

# Epsom Downs Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125127
<b>Local Authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	340726
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Barron

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

The registered childcare provision, 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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	353
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Timothy Snuggs
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sally Leach
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 March 2007
<b>School address</b>	St Leonard's Road Epsom Downs Surrey KT18 5RJ
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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 October 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	340726

**Number of children on roll in the registered  
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered  
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons and held meetings with governors, the school's senior leadership team, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at school development planning, minutes of governors' meetings, school policies, including those associated with safeguarding procedures, assessment and tracking documentation, pupils' records and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors analysed the views of parents and carers in the 102 Ofsted questionnaires returned.

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

- how well pupils make progress in different year groups, focusing on the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 6, and what this signifies in terms of the standards pupils attain in Year 6
- the impact of the school's work to promote all aspects of community cohesion, especially regarding the multicultural nature of British society
- the impact of leadership and management at all levels in bringing about improvements to the school's overall effectiveness
- the quality of care, guidance and support for pupils, especially those requiring extra help, and the impact of initiatives to integrate vulnerable pupils fully into all aspects of school life and provide them with equal opportunities to succeed
- the impact of the school's initiatives to improve pupils' attendance.

## Information about the school

This primary school is larger than average. Pupils are almost all from White British backgrounds and almost all speak English as their home language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school holds several awards, including the Healthy School Award, the Green Flag Eco Award, the Artsmark Gold Award and, most recently, the Gold International School Award. The on-site Children's Centre, which consists of a Day Nursery and Family Centre, is an integral part of the school but this provision did not form part of the inspection.

**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

This is a good school which provides a good education for pupils. Pupils enjoy school and say they feel very safe and secure, commenting that 'it's like having an extra family'. Parents value the effective way the school safeguards and protects pupils. 'I never feel worried about my child's welfare during the day', is a typical example of the many positive comments in the questionnaire responses. Parents fully appreciate the lengths the school goes to in order to ensure that the quality of pastoral care, guidance and support for pupils is of a consistently high order.

Whilst the quality of leadership and management is good, the leadership of the headteacher is outstanding and provides the driving force for school improvement. Working in close partnership with the deputy headteacher and also with staff, governors and parents, she has ensured that the school continually evaluates its performance effectively and implements improvements where needed. This has enabled the school to increase its effectiveness since the last inspection by regularly checking and measuring its performance and improving its practices. One example includes improving the quality of education provided for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage from good to outstanding. This has been a key factor in improving pupils' achievement throughout the school and demonstrates that the school has made good progress and has good capacity to improve in the future.

Children enter the school at the age of three with skills and understanding well below those expected for their age, particularly in speech and language. They make consistently good and often very good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the rest of the school because of good teaching that caters effectively for their needs. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other pupils because they receive effective support. By Year 6, pupils attain average standards and this is reflected in their current work. Even so, standards in writing, especially pupils' ability to complete longer pieces of writing successfully, lag behind the standards they attain in other subjects throughout the school.

Pupils enjoy school and this is shown in their good behaviour and attitudes to learning. They fully realise the need to stay safe and have an excellent understanding of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils say they look forward to lessons because teachers usually make learning interesting. Although nearly all pupils have very good attendance records and consistently arrive on time every morning, a few do not. As a result, the school has implemented a series of measures, including liaising with other agencies, to improve the attendance of a small group of pupils who are persistently absent. These actions have had some effect on improving attendance but a few pupils are having a

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negative effect on the school's attendance figures, which are similar to the national average.

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

- Raise standards in writing, especially pupils' proficiency in completing longer pieces of writing successfully, by improving pupils' basic writing skills and their confidence to use a wider vocabulary when writing.
- Improve the school's attendance rates by liaising with outside professional partners in order to develop the use of effective systems to improve the attendance of the small number of persistent absentee pupils.

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

Pupils and parents value the caring ethos within the school. Staff are prepared to do that little bit extra to ensure all pupils are very well cared for and able to play a full and active part in school life. This is an important factor in ensuring that pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils' spiritual development is good, and their social and moral development is strong. This is evident in pupils' good behaviour and their growing awareness of the needs of others.

