has been above the national average in the previous two years. Leaders' decisive, thoughtful actions have reduced absence significantly. However, absence is still too high for a small number of pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the attendance of a small group of pupils who are absent too frequently so that absence does not impede their learning and their personal development.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The principal has been steadfast in her determination to establish a culture where ambitions for all are high. School leaders, staff and governors share her vision and have successfully established a school where pupils experience a broad academic curriculum in a caring, nurturing environment. One comment in particular submitted to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, reflected the sentiments of very many parents and carers. This parent said: 'Charles Darwin's approach to learning and focus on core values such as behaviour, respect and manners make for a lovely learning environment for my child.'
- Leaders have been uncompromising in their aim for teaching to be consistently of the highest quality. They use their regular checks of teaching, learning and assessment to identify any training needs. Leaders use training and development, including opportunities both from the trust and external providers, to make sure that staff are highly skilled practitioners. As a result, pupils in all year groups make strong and sustained progress, including in English and mathematics.
- Staff feel appreciated and trusted by leaders, which contributes to a strong ethos of working together to achieve the best for the school and its pupils. Staff value the high-quality weekly training sessions that are balanced between whole-school priorities and the development needs of individuals. Although leaders' expectations of them are high, teachers rise willingly to the challenge. They are strongly motivated to help pupils to fulfil their potential.
- Leaders' ongoing evaluation of the quality of education is accurate and informed by a variety of monitoring activities. Leaders have identified areas that could be even better. Their detailed plans for improvement are underpinned by carefully considered, astute actions. These actions have borne fruit. For example, the focus on providing pupils with more opportunities to work at greater depth in writing and mathematics has raised standards further in these subjects.
- Leaders have constructed a high-quality curriculum that covers a wide range of academic subjects. While staying true to the trust's principles of a curriculum that builds upon a rich base of knowledge, including in science, humanities and the arts, leaders have ensured that it meets the needs and interests of the pupils at Charles Darwin. They have carefully considered how to build upon subject knowledge, skills and understanding from one year to the next, while providing opportunities to revisit and consolidate learning. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning in a wide variety of subjects and make strong progress in all areas of the curriculum.
- The curriculum supports pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well. The electives programme, which is an extensive range of well-attended extra-curricular activities, provides opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of sporting, musical, creative and artistic activities. Pupils learn about a range of religions, beliefs and cultures and discuss moral issues in age-appropriate ways in religious education (RE). These ideas are also woven into history and geography and a thoroughly planned programme of assemblies.

- Subject leadership is excellent. Leaders use their comprehensive subject knowledge, and expertise available from the trust, to ensure that teachers' planning supports pupils' strong gains in learning over time. Subject leaders appreciate the freedom senior leaders give them to achieve improvement priorities and help teachers to plan learning. They are aware, however, that they will be accountable for ensuring that their actions make a difference and maintain the high quality of education provided.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) provides highly effective leadership. The SENCo has a detailed understanding of the provision that is in place for pupils with SEND. There are regular checks to make sure that additional support and high-quality teaching are having the intended impact on pupils' learning and personal development. This ensures that pupils with SEND make the same strong progress as others with similar starting points.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding efficiently to ensure that disadvantaged pupils can access all the activities offered and get any additional help that they need. Leaders refine their plans for how they use this funding based on a thorough evaluation of what worked well in the previous year and accurate identification of pupils' barriers to learning. As a result, they target additional support with increasing precision. Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school make strong progress and their attainment is improving towards that of others nationally.
- The sport premium is used to very good effect. Pupils benefit from opportunities for swimming that go beyond the requirements of the national curriculum and opportunities to participate in inter-school competitions. A wide range of activities, including ballet, modern dance and basketball, are offered after school or at lunchtime. Leaders have also invested in resources and training so that teachers can offer a wider range of sports and activities in physical education lessons and pupils can use equipment for physical activities.
- Leaders correctly identified reducing absence as a major priority for improvement. Their work to make sure that pupils and parents recognise the importance of regular attendance and rigorous systems for monitoring attendance have resulted in significant improvements. Despite their concerted efforts, leaders have not yet ensured that the attendance of a small minority of pupils is as high as that of other pupils in the school.

