

Darlinghurst Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114790
Local Authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	338445
Inspection dates	30 November –1 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Miller

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	384
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Lemasurier
Headteacher	Robert Knight
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 20 lessons, and visited others to evaluate the school's provision, including that for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They undertook other, more general observations, including extended school activities and displays of work. Inspectors held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They looked at the school's policies, self-evaluation and development planning, monitoring files, curriculum and safeguarding documentation, governors' minutes, the headteacher's reports to the governing body, local authority reports on the school and information provided for parents/carers. Inspectors received and analysed questionnaires from 76 parents/carers, 23 members of staff and 171 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well the school is enabling its pupils to make progress as they move from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6
- how well the teaching uses assessment to help challenge pupils and promote their progress
- the extent to which provision for the care, guidance and support of its pupils is a strength of the school
- how the school monitors and evaluates its contribution to community cohesion, and how this aids the personal development of its pupils.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average sized school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is slightly above average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. Pupil mobility is higher than expected nationally, with a rising roll and families moving into the area. The school is a member of the Southend Education Trust, and a partner school of the Southend Teacher Training Partnership. It holds Healthy Schools status, the Activemark award, a gold standards 'Splash' award for Modern Languages, a Basic Skills award, and an intermediate International Schools award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with below nationally expected standards. They make good progress to gain average standards by the end of Year 6. This is in spite of a high turnover in the school population. Over 50 pupils have joined the school in the current term alone, and some 13 have left. All classes have pupils who are new since September. The school has very good tracking systems for assessing and monitoring the pupils' progress. Extensive data are collected and used effectively to support individual pupils as well as larger groups and classes. Self-evaluation is good and development planning has identified the key areas for improvement. The school has a good track record of enabling its pupils to achieve well. Consequently, the school's capacity for further improvement is good. In practice, the school is a very cohesive community. Pupils have good opportunities to extend their understanding of their roles and responsibilities as young citizens from the local to international. The governing body has evaluated how effectively the school is promoting community cohesion and has identified which aspects are less well developed; however, the school's action plan has yet to be finalised.

In the 2009 national tests, the attainment of Year 6 pupils was above average in science, and broadly average in English and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities made particularly good progress to gain standards above those of similar groups nationally. The school has been successful in enabling its pupils to gain nationally expected levels by both Years 2 and 6. It has been less successful in enabling its more able pupils to gain higher Level 3 by Year 2 or higher Level 5 and above by Year 6, particularly in mathematics and English. Work on mathematical investigations and performance in English writing work, such as writing for purpose, remain relative weaknesses. The school is developing strategies to resolve these issues. Inspection evidence indicates these are starting to prove successful. Some significant improvements have taken place over the past three years in terms of rising standards by the end of the Reception year. These are now feeding successfully through into Key Stage 1.

Good achievement is being underpinned by good teaching at all key stages. This is ensuring a consistency of approach; for example, in the effective use of assessment in the classroom. Whilst focussed on teaching, lesson observations by senior leaders are insufficiently centred on learning. Middle leaders sample and monitor pupils' books regularly. Inspectors agree with their findings that marking approaches are inconsistent. In their questionnaires, a small minority of pupils felt they would like more information as to how well they are doing. Nevertheless, the vast majority of pupils say they receive explanations as to how to improve their work. This approach helps promote the pupils'