Pupils are polite and eager to do well. They say they are confident that any instances of unsocial behaviour will be dealt with quickly by adults. Pupils' attitudes to school are good, although this is not wholly reflected in their average attendance rates. They fully realise the need to adopt safe practices and a healthy lifestyle. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about the school's environmentally friendly vegetable garden and the livestock kept in the school grounds, including goats and free-range chickens. They talk confidently about their involvement in local community events but are slightly less confident when discussing the multicultural nature of modern British society.

The school prepares pupils effectively for the next stage of their education and it is very evident that pupils enjoy all aspects of school, especially the wide range of extra activities provided for them in the well-attended after-school clubs. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage work and play very well together. Pupils in Year 2 used their well-developed skills to good effect during an information and communication technology (ICT) lesson and were heard to cackle with delight when they played back the recordings of their own voices they had successfully made. Year 5 pupils displayed a growing understanding of the effects of global warming when they explained to the inspector exactly what was meant by the term 'Carbon Footprint' during a successful mathematics lesson. Throughout the school, pupils are encouraged to do their best and this was evident during a Year 6 lesson when pupils worked hard at changing complicated fractions to decimals and were proud to show off the work they had completed.

By the end of Year 6, standards are average and have improved in recent years because of the increased effectiveness of the school. Although pupils achieve well and make good progress from a low baseline, their attainment in writing lags behind their

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attainment in other subjects and this has a negative effect on the development of the skills necessary for their future economic well-being. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the very small yet growing number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve well because of the good level and quality of the support they receive. The more able pupils make similar good progress to all other pupils and there is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Children make rapid progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of outstanding teaching. Teaching is typically good throughout the rest of the school and ensures pupils make good progress in all year groups. When teaching is at its best, lessons are well structured and teachers use a variety of interesting approaches to motivate pupils, for example effectively linking computers to the interactive whiteboards to enhance learning. Tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities and offer a good level of challenge so that pupils work hard and make good progress. Teachers regularly check how well pupils are coping with their work. They offer a good level of support when

<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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required and are not afraid to change the nature of tasks to suit pupils' abilities more appropriately. Teaching assistants and teachers work effectively together to ensure that pupils needing extra help with their learning, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive the level of support they need to make similar progress to other pupils. On the rare occasions when teaching is less successful, pupils are asked to complete work that is not adequately matched to their abilities. When this happens, pupils lose interest and drift off task. As a result, they do not make the progress they are capable of, which restricts their achievement.

The school's well-balanced and imaginative curriculum provides a breadth of experiences for pupils and links subjects together well in order to make learning more enjoyable. Links between writing and subjects such as ICT are beginning to have a beneficial effect on pupils' progress although this is still an area for development. A range of interesting visitors to the school and regular visits to places of interest, such as the Natural History Museum in London, broadens pupils' understanding of the world in which they live. Provision for personal, social and health education is good and ensures pupils are well aware of the importance of keeping fit and healthy. The school provides a very diverse programme of enrichment activities for pupils of all ages, including a wide range of popular after-school clubs such as football and gardening.

The school is proud of the outstanding level of pastoral care, guidance and support it provides for pupils and this is the basis for their good personal development. Parents value the extremely supportive way the school looks after their children. Pupils say they are always made to feel welcome at school and are confident they will always be well looked after. Particularly effective induction and transfer arrangements help pupils settle quickly into new routines and vulnerable pupils receive excellent levels of care and support to help them become fully involved in all school activities. The school works closely with a large number of outside agencies in order to offer a high level of care and well-targeted support to families who are hard to reach or who are facing challenging circumstances.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The good quality of leadership and management is reflected in the thoroughness of the school's self-evaluation and the quality of its development planning. Leaders and managers at all levels have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and share a

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common belief in continually striving for school improvement. The headteacher and staff have implemented many improvements since the last inspection, for example by enhancing the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They have been well supported by the governing body, which offers a good level of support and challenge to the school and takes its duties seriously. Individual governors play an active role in school life and are involved in all major decisions.

The school's links with parents are outstanding, particularly those who may have had doubts about becoming involved with the school. Parents value the way in which the school has developed several methods for keeping them well informed and for including them very effectively in their children's learning and well-being. They appreciate the outstanding way in which the school tackles discrimination and places equality of opportunity for all pupils at the heart of its work and ensures pupils are given equal chances to succeed. This is a key factor in ensuring that all pupils, regardless of their background or ability, make good progress, not only in their academic work but also in developing their social skills, including their respect for others.

