



Downe Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101614
Local Authority Bromley
Inspection number 286127
Inspection date 30 January 2007
Reporting inspector Wendy Simmons

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	High Elms Road
School category	Community		Downe
Age range of pupils	4-11		Orpington BR6 7JN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01689 853916
Number on roll (school)	70	Fax number	01689 850458
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Sylvia Snipp
		Headteacher	Mr Ron Lawrence
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Downe Primary is a small and oversubscribed village school. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. Virtually all are from White British backgrounds and there is little social deprivation. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties. The school is part of the 'Sports Partnership Programme' and the 'Darwin Education Partnership.' This partnership helps pupils to learn about the famous naturalist, Charles Darwin, who lived at 'Down House', which is very close to the school. In autumn 2006, the school was awarded the 'Active Mark' and is currently working to gain the 'Healthy Schools Award'.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Downe Primary school is a good school with several outstanding features. Pupils reach standards that are well above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Achievement is good. Pupils are happy, enthusiastic and successful learners who like their school and are treated as individuals. One pupil summed up the views of many when commenting, 'I can't think of anything to change, it's just all really great.' Pupils are well cared for and parents have confidence in the school. There are very strong partnerships with many organisations. One parent's comments summed this up well when saying, 'The school is the centre of the community.'

Underpinning this successful school is good leadership. The headteacher is very effective and is well supported by all staff. The drive to improve standards reflects strong teamwork, good management, clear vision and effective evaluation of the school's results.

Good teaching and learning begin in the Foundation Stage and are consistent through to Year 6. Pupils do especially well in mathematics and science, gaining exceptionally high results. In these subjects, very skilled teaching, challenging learning opportunities and links with local organisations help pupils to understand complex ideas. Overall, skills build up systematically year on year and reflect teachers' high expectations, good planning and outstanding relationships with their pupils. The school is successfully working on improving writing, but sometimes the targets given to pupils are not challenging enough and do not link effectively to pupils' skills. Equally, the guidance given to pupils, when teachers mark their English work, is not always clear enough in helping them understand how to improve, edit and extend their writing.

The outstanding curriculum leads to pupils' enjoyment of learning. There is a strong focus on basic skills, and enrichment through many clubs and visits. The arts are well promoted; this helps pupils to contribute much to the community. For example, pupils performed 'Darwin's Dream' with professional opera singers at The Royal Albert Hall. Provision in the Foundation stage is good. As a result of recent building work and the employment of a full time teacher, the youngest children now have their own class and enjoy a well organised and good curriculum, this helps them to achieve well.

Pupils' outstanding personal development, when combined with their good academic progress, prepares them very well for their future lives. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are outstanding. Pupils behave very well, and show very positive attitudes. In particular, they value the excellent range of exciting sporting activities. These increase pupils' fitness, their understanding of team work and adoption of healthy and safe lifestyles.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils' writing targets are challenging and precisely matched to their level of skills.
- Give pupils clearer guidance about how to edit, extend and improve their writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When they start school, children's levels of skills and knowledge are generally better than those normally expected of four year-olds. There is some year-on-year fluctuation in the attainment of all year groups. This is a common feature of small schools and occurs because variations in the performance of each individual can have a disproportionate effect on the standards overall. Nonetheless, standards are typically well above average overall by the end of Years 2 and 6. In most years all the pupils gain at least the expected level and a good proportion gain even higher levels in most areas of their work.

Pupils do best in reading, mathematics and science where standards are exceptionally high. This reflects the strong start in the Foundation Stage. Young children acquire a very good knowledge of the world around them and gain good basic skills in counting and reading. Good progress continues between Years 1 and 6, reflecting high expectations, strong leadership and outstanding links with local organisations. For example, pupils benefited from working with a professional scientist at 'Scadbury Field Centre,' and learnt much about the environment.

The school has focused on improving English in the last year. Although standards are above average in reading, they are not as strong in writing, especially for higher attaining pupils. Standards are rising with improved opportunities for creative writing and a strong focus on grammar. Aspects of writing continue to be an area for development in the school's drive to raise standards in English from above average to an exceptionally high level.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils like their school very much and their behaviour is excellent; they are polite, courteous and keen to talk about why they like their school and enjoy learning. They especially like the sporting activities and confidently talk about how to get fit, eat healthily and work as a team. Pupils enjoy mathematics, saying, 'It's good, hard, but fun, we do lots of problems and algebra.' Equally, they enjoy science. Having visited the garden of the famous scientist Charles Darwin, one pupil commented, 'He discovered evolution and now I know a bit about that.' Through the school's council, pupils develop leadership skills, manage a budget and share responsibilities. Almost all pupils attend very regularly. However, the attendance rate is only satisfactory overall because of the impact of a very small minority of pupils, who have complex attendance problems.

Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding. Assemblies contribute much to this. Pupils learn to respect different cultures and faiths while also learning how to be a good citizen. For example, they raise funds for children to receive education in Malawi.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. As a result, pupils learn well and make good progress. Lessons are interesting and well prepared. The needs of all learners are carefully considered in the mixed-aged classes, and suitable work is provided for all learners. Teachers have good subject knowledge, show high expectations and have excellent relationships with the pupils. Pupils are attentive and eager to do their best, as seen when they spontaneously used their thesauruses to find alternative adjectives for their poems. In mathematics, pupils work with a specialist teacher who provides very challenging activities which are suitable for all abilities. Pupils confidently use information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning. Teachers make activities meaningful to pupils by linking subjects together, as evident in the school's centenary history research project, which skilfully linked English and art. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully but do not give pupils enough ideas on how to improve, edit and extend their writing. Otherwise, teachers use assessment information well to help them to plan pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum meets the needs of different groups of learners very well and is carefully planned for mixed-aged classes to ensure that skills build up well and pupils make good progress. Pupils commented that they like the very good range of extra activities, 'Everyday we have a club, we are always busy!' An excellent range of visits and links with other schools and the community help pupils to attain high standards. There is an outstanding focus on pupils' personal development. For example, pupils grow plants with sponsorship and support from a local garden centre through the 'Bromley Education Business Partnership.' Outstanding provision in science enables pupils to link design and technology, ICT and mathematics, as seen in pupils' working models of designs for doors with electrical buzzers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive good care, guidance and support and this helps them to gain confidence to do very well during their time at the school. Child protection procedures are rigorous. Almost all parents say that the school is very caring. Pupils are given good guidance about anti-bullying and health issues.

Teachers carefully assess pupils' progress, and assessment information is used well to plan activities for different ability groups. Pupils know their targets, but in English some of these are not challenging enough to ensure that pupils make as much progress in writing as they do in other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties receive very good support from staff, and parents value this. Outside agencies are used very well

to support children who need extra help. There are strong procedures in place for welcoming new children to the Foundation Stage.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and high expectations mean that pupils achieve well. All leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas of development. The school's results and pupils' progress are carefully monitored. The quality of teaching is monitored in lessons and through scrutiny of samples of pupils' work. Following an evaluation of its monitoring, the school has drawn up a clear plan to raise achievement in writing and has already improved provision. For example, more pupils in Year 2 are on track to exceed the nationally expected level in their writing this year. The quality of teaching is, overall, better monitored and evaluated than the quality of pupils' learning. This is why the school is only just beginning to recognise that pupils' learning targets in writing do not always match their needs. The school has a good capacity to improve as reflected in the progress made since the last inspection. Standards in science show significant improvement. There is a drive to raise attendance by only allowing parents to have authorised absence for their children in exceptional circumstances. The views of parents and pupils are taken into account when planning improvements.

Governors provide the headteacher and school with good support. They ask challenging questions about standards and carry out their roles and responsibilities conscientiously. The recent initiative to improve provision for children in the Foundation Stage reflects their good understanding of the curriculum.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

You may remember that I came to your school recently to find out how well you were doing. Thank you for being so friendly and telling me about your school. I am writing to let you know what I found out.

Your school is a good school where you clearly enjoy learning and value all that the staff do for you. Your teachers work hard to make learning challenging and fun. You do especially well in reading, mathematics and science. Teaching is good. You have interesting activities to do and I was especially pleased to hear about the exciting range of visits and clubs and the outstanding development of your personal and social skills. Your behaviour is excellent and a great credit to you all. Well done for being so polite, respectful, and helpful to each other. Congratulations on fund raising for different charities as this shows that you care for others and have the opportunity to organise things for yourselves. At school you are also well cared for by the adults and this helps you to make good progress.

Most importantly, your headteacher and all of the staff and governors are working especially hard to make the school even better for you. I have asked them to do the following things to help you to do even better in writing:

- make sure that you have challenging writing targets
- give you more ideas about how to edit, extend and improve your writing.

Please help them with this by working hard to make your writing even better.

Thank you again for telling me about Charles Darwin and your production of 'Darwin's Dream', this was quite unusual and so interested me very much. Keep up with all of the sports activities, as these are excellent and help you to be fit and healthy.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Simmons(Lead inspector)