

# Darenth Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118245
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	339173
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Carole Skinner

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	106
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Iris Gutteridge
<b>Headteacher</b>	Simon Manning
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 May 2010
<b>School address</b>	Green Street Green Road Dartford DA2 8DH
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. It took place during the school's 'Environmental Science and Art Week', when many of the activities were led by outside providers. It was only possible to observe four lessons, one in each of the four classes. In addition, inspectors looked at many aspects of the school's work. They looked in detail at pupils' workbooks, displays in classrooms and around the school, some of the additional activities that were taking place, the school's assessment and tracking information for each year group, the minutes of governing body meetings, the school's evaluations of teaching and learning, and safeguarding documentation. Inspectors met with staff, pupils and a representative of the governing body. They looked at questionnaires from 23 parents and carers, 40 pupils in Years 3 to 6 and nine members of staff.

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

- how effectively the school is raising attainment by accelerating progress for all groups of pupils
- the impact of recent initiatives on reducing absences
- the extent to which recent improvements in teaching, assessment and the curriculum are helping to strengthen the school's capacity for sustained improvement
- the urgency with which senior and middle leaders and governors are driving improvement, particularly in the quality of teaching, in order to raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress.

## Information about the school

This small school draws most of its pupils from the village of Darenth. The large majority of its pupils are of White British heritage and approximately a third are from Gypsy Roma and Irish Traveller backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is higher than average. A high percentage of pupils, close to half in each class, have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. There is a higher than average turnover of pupils. Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes; one class has children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and a small number of Year 1 pupils. Since the last inspection, there have been significant staff changes, including three deputy headteachers. Recruitment difficulties have resulted in a number of temporary teachers being employed. The assistant headteacher joined the school in February 2010, since when the school has had a full complement of permanent staff. Both the chair and vice-chair of the governing body recently had to stand down for health reasons. Since the last inspection, the school has been awarded Activemark, Healthy School status and the Anti-Bullying 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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

### Main findings

Darenth Community Primary provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is rapidly improving after a period of significant disruption caused by high staff turnover, staff illness and recruitment difficulties. Since September, working in close collaboration with the local authority, the school has demonstrated that it is firmly on the road to recovery. Past underachievement by pupils is being tackled with determination, driven by improvements in teaching and the curriculum. The headteacher, who knows each pupil personally, is highly respected by parents, carers and the local community and is successfully building a strong staff team who share his aspirations for the pupils and for the future of the school. Nevertheless, many of the strategies to improve pupils' learning are still being embedded throughout the school. Most staff are at a relatively early stage of developing their leadership roles, particularly in monitoring the school's performance and driving improvements. The school's accurate view of its own effectiveness, and of the progress made over the last six months, demonstrate it has the necessary capacity to sustain and increase the momentum of improvement.

Children do well in all areas of learning in the Reception class. Progress has begun to accelerate in Years 1 to 6 but is still not rapid enough to ensure that all groups of pupils make consistently good progress. High levels of care and carefully planned provision effectively meet the needs of Traveller children and of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, enabling them to make good progress. Average- and higher-attaining pupils do not always achieve their full potential. In 2009, pupils' attainment in the Year 6 national tests was low as a result of the disruptions to pupils' learning over the previous two years. The current Year 6 pupils experienced the same lack of continuity, but, since September, have made up a lot of lost ground. Although still not quite up to average standards, they are not far off.

The main reason why teaching is not consistently good is that teachers do not always use assessment information rigorously enough to fine-tune their planning so that every lesson builds consistently on each pupil's previous learning. Feedback to pupils is improving but teachers' marking does not always explain what they need to do to improve. A new skills-based curriculum is making learning more relevant and enjoyable for the pupils and is carefully planned to ensure progression in learning in the mixed-age classes. There are, however, too few opportunities for pupils to use and develop their reading, writing, numeracy and computer skills in other subjects.

