

Darenth Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118245
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	291062
Inspection date	11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Taylor

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Roberts
Headteacher	Simon Manning
Date of previous school inspection	10 September 2001
School address	Green Street Green Road Darenth Dartford DA2 8DH
Telephone number	01474 703178
Fax number	01474 709419

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

In this smaller than average school, the proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Almost all pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory; this is agreed by senior leaders in the school and inspectors. There is a strong family ethos and the school is a happy, harmonious community. Staff work well with parents, carers, the network of schools and external agencies. Parents support their children's education well and have positive views of it. Typical comments include: 'I have been delighted with the progress that both my children have made since attending this school.'

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Pupils' progress has not been consistent year on year, but standards and progress have improved in recent years, especially in mathematics and science. The school has rightly identified the need to raise standards in English further, especially in writing. Because standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2 have been well below average, pupils have had a lot of catching up to do in order to meet the challenging targets set for them at the end of Year 6, and attain standards close to those expected.

The curriculum is satisfactory and strengthened by a good range of after-school clubs, but it also has some weaknesses. Not enough has been done to ensure that it is planned to accommodate the wide age span of pupils in the classes, and so ensure that all receive the curriculum that they should. Foundation Stage provision is satisfactory. It enables children to settle into school well and develop good social skills. The school has worked determinedly to strengthen teaching. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory and some teaching is good. Better mathematics and science teaching are helping to improve standards.

Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils enjoy school, behave well, and develop maturity and good relationships. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Pastoral care is good, which ensures pupils are well cared for, kept safe and encouraged to eat healthily and take regular exercise. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher maintains the positive ethos and ensures the school runs smoothly. Since the last inspection, he has been successful in bringing about improvements in teaching and in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning with a consequent rise in standards. Not enough has been done to extend subject leaders' roles in developing and checking work in their subjects. This limits their understanding of the improvements needed, such as those to the curriculum, and the extent to which they are able to contribute to improving the quality of the school's self-evaluation and development planning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, especially in writing.
- Ensure that the curriculum is planned to meet the needs of pupils of different ages in the mixed classes and that, over time, they receive the curriculum they should.
- Improve subject leaders' roles in developing, checking and evaluating teaching, learning and pupils' progress, so that they are clear about the strengths and weaknesses, and can plan improvements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school does not have a precise overview of the trends and strengths and weaknesses in the attainment of pupils when they start school. Data for the last two years show a wide spread

of attainment by the end of Reception and marked variations in standards across the different areas of learning. The school has done little to clarify the extent to which these differences arise from variations in overall Foundation Stage provision, or to differences in children's prior attainments.

Standards at the end of Year 2 have improved significantly in the past two years, as a result of improvements to teaching and provision. They are now broadly average in mathematics and science, but remain low in English. By the end of Year 6, science standards are above average, while those in English and mathematics are slightly below, but not significantly below average. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress overall during their time at the school. However, progress has not been consistent each year, mainly due to variations in teaching. Pupils' progress accelerates at the top of the school because teaching and learning are good, resulting in consistently good achievement at Key Stage 2 over the past three years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