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good attitudes to learning, and good levels of self-motivation. On their questionnaires, a high proportion of pupils gave reasons why they enjoy school; as one wrote, 'This is a lovely school, and I never want to leave!'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By summer 2010, raise further the attainment of Year 6 pupils by:
 - improving the teaching of problem-solving and investigations in mathematics
 - optimising opportunities for development of pupils' writing skills across the curriculum
 - implementing fully the school's strategies to enable its more able pupils to achieve higher levels
 - ensuring a more consistent approach to marking, in order to reinforce pupils' understanding of their next steps in learning
 - ensuring the monitoring of lessons by senior and middle leaders focuses on improving the quality of pupils' learning.
 - Ensure the school and governing body complete, by January 2010, their action plan for promoting community cohesion.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve well. This is because of the good, planned support provided by teachers and teaching assistants alike. Good language development is aided by the effective use of visual resources. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson, model frogs were adding fun and clarity to multiplication work with a group of pupils from European, African and Asian ethnic backgrounds. Good achievement for pupils overall is underpinned well by the smooth transition for pupils new to the school, at each stage of education and between each year group. Pupils settle quickly into their new school. Pupils rise well to the challenges set for them in their learning because of good lesson planning. They think through problems and explore solutions for themselves, and are encouraged to do this because of consistently good questioning by teachers throughout the school. Consequently, pupils find learning both interesting and enjoyable. Pupils' interest in learning has been enhanced further since the last inspection by a considerable improvement in information and communication technology (ICT) resources. Their key ICT skills are developing well, and this is motivating further pupils' interest in learning.

Children enjoy lessons and coming to school. They behave well, are polite, enthusiastic, and almost all work hard. Pupils are willing to express their views with confidence. Attendance is average, largely as a result of illness, a tendency for families to take holidays during school terms, and delays in being able to take pupils off the roll when they leave. Almost all children feel safe in school although, like their parents/carers, a few worry about some energetic and occasionally boisterous play at break and

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lunchtimes times. This occurs largely when the field is not available in wet weather. Nevertheless, pupils do understand how to keep safe, and take extensive opportunity for healthy exercise. An enjoyment of sport and physical education was a strong theme from the pupils' questionnaires. Opportunities to work with a coach from a local football club are seized upon eagerly. Pupils are prepared well for their future lives and education. This is not only in terms of their satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills, but also their good inter-personal skills, and participation in activities promoting enterprise, responsibility and social awareness.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good assessment ensures a daily evaluation of pupils' learning. This enables the teaching to help pupils build on their prior learning. Teaching assistants often develop their own materials, which help bring ideas to life. Although pupils know their targets for improvement, they are not always clear about what they need to do to reach them. Some marking merely acknowledges achievement but does not guide specific improvement. Nevertheless, there is some exemplary marking, with points for

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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improvement acknowledged by the pupils and followed-up in their subsequent work. Some outstanding teaching was seen in both key stages, but particularly in Year 6 where pupils are encouraged to think independently and challenged consistently to achieve higher levels.

The school's developing curriculum is becoming increasingly innovative. Teachers are engaged fully in the process of tailoring what is taught to pupils' needs. Teachers across the school are really fired-up by encouragement from senior leaders to develop lessons which are purposeful and set in a context which the pupils understand. Improvements to raise further standards in English and mathematics throughout the school are in hand. These include the development of guided reading, the promotion of writing across subjects, and raising pupils' understanding of number facts. Provision for gifted and talented pupils has developed steadily, and is now starting to have an impact on raising standards. Although there is a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities which supplement learning, take-up is relatively low because only 30% of pupils live in the official catchment area.

The school's ethos and environment are welcoming. Almost all pupils enjoy coming to school. The breakfast and pre-school clubs provide a positive start to the day. Care for vulnerable pupils is exemplary, and supports greatly their progress and well-being. Racist incidents are rare, and always reported properly to the governing body, which monitors carefully such incidents. Although the way these events are recorded is inconsistent, they are always followed up. Health and safety documentation is maintained well, and staff are qualified very well for first aid and child protection.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Although the headteacher's additional work in training school leaders at all levels takes him away from the school for two days a week, he has built an effective leadership team within the school. The deputy and assistant headteachers play a vital role in the day-to-day management of the school. Whilst some middle leaders are still learning their craft, they show good teamwork, energy, enthusiasm and insight. Discussions with governors showed an active commitment and support for staff in their common drive for improvement. Leaders at all levels ensure this is a school with a positive approach to its future.