Links with external agencies and partnerships with other institutions are used extremely effectively to support pupils' learning and well-being. Several international partnerships enhance pupils' understanding of global issues and cultural differences, including links to a number of schools in Ghana and Malawi.

Safeguarding procedures are good and meet all requirements, and are reflected in the precision of the staff recruitment and vetting checks. Staff and governors receive regular training about safeguarding and child protection issues and are well aware of the importance of their roles in protecting pupils.

The school's work in promoting community cohesion is good. It has built up effective links with the local community, which it uses well to develop pupils' understanding of different types of people, and also of shared community values. However, pupils' appreciation of the diversity of cultures and beliefs in the wider national community is not quite as well developed as their understanding of the range of cultures and beliefs in other countries.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>



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<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children really enjoy their first two years at school and make consistently good or better progress because teaching caters exceptionally well for their needs. Parents value the quality of education the school provides for their children. The comment by the parent of a child in the Reception Year aptly summed up the outstanding quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage: 'My child is generally excited to attend school and usually shares his lessons with us at home'.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding and ensure the needs of all pupils are fully met. Meticulous records of their progress are kept and are used very effectively to plan work for children. Nothing is left to chance. Welfare is given the highest priority and, as a result, children say they feel extremely safe and know they can get help if they are worried about anything.

The Nursery and Reception classrooms and workspaces are colourful and welcoming places which provide stimulating and rich learning environments. Children behave very well and display high levels of independence. They enjoy role play, especially when it involves working in the 'Hospital and Fire Station', which is currently proving to be very popular. Children respond enthusiastically to 'emergencies' and provide a high level of care for 'hospital patients'. Progress in their personal, social and emotional development is outstanding and from this early age, children are prepared exceptionally well for transfer into Year 1. They benefit from the excellent example set by older pupils and very high expectations of their teachers. Teaching is outstanding, especially the teaching of letters and sounds, writing and numeracy. Although a secure outdoor area is used to help children build up the skills associated with outdoor learning and play, it is not up to the standard of the Early Years Foundation Stage classrooms. The school is aware of the need to develop the outdoor learning area so that it fully complements the excellent indoor provision.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

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## Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of the parents who returned the questionnaires or who were spoken to by inspectors hold very positive views about the school. Most parents who responded agreed with all the statements on the questionnaire. Several parents commented favourably about the caring ethos of the school and almost all thought that the quality of teaching was good. Their responses included several very positive comments, such as, 'We feel Epsom Downs is a happy, vibrant and well-managed school where every child matters'. Very few parents expressed any concerns. A few parents felt the school did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour and a very small number felt the school did not always take their views into account. Inspectors considered these comments and judged that the school deals with unacceptable behaviour well and takes parents views into account on a regular basis.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Epsom Downs 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 102 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 363 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	69	29	28	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	73	72	29	28	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	53	52	45	44	1	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	58	37	36	2	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	65	64	37	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	56	43	42	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	68	67	30	29	0	0	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)	47	46	48	47	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	48	51	50	0	0	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	44	44	43	6	6	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	42	52	51	2	2	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	58	57	43	42	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	61	39	38	0	0	1	1

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"><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.**



22 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Epsom Downs Primary School, Epsom, KT18 5RJ

Thank you for welcoming us to your school the other day. Everyone was very friendly and we enjoyed talking to you about what you like the most about school and seeing you all working hard in lessons. We were also impressed by the way you care for the school's goats and chickens and how you grow your own vegetables in the school's garden. We found your school to be a good school and your parents obviously agree.

Here are some of the highlights of your school.

- Children get off to an excellent start during their first two years at school in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- You then achieve well throughout the rest of your time at school.
- Your school takes really good care of you and makes sure that you are all very safe and secure.
- Your teachers try to make lessons interesting to ensure you make good progress.
- You behave well and you are very friendly, caring and polite.
- You have a very good understanding of the importance of making sure you have a healthy lifestyle.
- You enjoy school and you all say that you like your teachers.
- Your headteacher, teachers and governors lead and manage the school well.

We believe your headteacher and teachers can make your school even better. We have asked them to do two things.

- Help you to improve your writing, especially when you write longer pieces of work.
- Make sure that the small minority of pupils who often stay at home when they should be in school attend every day.

Once again, thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school and remember you can help your school to get even better by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Michael Barron

Lead inspector

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