

# Downsell Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 103044            |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Waltham Forest    |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 323731            |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 24–25 March 2009  |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Julie Winyard HMI |

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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|--|------------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>  | Primary                            |
| <b>School category</b>   | Community                          |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>   | 3–11                               |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>  | Mixed                              |
| <b>Number on roll</b>  |                                    |
| School (total)   | 661                                |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0                                  |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years                                     | 0                                  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>   | The governing body                 |
| <b>Chair</b>   | Ms Christine Mitchell              |
| <b>Headteacher</b>   | Mrs Usha Sahgal                    |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 12 October 2005                    |
| <b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>                              | Not previously inspected           |
| <b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>   | Not previously inspected           |
| <b>School address</b>  | Downsell Road<br>London<br>E15 2BS |
| <b>Telephone number</b>  | 020 8556 0103                      |
| <b>Fax number</b>  | 020 8558 8293                      |

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|--------------------------|------------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This primary school is much larger than average. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language is much higher than those found in schools nationally. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. These difficulties lie mainly in the areas of dyslexia, speech, language, communication and emotional behavioural difficulties. However, the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is below average. More pupils start or leave the school during the year than in similar schools nationally. The school is a recognised provider of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) placements and was, until procedures changed recently, a training school. The school has won several awards, including Activemark and the International School Award. The school runs a breakfast club and a wide variety of after school activities.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Downsell Community primary school is a good and improving school. In the words of one parent, 'I like this school. The teachers are good and the school is safe. My daughter is very happy'. This is the view of the majority of the parents who replied to the inspection questionnaire. However, a small minority of parents have concerns about bullying and communication between the school and parents. Inspection evidence found that the school has very robust systems in place both to combat bullying and to deal with it as and when it occurs. The school has recognised that communication is a concern and the governors and staff are working together to address this both through the POD group and through the recently established monthly opportunity for parents to meet with parent governors. Governance overall is good because governors know the school well and challenge as well as support initiatives for school improvement. The headteacher and senior leadership team provide good leadership, and middle managers have a good understanding of how to improve learning and teaching in their subjects. Monitoring is a strong feature within the school and it has improved the quality of education and the standards pupils achieve. Because of this, the school has a good capacity to make further improvements.

Standards are improving in the Early Years Foundation Stage. From their well below expected levels on entry, children make good progress, due to the good teaching they receive. During Key Stage 1, where the quality of teaching is more variable, progress is satisfactory and standards are below average. In Key Stage 2, progress accelerates and is good because of the good teaching. Standards have risen over the last two years and are now above average. While the quality of teaching and learning is good overall, the school has acknowledged that this is not yet consistent across all year groups and is already working hard to bring about improvements.

There are extremely robust systems for ensuring pupils are safe and well cared for at school. This has had a very positive impact on pupils' personal development and well-being, which is good and improving. Pupils' good attitudes and good behaviour is a strong feature of the school and their enthusiasm for learning is evident, particularly when the teaching is good. Pupils speak very highly of the school and particularly enjoy the outstanding range of extra-curricular clubs. However, they are not clear about their learning targets and because marking is not consistently developmental, they are not always sure how to improve their work, and progress slows. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make consistently good progress because they are clear about their learning and behaviour targets. They are very pleased with the support they receive from the inclusion coordinator and her team and say with confidence that they have made good progress because of this. The school has developed a wide range of partnerships, which have greatly benefited the pupils. For example, the outstanding work of the sports partnership contributes very well to the provision of expert teaching in physical education and in after school sports activities. Because of their good level of basic skills and their ability to collaborate in their work and play, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children are well cared for in a warm and friendly atmosphere where they behave well and are enthusiastic in their learning. The well-established system for making home visits before children start Nursery is particularly effective in easing the transition from home to school. The children's