The school community is exceptionally cohesive. Pupils from different backgrounds get on very well together and are courteous and considerate. The Travellers' culture is celebrated through the curriculum and special events, but the school has yet to expand pupils' horizons so that they fully appreciate the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom

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and beyond. Despite close working relationships with outside agencies, the school has not managed to improve attendance, which remains low. By contrast, the school is exceptionally successful in supporting vulnerable pupils and has helped many to overcome significant barriers to learning.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Accelerate pupils' progress, so that it is consistently good by December 2010, by:
  - making more rigorous use of assessments to inform teachers' planning so that lessons build successfully on pupils' previous learning, especially for those who are capable of reaching average or higher levels of attainment
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to use and develop their literacy, numeracy and computer skills in different subjects
  - fully implementing the new marking policy so that pupils know exactly what they have to do to improve and are involved in assessing their own and each other's progress.
- Improve attendance by working closely with the small number of families of pupils who have high levels of absence in order to promote the importance of regular attendance for their children's future well-being.
- Develop and extend the roles and responsibilities of all teachers in evaluating the school's performance and driving improvement by:
  - ensuring that lesson observations, analysis of data, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils all focus clearly on the quality of learning and rates of progress
  - using the information gained to produce clear plans of action with precise timescales and measurable criteria for judging success.
- Extend the school's influence in promoting social cohesion and awareness of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity beyond the school and local communities

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Pupils are enthusiastic learners who work hard and are keen to do well. They collaborate well in pairs and groups, sharing ideas and planning investigations. They show interest in a wide range of activities and thoroughly enjoyed listening to the 'Junk Orchestra' and finding out about birds of prey. When lessons inspire and motivate pupils, they make good progress. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 came up with original and imaginative ideas when using similes and metaphors to create vivid descriptions. However, rates of progress, although improving, are inconsistent between groups of pupils. As a result, too few pupils reach above-average levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science and some who are capable of average levels fall short. The most-able pupils sometimes do the same work as others or spend too long practising skills, in mathematics for example, rather than using and applying their skills in different contexts.

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Free fruit for all and plenty of opportunities for sport help pupils to stay fit and healthy. They know what makes a healthy diet and how to keep themselves and others safe, for example when using the internet. Older pupils enjoy being house captains, dinner monitors and playground friends. It was good to see Year 6 pupils helping Reception children to make their 'junk' instruments and shepherding them on the field when playtime ended. Most pupils enjoy school and attend regularly, but a small number do not achieve as well as they might because they come to school infrequently and miss out on important learning.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

New assessment procedures are currently being embedded throughout the school. These are contributing to improvements in learning as teachers become increasingly adept at tailoring their lessons to pupils' individual needs. For example, in a literacy lesson for Years 1 and 2, four groups of pupils were given tasks at differing levels of difficulty and made good progress in learning about bats as they answered questions by finding information in a piece of text. Pupils' workbooks show that this good practice is

<sup>1</sup> 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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not consistent across all classes and subjects. Expectations of middle- and higher-attainers are sometimes not high enough to ensure they make consistently good progress, especially in writing and mathematics. Well-trained learning support assistants provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, enabling them to play a full part in lessons.

Since the last inspection, the curriculum has had a complete overhaul and is now planned to ensure that pupils in the mixed-age classes do not repeat the same topics. All staff have contributed to the planning, which is continually evolving in response to regular reviews. Themed weeks and other special events contribute much to pupils' learning and enjoyment. A display in the entrance hall celebrates 'Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month', and visiting storytellers share Romany stories with the pupils. Trained counsellors, including the headteacher, provide sensitive support and guidance for pupils with emotional difficulties, which enable many to make good progress. When Traveller children go travelling, the school provides a pack of materials which is tailored to each pupil's needs, with guidance for parents and carers to support them while they are away. High-quality care for all pupils helps those who join the school part-way through a term to settle in and feel part of the school family. The school has introduced a variety of measures to improve attendance, but in the past year its efforts were thwarted by epidemics of measles and swine flu. The school remains committed to promoting regular attendance.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The pace of improvement since the last inspection has been hindered by high staff turnover, but the momentum is now building. New subject and assessment leaders are developing their roles in checking pupils' progress, identifying where improvement is needed and implementing strategies to raise attainment. English, mathematics and science leaders have been coached by local authority advisers in observing lessons and analysing pupils' work. All have identified accurate priorities for improvement, such as improving pupils' investigative skills in mathematics and science. The headteacher holds a termly meeting with each class teacher to discuss every pupil's progress over the term and to determine where higher targets could be set or additional support provided. These initiatives are already beginning to have a positive impact on accelerating pupils' progress, as the school's tracking information shows, but are not fully in force.