Governance of the school

- The trust has played an instrumental role in the school providing a high quality of education. The trust director of standards and chief executive officer (CEO) regularly check on the quality of education provided and the work of the principal and other leaders. Their comprehensive understanding of the challenges posed when establishing a new school has equipped them to provide the support and challenge school leaders needed to overcome these challenges.
- The trust has provided subject expertise and guidance materials to help construct the curriculum. The trust also provides opportunities for the principal, SENCo and subject leaders to attend network meetings with colleagues from other schools, in addition to training and professional development opportunities.
- The trust has ensured that members of the local governing body have the wide range of skills and expertise needed to make them very effective in their roles. Governors

make regular, purposeful visits to the school and ask pertinent questions of leaders. As a result, governors have a deep and detailed understanding of the work of leaders, the quality of education provided and the progress that is being made towards priorities for improvement.

- Governors ensure that resources and additional funding are used effectively and have a positive impact on pupils' experience of school, achievement and attendance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders, governors and the trust ensure that keeping pupils safe is given the highest priority. Policies and procedures reflect the latest published guidance. Teachers receive regular training so that they can recognise the signs that pupils are at risk or suffering harm and are confident to report concerns.
- Records of concerns are accurately maintained. The designated safeguarding lead makes any referrals to external agencies swiftly so that pupils and their families receive the help that they need as quickly as possible. Leaders analyse concerns to identify any patterns and build up a broad picture that they use to inform staff training and topics raised with pupils in assemblies.
- Leaders ensure that all the necessary checks to ensure that adults are suitable to work with pupils are carried out thoroughly. The record of these checks is accurately maintained. The safeguarding governor regularly checks this record and governors are diligent in ensuring that safeguarding responsibilities are fulfilled.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They learn how to stay safe from harm, including when working online. All parents who responded to Parent View and those who spoke to inspectors agreed that their children are safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching in all classes and across all subjects is highly effective. Teachers use their very secure subject knowledge to plan sequences of learning that capture and build upon pupils' interest. As a result, pupils make strong gains in knowledge, skills and understanding and develop as confident and inquisitive learners. In a Year 2 geography lesson, pupils asked questions and raised points about what they had seen on a recent trip to the coast when learning about erosion. Year 1 pupils confidently spoke about what they had learned about the planets in the solar system and the differences between them.
- Teachers have the highest expectations of behaviour and participation in learning. Pupils respond positively to well-established routines and clear expectations of how they should behave in lessons. This means that there is a calm, purposeful atmosphere for learning in all classrooms, with occasions when time for learning is lost or disturbed being extremely rare.
- Teachers have a detailed knowledge of individual pupils, which they use alongside accurate assessment information to plan activities that are matched extremely well to pupils' capabilities and needs. Teachers provide all pupils, including the most able, with

learning that challenges them to improve their knowledge and understanding and aim for higher standards. Pupils rise to this challenge and make very good progress as a result.

