

Dunton Green Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118272
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326797
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Carole Skinner

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	173
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
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hazel Lankestaer
Headteacher	Christine Barton
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	London Road Dunton Green Sevenoaks TN13 2UR
Telephone number	01732 462221
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. The proportion of pupils who are of minority ethnic heritage is increasing but still below average. A small number of pupils are in the early stages of learning to speak English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than in most schools. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Reception class, which has had several teachers during the past year. A new permanent teacher took up the post in April 2009. The school belongs to the School Sports Partnership and has received Healthy School and Activemark awards. There is a privately run on-site nursery which was inspected separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils achieve well and grow into confident young people who are fully equipped to face the challenges of secondary school and beyond. Recent initiatives to improve teaching and learning and to raise standards are now bearing fruit. Pupils make good progress from Year 1 to Year 6 and reach standards that are well above average by the time they leave. The provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Its shortcomings include insufficient resources and an uninspiring outdoor play area. The new teacher has done much in a short time to improve the provision for children's learning and development in line with recognised best practice but knows there is still a way to go.

The key to the remarkable upturn in pupils' rates of progress in Years 1 to 6 and the subsequent rise in standards has been the introduction of new strategies that are designed to meet each pupil's individual needs. Teachers and senior leaders make rigorous use of assessment information to highlight gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Careful and regular tracking of pupils' progress provides a useful early warning system so that staff can quickly identify those pupils who are not making enough progress towards their challenging targets. Senior leaders then put into place specific additional support that is short, sharp and tightly focused on individual needs. They then evaluate the impact of these interventions on pupils' progress. Data show that all groups of pupils achieve equally well, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils who are gifted and talented. The few pupils who are learning to speak English for the first time make outstanding progress as a result of first-rate provision.

Pupils' enthusiasm and their good behaviour help to create favourable conditions for learning in every classroom. They show initiative, enjoy taking responsibility and develop independence. Their enjoyment of learning is enriched by the good quality teaching and stimulating curriculum that are carefully planned to build on their interests and experiences. A wealth of opportunities to take part in different sports and dance activities contributes much to the pupils' outstanding awareness of how to keep fit and healthy. They have good opportunities to mix with pupils from other backgrounds and cultures, especially in joint events and through an exchange with a school in France.

Pupils feel very safe in school and both they and their parents attribute this to the excellent care they receive. Typical comments refer to the school's 'very caring ethos' and its 'approach to praise, discipline and teaching' that is described as 'second to none'. Academic guidance is good but there are a few inconsistencies still to be ironed out in the way teachers give pupils feedback through marking their work and involve them in assessing their own progress.

Strong teamwork is the cornerstone of the successful leadership and management. Senior leaders, governors and staff share the load in evaluating the school's effectiveness and formulating coherent strategic plans to ensure its continuing improvement. They have put in place a highly effective cycle of assessment, planning and review with a vision of increasingly personalised learning at its heart. Their successes so far show that they have a good capacity for continuing improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start school with skill levels that are a little lower than those expected for their age. They reach standards close to the national average by the time they enter Year 1. The school's attempts to improve the provision over the last three years have been frustrated by staffing difficulties and budget limitations. It is at last in a position to realise its vision now that a permanent teacher is in post and plans are in place to relocate the outdoor area. A strong emphasis on developing children's independence and social skills ensures that they make good progress in their personal development. Progress in other areas of learning is satisfactory because the curriculum is still evolving and changes have yet to be embedded. The outdoor area and classroom are both under-resourced. Outdoor learning is developing but does not yet provide children with a sufficiently rich range of experiences that encompass all areas of the curriculum. Nevertheless, children have appropriate opportunities to learn through play and exploration. In one session, some were observing snails with magnifiers, while others chose to investigate shapes, create patterns and play in the Very Hungry Caterpillar Café. Early writing and mathematical skills are soundly developed by creating menus for the café and writing invitations to the Teddy Bears' Picnic. The school is working closely with external specialists to ensure the ongoing development of the provision. Children's safety and welfare are high priorities. Parents are being increasingly involved in their children's learning and many value these opportunities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the range of resources for both indoor and outdoor learning in the Reception class and create a vibrant and exciting environment that stimulates learning in all areas of the curriculum.
- Ensure the marking of pupils' work gives good guidance on how to improve and involves them productively in assessing their own learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards plunged to a five-year low in 2007 after hovering around the average mark for a few years. This unexpected downturn, mainly caused by a sickness bug during the national tests, simply strengthened the school's resolve to raise standards to new heights. The exceptionally high standards and outstanding achievement of the 2008 Year 6 cohort was an astonishing improvement. This was no 'flash in the pan' but the result of carefully planned strategies to personalise learning to meet individual pupils' needs. These benefit pupils of all capabilities. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve very well while the most able are challenged and extended so that the proportion who reach the higher Level 5 is much higher than in most schools. Pupils also achieve high standards in physical education, music and art. Staff and governors are well aware of the pressing need to accelerate children's learning in the Reception class to ensure that they too make the best possible progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are confident that staff listen to their ideas and act upon their suggestions through the class and school councils. For example, they were instrumental in making changes to the playing