In lessons, pupils behave well, show good attitudes to learning and concentrate well. Lunchtime is an important social occasion, and relationships and pupils' behaviour in the dining hall are excellent. Pupils are polite and helpful. They develop maturity and willingly undertake responsibilities around the school, for example, as school councillors and members of the school forum. Older pupils take particularly good care of younger ones and play an important role in helping the school to run smoothly. They say they find school rules helpful in creating a happy school. Pupils have a sound and developing understanding of healthy lifestyles, through work towards Healthy Schools Status. They benefit from good opportunities to take part in physical activities in lessons, break-times and through good participation in after-school clubs. Links with business and other enterprising activities help pupils to prepare soundly for their future economic well-being. Although still below average, attendance has improved well in recent years because the school is doing as much as it can to ensure parents understand the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Both have improved in recent times, which is the main reason for the rise in standards in science and mathematics. Teaching is sometimes good, and better, especially for pupils in Years 5 and 6. General strengths lie in the clear explanations teachers give and in their positive relationships with pupils. Good classroom organisation is maintained and pupils are well managed. Skilled teaching assistants are deployed well to support learning. Weaker elements of some of the teaching relate to a lack of pace and challenge in parts of some lessons, especially where teachers' planning is not sufficiently detailed to take account of different age groups. In some cases it describes what pupils will do, rather than what they are expected to learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. In the mixed Reception and Year 1 class, Reception children have access to work in each of the six areas of learning. In Key Stages 1 and 2, there is a good focus on developing the basic skills. Good improvements to mathematics and science provision, and focused intervention programmes, have been successful in raising standards at the end of Years 2 and 6. The school has rightly made the decision to revisit and strengthen English provision, including the way that pupils' skills in reading and writing are applied and developed through work in other subjects. A weakness in the overall curriculum is that not enough account has been taken of the mixed year groups. The number of pupils in each year group is small and varies each year. This requires ever-changing arrangements to the way that pupils are grouped into classes. Not enough attention has been given to ensuring that the work and topics subsequently planned each year take account of pupils' varying ages, prior learning and skills.

Some interesting and challenging curricular enrichment is provided. This includes special whole-school themed weeks, such as those on flight and the Romans, and a number of visits to places of interest. Pupils also take part in a good number and range of after-school clubs, including a popular go-cart club for older pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Personal support for pupils is good, including that for pupils who are particularly vulnerable. Good systems are in place to help pupils settle into school and to approach the transfer to secondary school confidently. This is supported by good links with parents and external agencies. Pupils are well supervised and cared for. They learn how to stay safe. They say that they feel confident to approach a member of staff if they have any problems, and that rare incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly. Checks on staff and risk assessments take place regularly. Pupils receive some guidance about how to improve their work through marking and individual targets, but there is scope to strengthen this further. The school does not do enough to identify promptly those pupils who need extra support when they are lower down in the school, in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, for example.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and provide the school with a sound capacity for further improvement. The headteacher knows pupils and families well, and understands their needs. More recently, he has maintained staff morale during some difficult times. Clear and effective management systems enable the school to run smoothly on a day-to-day basis, and ensure that all staff are kept informed and consulted.

Staff training, along with the headteacher's formal monitoring of lessons, has enabled the school to strengthen teaching and tackle some unsatisfactory aspects. Checking lessons and pupils' finished work is, however, not regular enough to consistently pinpoint strengths and identify where improvement is needed. This is to a large extent because senior teachers and subject leaders are not sufficiently involved in the monitoring process. This weakness also

points to why some priorities identified in the school development plan are not clearly linked to actions to improve standards and progress.

The school is carrying forward a considerable budget surplus, well in excess of that recommended; however the school is now using its surplus budget to increase its staffing ratio. Governance is satisfactory. Governors, led by a knowledgeable and active chair, are increasingly involved in the school and very supportive of it.

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Annex A

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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

12 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Darenth Community Primary School, Darenth, Dartford DA2 8DH

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you. We think that your school provides a satisfactory standard of education.

These are the things that are working well in your school:

- Standards in science and mathematics are improving.
- Your behaviour in the lunch hall is outstanding, which makes lunchtimes happy, sociable and relaxing.
- You are friendly, well behaved and polite. You get on well together. We noticed that older pupils help to take really good care of younger ones and help to make the school run smoothly.
- The staff take good care of you.

This is what we have asked the headteacher and staff to do next:

- Improve standards in English, especially writing.
- Look closely at the curriculum and ensure it is better planned for pupils from different year groups in mixed-age classes. This is because we noticed that, although there are two and sometimes three different year groups in each class, on too many occasions you all do the same work.
- Make sure that teachers who lead subjects have time to look at your work and lessons, to see what is working well and what needs to improve.

You can help by ensuring that you carry on working hard. You might also make some suggestions about how you think your school might improve.

Thank you once again for making our visit enjoyable.

With very best wishes

Kathryn Taylor Lead Inspector