- Teachers and teaching assistants use questions skilfully to check and deepen pupils' understanding. They act quickly to deal with any misconceptions or provide extra help when individual pupils are struggling to understand something.
- Teachers provide insightful verbal and written feedback in line with the school's policy. Because teachers do this in a clear easy-to-understand way, pupils capitalise on the guidance they receive to improve their work or deepen their understanding.
- Reading has a very high priority within the curriculum. Pupils read regularly, both in school and at home. They understand the importance of reading in helping them learn across the full range of subjects. Teachers' focus on pupils using and understanding a wide range of vocabulary aids the development of pupils' comprehension and inference skills. Pupils develop the skills and strategies needed to understand a variety of texts. Consequently, pupils make very strong progress in reading.
- The teaching of phonics is highly effective. Adults teach phonics regularly and follow the school's chosen scheme closely. They accurately model the sounds made by combinations of letters so that pupils use their phonics skills accurately when reading or spelling unfamiliar words. Adults ensure that the books that pupils read are appropriately matched to pupils' phonics skills. This means that pupils read fluently, understand what they read and gain confidence so that they develop an enjoyment of reading.
- Teachers are very successful in teaching pupils the skills of writing. Pupils learn and use the technical aspects of grammar and punctuation in their writing in all subjects. Pupils are taught how to write for different purposes and given opportunities to practise these skills across the curriculum. Leaders' decision to focus on developing pupils' vocabulary and providing more opportunities to write at length has been successful in raising the quality of pupils' writing. Pupils are confident writers and make strong progress.
- Mathematics teaching provides pupils with many opportunities to develop their understanding of a wide range of mathematics and apply this in different contexts. Teachers ensure that pupils revisit and consolidate important knowledge and concepts. As a result, pupils are confident in using mathematics to solve problems and explain their reasoning. This is helping to increase the proportion of pupils who are able to work at greater depth.
- Teachers have the same high expectations for all pupils. They know of any barriers to pupils' learning and adapt activities, or provide help, to successfully overcome them. Additional adults are skilled in providing any extra help that pupils may need. As a result, pupils with SEND, pupils who speak English as an additional language and disadvantaged pupils make strong progress. Targeted, short programmes of additional help are highly effective in supporting those pupils who are at risk of falling behind.
- Teachers work with other schools in the trust and local schools to check the accuracy of their assessments. An externally assessed mathematics test is used to provide further evidence of pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics.
- Teachers carefully plan opportunities for pupils to work with others and to work

independently. This successfully promotes pupils' personal and social development. Pupils discuss and share ideas confidently and listen respectfully to one another.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- School leaders and governors recognise that pupils' personal and emotional well-being is essential and underpins their academic achievement. Leaders ensure that pastoral care has a high priority and that appropriate time and resources support this aspect of the school's work.
- Almost all parents who responded to Parent View, and all those who spoke to inspectors, say that their children are happy in school and well looked after. Very many of the free-text comments submitted to Parent View commented on the caring nature of the school and the support given to individual pupils, which enables them to flourish. One comment, which sums up parents' views of the school well and reflects many others, was 'a wonderful school that has helped build my son's confidence and learning'.
- Staff know their pupils very well. They ensure that pupils get any help that they need in times of difficulty. The school's nurture provision, 'Tree Tops', provides very effective support for pupils, including the most vulnerable, contributing strongly to their personal and social development. Pupils are confident that they can speak to an adult in school if they have any concerns and that these will be dealt with quickly. They say that bullying is extremely rare, which school records confirm.
- Leaders have established very strong arrangements to support pupils when they join the school, including those who join part way through the school year. As a result, pupils settle in well and quickly become part of the friendly school community.
- The school celebrates the diversity in its community through special events, trips and assemblies. Pupils learn about others' cultures in RE and geography, where Year 3, for example, learned about multicultural communities when learning about London. They understand why learning about and respecting others' cultures and beliefs are an important part of living in modern Britain. Their respect for difference is indicated by the lack of incidents where racist, homophobic or derogatory language has been used. A parent accurately described the school as 'a vibrant, diverse and inclusive learning environment'.
- Pupils value and are proud of the many opportunities they have to take on responsibility. Roles on the school council, as house captains, playground buddies, first aiders and eco-warriors enable pupils to be active members of the school community and support their fellow pupils. There are many opportunities for pupils to experience the school's core values of being confident, valued, engaged and independent.
- There are a host of opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn about morals and reflect on their beliefs in ways appropriate for their age in RE. The school's ethos and its behaviour and rewards system support pupils' understanding of right and wrong. A well-planned personal, social, emotional and health education programme, supported by assemblies, lunchtime activities such