first visit to the Nursery is very carefully planned and so they feel safe and happy when they arrive. The outdoor learning area is particularly well planned, well resourced and used imaginatively. In Reception classes, well-established routines help children new to the school to settle and develop positive relationships, and those who attended Nursery to build well on their previous experiences. Children's health and well-being are well promoted and staff consistently encourage children to speak with greater clarity and accuracy. Focused tasks for small groups are very effective. For example, in the letters and sounds group, activities are helping the children to make rapid progress in gaining the skills needed for reading, and particularly in writing which is an identified area for development. The strong team provides a stimulating learning environment which ensures that children make good progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. Leadership is good and staff are always seeking to improve. A new and more rigorous tracking system has recently been introduced to assess children's skills and knowledge when they start school and to check their progress. There are valuable links with external early years providers who support and encourage parental involvement in their child's learning journey. One parent wrote, 'The staff are one of a kind and the children are happy and eager to learn'.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards and ensure that pupils make consistently good progress by ensuring that an even greater proportion of the teaching is good or outstanding.
- Improve target setting and marking so that pupils have a clear understanding of the next steps they need to take in their learning and exactly what they need to do to improve their work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Children leave Reception with standards that are below expected levels in all areas of learning. Progress overall is satisfactory through Key Stage 1 because the quality of teaching is variable. By the end of Year 2, pupils reach standards that are below average in reading and writing and just below average in mathematics. In Key Stage 2 pupils' progress is good as a result of good teaching and because underachievement is rapidly identified and appropriate interventions put in place. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average and improving. The school's data show that in 2008 standards in English, mathematics and science improved and data for the current Year 6 show that this upward trend is continuing. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, as do pupils who speak English as an additional language.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy coming to school. The school has worked very hard to improve attendance, which is now satisfactory. Pupils respect each other in lessons and in the playground. The recent anti-bullying week has embedded systems and procedures that make children feel safe and supported when they need help; they feel they can talk to staff about any concerns and that these are dealt with swiftly and decisively. One pupil's idea of making posters to promote anti-bullying resulted in some innovative artwork. This is prominently displayed near the entrance to the school and underlines how hard the school works to eradicate any form of bullying. Pupils are well aware of internet safety. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their sense of spirituality develops well, not just in terms of recognising

and understanding the many different faiths represented, but also by experiencing the wonder of art, evident throughout the school, and in the natural world. For example, the children take great care of the large African snails in Reception. Pupils mature into helpful members of the community. They work cooperatively, showing care and consideration for others. This sense of caring about the wider community is also reflected in the range of charities they support. Pupils are aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, partly as a result of the school's work in achieving the Activemark. It is working towards gaining Healthy School status. Packed lunches have become healthier and staff have high expectations and ensure that pupils have appropriate guidance so that they are able to make healthy choices. Pupils are clear about how to be safe; they are very careful when going up and down the stairs and advised inspectors to 'keep to the left'! They enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as serving on the school council, and are proud of the differences they see they have made in the school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. There is a higher proportion of good and outstanding teaching in Years 3 to 6 where teachers' high expectations for pupils' learning has a positive impact on their behaviour and attitudes, and on their enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning. Throughout the school, relationships are strong and engender confidence in the pupils to 'have a go' without fear of failure. Where the teaching is most effective, paired discussion between pupils and good questioning make pupils think more deeply, and results in good responses from the pupils. Good day-to-day assessment procedures ensure that activities effectively match the different needs of the pupils and there is an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils. The activities are relevant to pupils' experiences so that they see a meaning to their learning. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils wrote a brochure to persuade parents to send their children to Downsell. Classroom assistants make a considerable contribution to the good progress made by pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities and by the minority ethnic pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. The inclusion team is highly successful in supporting the learning of the few pupils who do not always live up to the normally good behaviour of other pupils. There is good and sometimes outstanding teaching of physical education, games and music. This leads to some high-quality work and good achievement.

There remains a small minority of the teaching that is satisfactory. In these lessons there are good features, but sometimes whole-class sessions are too long and pupils start to lose concentration. Inconsistency in day-to-day assessment means that some work is either too easy or too hard for the pupils and they do not make the good progress or attain the standards seen in the good lessons.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