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Governors, who are also undergoing a period of change, have a sound knowledge of the school's strengths and know where improvement is needed. More experienced governors are confident to ask challenging questions and contribute to the school's accurate self-evaluation. Statutory requirements are fully met and there are rigorous procedures for ensuring the safety of staff and pupils. The school successfully promotes racial harmony and actively prevents discrimination. While good attention is given to ensuring that pupils with additional needs are well provided for, there is insufficient focus on ensuring that middle- and higher-attaining pupils are suitably challenged. The headteacher has forged exceptionally good links with the local community and the school celebrates the ethnic and cultural diversity of its pupils. It is less effective in promoting community cohesion in national and global contexts.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

**Early Years Foundation Stage**

Many children start school with little pre-school experience and weak language and social skills. There is a strong emphasis on developing these aspects of learning in the Reception class. Children make good progress in all areas of learning. They have many opportunities to learn through play and exploration and were very excited about their trip to the Forest School, where they climbed a steep hill, dug for treasure and made a shelter. Learning is planned around themes and topics, to which the children contribute ideas and suggest how they might find things out. Regular teaching of letters and sounds prepares children well for writing, although this is an area where boys do not do as well as girls. Pupils learn through a combination of direct teaching and activities they initiate themselves. The teacher keeps detailed records to show which areas of learning



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have been covered, but lesson planning lacks sufficient detail about the learning that is intended to take place as a result of particular activities. Regular observations and assessments of the children's progress are used to target support, provide specific experiences and build on children's knowledge and understanding from day to day.

The Reception teacher has a clear plan for developing the provision, including improvements to the outdoor learning areas. Children settle in well as a result of carefully planned induction procedures. They are happy and feel safe because they are well looked after, not only by the adults but by their older 'buddies'. The school is developing closer links with the feeder pre-school to improve continuity for the children.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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**

About a fifth of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Most of these are happy with their children's experience at Darenth and the inspection findings confirm their positive views of the school. A few expressed concerns about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that behaviour is good, and on occasions exemplary, because all staff have high expectations of the pupils and implement the behaviour policy consistently.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Darenth Community Primary 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 23 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 106 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	70	6	26	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	15	65	8	35	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	57	9	39	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	48	11	48	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	11	48	11	48	1	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	35	14	61	1	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	61	8	35	1	4	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)	11	48	9	39	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	43	11	48	2	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	26	14	61	3	13	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	48	12	52	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	16	70	7	30	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	57	9	39	1	4	0	0

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



21 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Darenth Community Primary School, Darenth DA2 8DH

Thank you for being so friendly when we visited your school and for telling us about all the interesting things that you do. We could see how much you enjoyed the 'Junk Orchestra' and learning about the birds of prey. Your science challenges looked like fun too! Some of you were rather worried about behaviour, but we were very pleased to see how well you all behave in lessons and around the school. Here are some of the other good things we found out.

- All of the adults take good care of you so that you feel very safe.
- You keep fit and healthy by eating fruit every day and taking part in lots of sport activities. Well done!
- You have some really exciting activity weeks with lots of visitors who teach you new and interesting things.
- You enjoy taking responsibility. It was lovely to see some of you older children looking after the younger ones.
- You make good progress in the Reception class and learn lots of new things.

Some of you have had quite a few different teachers over the last couple of years. Your headteacher and governors have worked hard to find teachers who are all working together to make your school better. This is what we have asked them to do to help your school to improve from being satisfactory to good:

- make sure you all make good progress in your lessons
- help you and your families to make sure you come to school every day
- make sure all the teachers check how well you are doing in different subjects so they can improve lessons even more
- help you to find out more about the different cultures in our country and around the world.

You can help by coming to school every day so you don't miss out on important learning. We would like to wish you every success in the future,

Yours sincerely

Carole Skinner

Lead inspector

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