as mindfulness colouring and specially trained staff contribute effectively to pupils' emotional well-being. Lunchtime clubs and after-school electives provide a wealth of opportunities for pupils to pursue sporting or cultural activities, including modern dance, choir and chess.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around school is excellent. Behaviour in lessons is often faultless. Pupils respond to teachers' high expectations and carefully planned learning activities so that incidents of learning being disturbed by poor behaviour are extremely rare.
- Pupils typically take responsibility for their own behaviour. They understand the school's behaviour and reward system and respond quickly on the rare occasions when teachers need to refer to this. Behaviour management is consistent but low key as a result. Leaders ensure that those pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour get the help that they need to improve their behaviour.
- Behaviour during less-structured times of the day, such as lunchtime, meets the same high standards as that seen in lessons. Pupils get on well with one another and with adults. They are polite, show good manners and are friendly. This is reflected by the very low number of serious behavioural incidents. Leaders closely monitor those incidents that do occur so that they can identify emerging patterns in the behaviour of individuals and put in place any help that is needed.
- The principal, trust and governors have rightly focused on improving attendance and reducing the proportion of pupils who are absent too frequently. Attendance has been below the national average in the first two years since the school opened. Leaders have established rigorous systems for monitoring attendance. Leaders' actions have resulted in significant improvements. Attendance so far this year is above the most recent national average.
- Leaders explore reasons for absence thoroughly and put in place support for pupils and their families to reduce absence. This is based on individual pupils' circumstances and needs. Leaders celebrate and reward high attendance for individuals and each class. However, despite leaders' concerted efforts, a small number of pupils are still absent too often.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Published outcomes for 2018 show that the proportions of pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science at the end of key stage 1 were in line with national averages. This is in the context of a number of pupils not having been in the school for the whole of the key stage. Teacher assessments and scrutiny of current Year 2 pupils' work show that standards have been maintained overall and have improved further in writing and mathematics.
- The proportions of pupils assessed as working at greater depth in writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 in 2018 were below the national averages.

While this reflected pupils' prior attainment, leaders were not satisfied with this. As a result of teachers' high expectations and activities that provide appropriate stretch and challenge, the proportions of pupils currently working at greater depth in these subjects have increased significantly.

- As a result of highly effective teaching, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been consistently above the national average. The few pupils who have not achieved the expected standard in Year 1 almost always do so when they undergo the check again in Year 2.
- Inspectors' scrutiny of current pupils' work shows that they are making strong and sustained progress across the curriculum in all year groups.
- Pupils, including the most able pupils, make strong progress and achieve well because teachers routinely match activities accurately to pupils' abilities. Teachers challenge pupils to improve their work and show deeper understanding. Pupils rise to this challenge and aim to do their best and achieve higher standards as a result.
- Those pupils who speak English as an additional language make very strong progress and achieve particularly well. This is because leaders ensure that they accurately identify pupils' command and understanding of English and quickly put in place any additional help that pupils need. The progress this group makes in reading and writing in a short space of time is particularly impressive.
- Pupils with SEND make strong progress from their starting points. The SENCo ensures that pupils' needs are accurately and quickly identified. Any additional help is put in place swiftly and leaders check to make sure that teachers are adapting their teaching to meet pupils' needs. Provision for pupils with SEND is highly effective.
- Teachers' expectations of disadvantaged pupils are as high as they are for other pupils. Teachers and leaders identify pupils' barriers to learning accurately and make sure that any additional support has a positive impact on pupils' achievement. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make good or better progress from when they join the school. Disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils nationally in the phonics screening check. For disadvantaged pupils currently in Year 2, their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is improving compared with that of pupils in 2018. Differences between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally are diminishing.
- Leaders have ensured that expectations of what pupils can achieve in subjects other than English and mathematics are high. For example, in history, pupils develop an understanding of chronology, significant events, ancient cultures and concepts such as empire, tribalism and monarchy. In geography, pupils develop skills of comparison and analysis and develop their geographical knowledge in the context of their local area, as well other parts of the world. In all subjects, pupils learn to use subject-specific vocabulary accurately. As a result, pupils are well prepared for study in future years.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Leaders' expectations and aspirations for children in the early years are as high as they are in the rest of the school. Adults in the Reception classes ensure that the provision is of the highest quality.
- The early years leaders have a clear understanding of the many strengths in the

Reception classes. They have ensured that teaching, learning and assessment are highly effective and that the curriculum is coherent and follows the principles of the rest of the school. There is a definite focus on developing children's communication and language skills, early literacy and numeracy skills, and self-awareness and self-confidence. However, this is not at the expense of other areas of learning. Children experience a broad curriculum and a range of learning experiences.