Partnerships to support pupils' learning are well-developed. The school is a centre for

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training graduate teachers, and pupils' benefit greatly from their presence. The school's good approach to community cohesion results from some important features which are embedded in the school's ethos/culture. These include pupils' respect for others, the role models provided by staff, and partnerships established by the school from local to international levels. However, governors are still developing their role in relation to the promotion of community cohesion. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and staff are suitably trained. Risk assessments are practical and realistic, and pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. The school's effective systems for tracking pupils' progress, its work with families, and the impact of provision through extended school activities, are ensuring equality of opportunity and sustained improvement for all its different groups of pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Over the past three years there has been a steady improvement in the standards attained by children at the end of the Reception year. Children now meet national expectations across most of their areas of learning. They are prepared well to start National Curriculum work in Year 1. Not all children who join the Nursery continue into the Reception class; currently fewer than half did so. Those children who join in the Nursery receive a good head-start. The good progress children make is down to thorough initial assessments of their needs. This provides a firm foundation upon which teachers and assistants build individual programmes of learning. Staff are particularly skilled in engaging children in conversation through questions. Good provision in the Nursery ensures children's social and emotional needs are catered for well, and that

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enjoyment in learning is fostered both through adult-directed and free play. Good teaching has ensured the introduction of effective methods which support well children's communication, language and literacy development. The linking of letters to sounds is raising children's readiness for reading, and supporting the development of literacy from the Nursery through to Year 1. Such approaches are indicative of good leadership and management. Resources throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage are good, but both Nursery and Reception classes lack a permanent covered, outside area to enable the free-flow of indoor and outdoor activities in all weathers.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents/carers who responded to the questionnaire are supportive of the school. In their written comments, a few expressed concerns that the school does not always take account of their suggestions or concerns. Some were worried about younger and older pupils playing together in the school playground. Inspectors find there is the opportunity for younger pupils to use a different area if they so wish. The pupils benefit well socially from mixing together at playtimes. A few parents/carers were concerned about access through the main school gates. The school has to balance its use of main entrances with emergency service advice regarding access and egress. Parents/carers and visitors could help by ensuring the gates are always closed when they enter and leave the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Darlington Primary and Nursery School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 76 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 384 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	59	27	36	2	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	38	52	30	41	4	5	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	36	41	55	4	5	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	41	38	52	2	3	3	4
The teaching is good at this school	33	45	36	49	4	5	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	48	34	45	3	4	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	43	41	55	2	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	22	33	41	62	1	2	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	36	41	57	2	3	3	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	46	38	51	0	0	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	29	42	60	7	10	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	35	47	35	47	3	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	53	30	39	4	5	2	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



2 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Darlington Primary and Nursery School, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3JS

We would like to thank you all for welcoming us so warmly into your school. You were polite and interested, and asked us a great number of questions. We appreciated your curiosity, enjoyed talking with you and were impressed by your attitudes to learning. We agree with your teachers, parents and carers when they say yours is a good school. You played an important part in helping us to understand why it is so good, and these are a few of them.

You achieve well and make good progress during your time at the school.

Those of you who have difficulty with your learning are supported well.

You have good teachers who make your learning interesting and enjoyable.

Your teachers work together well as a team, and set you a good example.

You behave well in school, and show good respect for each other.

The adults at your school take good care of you and look after you well.

You understand well the importance of exercise and living a healthy lifestyle.

The personal qualities you develop will stand you in good stead in later life.

These are the things we have asked your school to do now:

- help you to raise further your attainment in mathematics and English
- help those of you who are more able to gain higher levels in national tests
- make sure all marking helps you to understand what, and how, to improve
- ensure that when your teachers observe each other's lessons, they focus more on your learning
- ensure the school and governing body complete their plans to help you all gain an even better understanding of your roles and responsibilities as young citizens within the community.

We think the school is on the right track to meet the challenges it has set itself and improve further. On one of your notice boards there is a poster which states, 'Darlington does something different'. We know you do, and hope you help the adults at your school to keep that special character.

With all best wishes for your future.

Michael Miller
Lead inspector

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