field. Pupils say bullying is rare and that adults act quickly to tackle any concerns. Older pupils act as 'buddies' to help younger ones. Pupils particularly enjoy the excellent range of extra-curricular activities and are highly motivated by events such as the foreign exchange visits. Pupils who join the school as non-English speakers rapidly integrate into friendship groups and are well cared for by their classmates. Pupils arrange and take part in activities for the local community and raise funds for a range of charities. Good behaviour is founded on strong moral awareness, although a few pupils find it difficult to meet teachers' high expectations and occasionally disrupt the otherwise calm and purposeful atmosphere. Good spiritual and cultural development is nurtured through the curriculum and opportunities to experience music and dance from around the world. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good. Most absences are due to illness and holidays taken in term time. Opportunities such as learning French and handling budgets give pupils a head start in acquiring the skills necessary for future life. Year 6 pupils organised a limited company to make and sell products for a summer sale. They even made a profit after refunding shareholders' money!

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are planned effectively to meet all pupils' needs through a good variety of approaches, using an interesting range of resources. On occasions, inspirational teaching motivates pupils to produce excellent work. Generally, pupils are fully engaged in learning, the pace is brisk and there is a satisfying buzz of activity. Regular assessments highlight pupils who are having difficulty, for example in acquiring a particular mathematical concept or interpreting texts. Strategies are then devised to tackle the problems through specific intervention programmes. Well-briefed teaching assistants work in close partnership with teachers to support learning. Teachers explain to pupils what they are intended to learn in each lesson but do not always give them opportunities to evaluate how well they have met their goals. The quality of teaching in Reception has been too variable over the past year and some parents have expressed understandable concerns about the number of changes. This situation is now improving but there are occasions when adults miss opportunities to extend children's learning through questioning and conversation and by participating in their play.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school caters well for pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development. Literacy and numeracy are high on the agenda and pupils' skills are often developed through other subjects, such as science, history and geography. The well-equipped computer suite enables pupils to learn new skills but they do not have enough opportunities to use these skills in the classroom to support learning in other subjects. The school is gradually moving away from a subject-based curriculum to one that makes more creative and meaningful links between subjects. The curriculum is enriched by a superb variety of additional activities, especially in sport and music. Pupils' cultural development is enhanced by attending concerts and the ballet. The choir and dance group participate in festivals and competitions, such as 'Music for Youth'. Older pupils enjoy residential visits to France and pupils with particular gifts and talents attend special classes at secondary schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Robust and rigorous arrangements for ensuring pupils' health and safety contribute much to their personal development. Excellent relationships between pupils and adults, based on mutual respect, help to create a calm and purposeful atmosphere in lessons and around the school. Productive partnerships with parents and external agencies enhance the support and guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are excellent arrangements for supporting vulnerable pupils, including counselling from trained staff. An established induction programme enables children to feel confident when they start in the Reception class. There is much good practice in giving pupils feedback and guidance on their work but marking is inconsistent and does not always show pupils the next steps in learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity for all pupils lies firmly at the heart of its vision and strategic planning. Rigorous monitoring and detailed analysis of progress data give staff and governors a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas that need improvement. Some subject leaders have yet to fully develop this aspect of their role. The school has already taken good steps to promote common values and tolerance amongst pupils and is reaching out into the wider community. Pupils have many opportunities to mix with others from different backgrounds and to appreciate diversity. A wide-ranging action plan sets out a challenging agenda for improving the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage, including a programme of governor training. Governors support and challenge the school and are fully involved in reviewing the impact of improvement strategies.

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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?	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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	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

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 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	1
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**

21 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dunton Green Primary School, Sevenoaks TN13 2UR

Thank you for helping to make our recent visit so enjoyable and for talking to us about your work. You told us that you enjoy school a lot and that the adults take good care of you. Your good behaviour and attitudes to learning help you to achieve well. Here are some of the things that make Dunton Green Primary a good school.

- You achieve standards that are well above average and are well prepared for moving on to secondary school.
- Good teaching and an interesting curriculum keep you fully involved in learning.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and you take part in a very wide range of sports, dance and gymnastics activities that help to keep you fit.
- You get on extremely well with each other and with the adults and this creates harmony within the school.
- You have many exciting opportunities, such as attending concerts and ballet performances and visiting a whole range of interesting places, including a school in France.
- The adults who run the school make regular checks to see how well you are all doing and they plan special activities to help you when you are finding things a bit tricky. This is making a big difference to you and is helping you to make faster progress.

We have asked the staff and governors to make some more improvements for the children in Reception, to make sure they have an exciting curriculum, good resources and a well-equipped area for learning outside. We have asked the school to make sure that marking shows you clearly what you need to do next to improve your work. We have also asked the teachers to give you more opportunities to assess your own progress towards your learning goals. You can help by thinking carefully about the progress you have made and what you need to do next.

With very best wishes for your future success,

Yours faithfully

Carole Skinner

Lead inspector