- Leaders have ensured that, as the school has developed, adults in the early years have made very effective use of the indoor and outdoor learning environments to support all aspects of children's learning.
- Staff are particularly adept at planning and adapting activities so that they provide the right level of challenge for children's abilities and build upon their interests. As a result, children are fully engaged in learning activities and show high levels of interest and curiosity. All children make substantial gains in their learning and personal development.
- Learning activities are thoughtfully planned and address all areas of learning equally well. Adults ensure that focused sessions that teach specific reading, writing or mathematics knowledge are supported by ample opportunities for children to use and practise what they know in the activities that they choose for themselves. Consequently, all activities are purposeful and support learning very effectively.
- Most children join the school with skills that are slightly lower than those typical for their age, particularly in communication and language and social development. A significant proportion of children do not speak English as their first language. Due to highly effective teaching, accurate assessment that is used to inform planning for individual children and precisely targeted additional support, children make outstanding progress.
- By the end of their time in the Reception classes, many children develop the skills and attitudes needed for successful learning in key stage 1. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has consistently been above the national average. The proportions of children achieving the expected stages of development in each area of learning are typically at or above the national averages.
- Children's behaviour in the early years is exemplary. Adults model expectations well and children develop good relationships with them and with one another. Children play and learn together exceptionally well. As elsewhere in the school, leaders ensure that any children who have difficulties in managing their behaviour get access to any additional help that they need. This includes assessments to identify needs from external agencies.
- Adults ensure that children are kept safe and are well cared for. Well-planned transition arrangements quickly help children to settle into the early years. Safeguarding arrangements in the early years are effective. All of the required welfare arrangements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	142871
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10088634

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	179
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	David Tibble
Principal	Jo Brown
Telephone number	01603 733 166
Website	www.charlesdarwinprimary.org
Email address	charlesdarwin@inspirationtrust.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Charles Darwin Primary School opened as a free school on 1 September 2016. It was established by the Inspiration Trust, which is responsible for governance. The trust has delegated some responsibilities to a local governing body, which is shared with another primary school in the trust.
- The trust provides support through its director of standards, specialist subject leaders and training and professional development opportunities. Trust representatives, including the CEO, regularly check on the work of leaders and the quality of education provided.
- The school works collaboratively with other schools in the trust and local schools to check the accuracy of teachers' assessments. School leaders have led developments in the early years curriculum and key stage 1 curriculum in the trust.

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It currently has pupils in classes from Reception to Year 3 but will eventually provide for pupils from Reception to Year 6.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. However, the proportions of pupils who are from other ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language are much higher than in most primary schools.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is slightly below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average, including the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not make use of any off-site alternative provision.
- A nursery provision, Charles Darwin Nursery, shares the school site but is registered and inspected separately by Ofsted.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. All of these observations were carried out jointly with the principal or vice-principal. The inspection team scrutinised work in pupils' books when visiting lessons and carried out a more detailed scrutiny of a sample of key stage 1 and key stage 2 pupils' work from across the curriculum. Inspectors also reviewed the online records of learning and the written work of a sample of children in the Reception classes. The lead inspector heard a group of pupils read to adults that they knew.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons, met with a group of pupils they selected from Year 1 to Year 3 and spoke to pupils when observing them at informal times, such as lunchtime, to gather their views on the school. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders and members of the local governing body. The lead inspector met with the CEO of the Inspiration Trust and the trust's director of learning. There were no responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. The lead inspector considered the 11 responses to a printed copy of this questionnaire and held discussions with recently appointed teachers.
- Inspectors spoke to parents before the start of school on each day of the inspection. They considered the 71 responses submitted to Parent View in the last 365 days, including 48 free-text comments.
- The inspection team reviewed a range of school documents and policies, including behaviour and attendance information, information about pupils' achievement, minutes of governing body meetings and documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Wilson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Craig

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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