There are outstanding features in the good curriculum. The national literacy and numeracy strategies are firmly established and effectively support learning in these subjects. The curriculum meets pupils' needs successfully and includes an excellent range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. These include sport, additional support for reading, gardening and an annual residential visit to France. These add a further valuable dimension to learning. The creative arts are influential in pupils' learning and provide opportunities for pupils to excel in

subjects such as music and foreign languages. Curriculum planning is good and links subjects in meaningful and relevant topics that celebrate the diversity of the school population. The planning provides good opportunities for pupils to use their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology to support learning across all subjects. For example, pupils used computers, headsets and electronic keyboards to help them compose a piece of music. They then saved this on a memory stick and were able to play it back. Curricular support for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is excellent and enables them to access all aspects of the curriculum. Senior leaders recognise that there is scope to establish a curriculum in Year 1 that more effectively meets the needs of the pupils who are not ready for work on the National Curriculum.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides excellent care and support for its pupils and this underpins their great enthusiasm for school. Rigorous policies and robust procedures are in place to ensure the health and safety of all pupils. All staff contribute towards establishing a safe and secure environment in which pupils can thrive. Pupils are encouraged to be supportive of each other through activities such as 'Supportive Pupil of the Day'. This outstanding initiative has been widely recognised outside the school. There are good systems to help new pupils settle in and their parents are well involved in the process. Those who are new to learning English receive good support and this is developed further through projects and activities that celebrate the multicultural diversity of the school. Excellent procedures are in place to identify pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and teachers are now able to focus support more accurately, particularly on those pupils who are underperforming. A wide range of intervention strategies is used to meet pupils' differing needs. Learning mentors and teaching assistants help pupils to make good progress both academically and emotionally and outreach workers also liaise with parents. Pupils have class and group targets in literacy and numeracy. However, some are too generic and do not give pupils a clear enough idea of their progress and how they can improve. The quality of teachers' marking is variable. In the best examples, teachers' comments inform pupils what is good about their work and exactly what they need to do to improve further.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The good leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team has ensured that the strong focus on school improvement has been sustained since the last inspection. Middle leaders have become more proactive in evaluating the subjects they lead and are clear about strengths and areas for development. Overall, self-evaluation is good. However, the school is aware that it needs to improve its system for tracking pupils' progress. This currently works well for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities but not for all pupils, and this is already under review. The school sets challenging targets for the end of Year 6 and pupils are currently well on track to achieve these. Governance is good because of the strong leadership of the very experienced chair of governors. She encourages governors to challenge the school about the outcomes of its work and to monitor and evaluate school improvement. Community cohesion within the school is good because pupils collaborate very well in class and racial harmony is evident in all lessons. Pupils have a good understanding of their place in the world because of

the outstanding international links the school has established. For example, the close relationship with the school in Uganda has involved reciprocal staff visits and the first visit from pupils will take place in the summer term. The school has just established links with schools in the United Kingdom with very different cultural, ethnic and socio-economic profiles. Cohesion within the local community is less secure and the school realises that this is an area for further development. The school has established effective partnerships with external experts such as speech therapists and educational psychologists.



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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 |
|---|----------------|

**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   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection  | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?   | 2   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements   | 2   |

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?              | 2 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve?   | 2 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?                     | 2 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?                          | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?                                 | 2 |

**Achievement and standards**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve?  | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress                           | 2 |

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                          | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education  | 2 |
| The attendance of learners  | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |
| 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

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

## Leadership and management

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards  | 2   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated   | 2   |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?   | 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  |

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Downsell Primary School, London, E15 2BS

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to your school. The respect you show to each other and to the teachers and support staff who work with you is impressive. We were also very pleased to see how much you enjoy learning and how quickly you get on with your work when you are given a task to do. You progress well in English, mathematics and science. I particularly enjoyed the challenge of multiplication in Year 4 and observing the 'scientists' at work in Year 3! I wonder what will happen to the plants in your experiment. My colleagues really enjoyed seeing how well you look after the African snails in Reception and how well you measure in Year 2. It was also great to see the fantastic opportunities you have to develop your skills in the many sports on offer at lunchtimes and in the after school activities.

We would like to say a particular thank you to all those pupils who gave their time to talk to us, including the school council. It is clear that you like your school very much and you are doing a lot to make it as good as it can be. We were also very pleased to see how well you behave in school and on the playground.

There are two things we have asked the school to do to help you to improve your learning. The first is to make sure that all your lessons are as good as the best lessons we saw when we were at the school. The second is to check that you know and understand your learning targets and that when teachers mark your work they explain exactly what you have done well and how you can improve your work.

Thank you again for all your help and the inspection team would like to wish you all every success for your future lives.

Yours faithfully

Julie Winyard

Her Majesty's Inspector