



The Downs Primary School and Nursery

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115016
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279497
Inspection dates 1 December 2005 to 2 December 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs. Jackie Cousins LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	The Hides
School category	Community		CM20 3RB
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01279445538
Number on roll	223	Fax number	01279438482
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.F G Penketh
Date of previous inspection	15 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs. Claudette George

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized primary and nursery school is in the town centre of Harlow. Most year groups contain approximately thirty pupils. Levels of free school meals are broadly average. When the youngest pupils start school their levels of knowledge and understanding are below those expected for 3-year-olds. Overall the school has an average proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Eight out of ten pupils are from White British families. A few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. A considerable proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. A significant proportion of pupils join the school part way through the school year.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Downs Primary and Nursery is a good school. The leadership and management of the school are effective. The headteacher's and assistant headteacher's leadership is good. Teaching is effective and so pupils progress well. Teachers and teaching assistants are dedicated and care effectively for pupils. The partnership with parents is effective. One parent says, 'Our child is always happy and is growing both in a social and academic context.' The pupils are given a good start in the nursery and reception classes because of effective teaching and leadership. Standards by the start of Year 1 are broadly average. Pupils' progress is tracked effectively except in the nursery and reception classes. Assessment activities are used satisfactorily but the use of pupil targets to tell pupils what they need to do to improve could be further developed. Pupils' attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) is not recorded effectively and so teachers do not have a clear idea of how many pupils are working at expected levels. Pupils behave well and concentrate effectively on their work. Pupils enjoy the many interesting activities and special events, such as a harvest festival concert. Many pupils attend a wide range of after school and lunchtime clubs. Outstanding links with the community mean that pupils take part in many local competitions and activities. Governors keep a watchful eye on spending and effectively fulfil their roles. The school offers good value for money. The inspection confirms the school's judgement that the improvement since the last inspection has been effective. Standards for more able pupils are higher. Good use of the ICT suite, interactive whiteboards and teachers' expertise means standards in ICT in Year 6 meet expectations. The school is in a good position to improve in the future and this inspection agrees with the overall evaluation of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Tracking children's progress more effectively in nursery and reception classes.
- Continuing to develop the use of pupils' targets so that they are even clearer about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Developing more detailed ways to record pupils' attainment in ICT.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' standards and achievement are good. Overall most pupils achieve well and attain average standards by Year 6. When pupils enter the school their levels of knowledge and understanding are below average overall, particularly in language and literacy skills. They get off to a good start in the nursery and reception classes and attain average standards by the beginning of Year 1 in most areas of learning. The majority of pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science are broadly average. Standards for boys and girls are similar. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Most pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress and

attain broadly average standards. Overall these pupils had below average levels of knowledge when they entered Key Stage 2. The school supports effectively the pupils who enter the school part way through Years 3 to 6. Many of these pupils started at the school with rather limited literacy skills. Standards in 2005 tests have gone up this year. This is because teachers develop basic skills and structure pupils' learning effectively. The school is in line to meet its challenging targets for 2006. The school has rightly identified pupils' problem solving skills as an area that could be further developed. Standards in ICT meet expectations. For instance, many Year 6 pupils use computers effectively to create posters using images from the internet well and evaluate different websites effectively. The majority of pupils with special educational needs make effective progress with regard to their specific targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are effective in creating a friendly school. Good behaviour and an enthusiasm for learning help pupils enjoy school and do well. They know they are treated fairly and that adults will listen if they have a problem. They say, 'Teachers find ways to make learning fun!' Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community through participation in local events and fund raising activities. For example, they have recently made cakes and sold them to support cancer research. Attendance is satisfactory and most pupils arrive at school on time. Pupils understand effectively how to lead safe and healthy lives. For example, they are now choosing more healthy meals and snacks in school. There are good opportunities for exercise and sport. They discuss their views and these are taken forward to the school council. They know they are taken seriously because they asked for more play equipment and now they have it. Pupils are well prepared for the future. They already know some of their next teachers because they are taught French, music and drama by teachers from the secondary school. There is also a strong emphasis on reading, writing, mathematics and computers which makes pupils' economic well-being good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their successes are recognised and this raises their self-esteem. They know why rules are necessary and contribute to making the school rules. Working together in pairs and small groups helps them to mix happily.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers' show great expertise in structuring pupils' learning so that it is broken down well into small steps. For example, the first part of a Year 5 lesson is used effectively to develop pupils' understanding in how to solve word problems. Throughout the school, teachers plan carefully to ensure that they meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Teachers have a good rapport with their pupils and use the teaching assistants well to aid learning. They make effective

