

# Inspection of Dartford Bridge Community Primary School

Community Campus, Birdwood Avenue, Dartford Kent DA1 5GB

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Inspection dates: 27 and 28 February 2024

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Sarah Smith. This school is part of the Cygnus Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Danielle Lewis-Egonu, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ryan Clifford.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy being part of this happy, inclusive school. They appreciate belonging to a diverse community where different cultures and beliefs are celebrated. Pupils value the rich opportunities this brings to learn about other people's faiths and customs.

The school is calm and orderly and most pupils behave sensibly. Warm relationships and effective transition arrangements help younger children to settle into the early years with ease. They delight in learning new things and exploring the early years environment. During lunchtimes, pupils play happily together. They feel safe and know that any concerns are quickly resolved.

Pupils live up to the school's expectations to be caring and respectful citizens. They learn that leadership comes with responsibilities as well as rights. Pupils help others through their participation in charitable fundraising events. During assembly times, they also reflect on current news and topical issues affecting other communities.

Pupils appreciate that the school recognises their achievements, which are celebrated during assemblies. They also look forward to special events, such as the eagerly anticipated talent show, where they can showcase their individual talents. They value education and know that this is important for their future success. By the time pupils leave the school, most achieve well. This sets them up well to succeed in their secondary education.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Since joining the trust, strong and determined leadership has transformed this school. Underpinning this is a demonstrable ambition and moral integrity for all pupils to receive a good-quality education. All aspects of the school have improved. As a result, achievement has risen. In 2023, pupils' achievement in the key stage 2 statutory assessments was significantly above the national average overall.

The school's curriculum is well considered, broad and ambitious. Content builds progressively from early years through to Year 6. The school keeps this under regular review. There is a clear strategy for continued improvement, including through effective oversight by those responsible for governance and accountability. The school has identified its most important priorities accurately. These rightly include aspects of the early years curriculum that is not yet implemented as effectively as leaders intend, or as well as the curriculum across the rest of the school.

When children join the early years, staff quickly identify any children who have additional needs or barriers to learning. This includes children with speech and language difficulties and children whose first language is not English. When needed, the school enlists specialist advice and support. However, not all staff develop children's language and communication well enough. They do not consistently engage children in purposeful conversations to enhance their language and enrich

their play. This hampers children's achievement in this important aspect of their learning.

In Nursery, songs and rhymes pave the way to phonics when children join Reception. This helps them to get off to a successful start to learning to read. Regular focused training equips staff to teach phonics effectively. Timely, additional help and regular practice support any pupils who are not keeping up. Pupils' wider reading knowledge and enjoyment are promoted well throughout the school.

Teachers deliver well-structured lessons following the school's approach. Effective checks on pupils' learning enable staff to know what pupils have learned and remembered. Curriculum design and teaching approaches successfully build pupils' knowledge across a breadth of subjects.

Staff encourage pupils to do their best. However, not all staff have consistently high expectations or ensure that pupils present their work with care and pride. Additionally, staff do not give sufficient attention to developing younger pupils' preparedness for handwriting and their letter formation and pencil grip. As a result, weak letter formation and handwriting in early years persist into key stage 1 for some pupils, which means pupils do not achieve as well as they could in writing.

The school has appropriate processes to identify pupils' ongoing needs and tailor support for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff adapt activities and resources so that pupils with SEND can successfully learn the curriculum. Staff provide appropriate guidance to pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour. Teachers use helpful guidance about pupils' barriers to learning and the most appropriate support strategies effectively.

Pupils attend regularly and enjoy learning. They are respectful, polite and welcoming to visitors. Pupils understand the school's values and can explain how these values help them in school. They learn about making morally sound decisions, the difference between right and wrong and the importance of honesty.

Pupils' enjoyment and learning are enriched through a programme of trips, including a residential visit to an outdoor pursuits centre. Pupils can participate in a range of school clubs, including sports, arts and crafts and the very popular music club. Pupils who have more limited experiences out of school are given priority for places at these clubs.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The school does not give sufficient focus to developing children’s early writing skills, including using correct pencil grip and letter formation, for some children. As a result, some children in early years are not developing their writing skills consistently well, which persists into key stage 1 for some pupils. This is reflected in the variable quality of some pupils’ handwriting. The school needs to ensure that early writing skills, and the necessary pre-requisite skills and knowledge children need for writing, are taught systematically and fully effectively.
- In early years, staff do not enhance or develop children’s language and communication consistently well. Not all staff engage children well enough in dialogue to extend their vocabulary, enhance their communication skills, or enrich their play. The school needs to ensure that all staff have the knowledge and expertise they need to deliver this aspect of the early years curriculum effectively.
- The school has not ensured that all staff have consistently high enough expectations for how pupils present their work. As a result, across the school and in different subjects, pupils’ handwriting and presentation are not as good as they could be and this can impede the overall quality of some pupils’ work. The school needs to iron out these inconsistencies and ensure that all staff have equally high expectations.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child’s school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, ‘[disadvantaged pupils](#)’ is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school’s [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147454
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10296455
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	475
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Ryan Clifford
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Smith
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.dartfordbridgecps.com">www.dartfordbridgecps.com</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Dartford Bridge Community Primary School converted to become an academy in October 2019. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate.
- The school is one of eight primary schools in the Cygnus Academies Trust. The board of trustees has delegated some responsibilities to the school's local governing board. This is set out in the trust's scheme of delegation.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.
- The school's early years provision consists of a Nursery class for three-year-old children and two Reception classes. Nursery children attend part-time, either mornings or afternoons. They join the Nursery the term following their third birthday.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the school's curriculum and sampled pupils' work in geography and religious education.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding: inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, around the school and during lunchtime. They spoke with pupils about their views of the school and their learning, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of the leadership team, including the leader with responsibility for SEND. The lead inspector met with trust leaders, including the chief executive officer.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the board of trustees and one other trustee. She held a separate meeting with the chair of the local governing board.
- Inspectors considered parents' responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments. An inspector spoke to some parents at the start of each day of the inspection.

### **Inspection team**

Sue Cox, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gillian Lovatt-Young

Ofsted Inspector

Baljit Bhabra

His Majesty's Inspector

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