use of computers and interactive whiteboards in lessons to stimulate learning and interest pupils. Most pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are included in all lessons effectively and so they make good progress. However, not all teachers are explaining to pupils what they are specifically looking for in their work and so the pupils are not always able to evaluate their success at the end of a lesson effectively. Assessment procedures are good and they are used satisfactorily. Teachers mark work effectively. Pupil progress is tracked well in English, mathematics and science. However, teachers are not recording pupils' attainment clearly in ICT using national guidance.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is good. The work pupils do is rich and varied with effective time given to all subjects. The pupils achieve well in literacy, numeracy, science and ICT. Furthermore, the school works effectively to ensure that pupils' days are varied. For instance, creative sessions allow pupils to make stars using glitter and colour which contain a wish that the children have made for others. Good provision for the arts includes work on famous artists where pupils create effective pictures in the style of Paul Klee. A good range of after school and lunchtime clubs is enjoyed by pupils. They have many opportunities to sing and perform both within and outside the school in musical productions and activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils' care, guidance and support are good. The school provides a safe environment where pupils feel secure. Health matters are taken seriously and staff know the pupils well. Child protection procedures are in place and possible risks to health and safety are assessed carefully. Staff keep a close eye on pupils' progress and give extra support when needed. For example, those who speak English as an additional language get individual help so that they can join in the lessons. Pupils with learning disabilities and those who are gifted and talented are identified in teachers' planning to ensure that their needs are met. In the nursery and reception class, children's progress is not as closely monitored as elsewhere in the school, but the school has identified this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is committed to raising standards and is setting about this with enthusiasm. She is well supported by the assistant headteacher and senior staff. The way in which the school closely evaluates its work means that areas for development are swiftly identified and addressed. For example, standards have risen this year, particularly in English. Pupils who need extra support to reach higher levels are given more effective guidance. Staff help pupils from all backgrounds to play happily together. Subject coordinators lead and manage improvement well through effective action plans. A good school development plan

demonstrates that the school's self-evaluation is effective. Governors take their responsibilities seriously and watch over the school well. Teamwork between staff and governors is driving the school forward. Together they create the improvement plan for the future. The school welcomes the views of all members of the school community and parents rightly hold the school in high regard. However, the school does not currently share its priorities with parents to give them a better understanding of what the school is working on. The inspection team agrees with the school about how well it is doing. It rightly knows that pupils could have a greater understanding about what they need to do to improve and is already working on this. Financial management is good and spending is matched to the school's priorities. The school has successfully overcome staffing difficulties in the nursery and the progress made by the youngest children is now effective. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for helping us find out about your school. We enjoyed watching you in lessons and talking to you. It was interesting to talk to your teachers and watch an assembly. Good things about your school include the fact that: - you work hard in lessons and behaviour is good - teachers and teaching assistants care for you well and help you to do good work - your headteacher and assistant headteacher have good ideas about ways to improve the school - you are encouraged effectively to lead healthy and safe lives - lunchtime and after school clubs are good - computers and interactive whiteboards are helping you to improve your ICT work. We have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. We hope that you will help teachers by listening to them carefully. The most important things are: - following children's progress more closely in the nursery and reception classes - continuing to help you get better at improving your work - making more detailed notes in how you are doing in ICT. Keep up the good work at Downs Primary School and Nursery.