

Charles Darwin Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111053
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	356854
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Joanne Olsson HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debbie Glimond
Headteacher	Mr Adam Croft
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Nine lessons led by nine teachers were observed. Inspectors made several visits to the Early Years Foundation Stage to observe provision. In addition, inspectors visited classrooms to talk to pupils and to observe three intervention programmes being delivered. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, a group of parents and carers, representatives of the governing body, senior leaders and managers and a local authority officer. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding, information about pupils' attainment and progress, the school's improvement plan and pupils' books. They considered the responses to questionnaires from staff, pupils and 147 parents and carers.

- Are current attainment levels being maintained and are all pupils, especially girls, making consistently good progress across the school?
- How effectively is the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities enabling this group to make appropriate progress from their starting points?
- Is the quality of teaching and the use of assessment consistently good enough to secure good pupil progress and further raise standards in all core subjects and in particular in reading?
- Is the role of all leaders, including governors, sufficiently well developed to drive improvements in provision, leading to raised standards in all core subjects?

Information about the school

Charles Darwin is an average-sized school which admits most pupils from its immediate locality. Most pupils are from White British heritage. A small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly similar to the national average; however, the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is lower than average. Pupil numbers have stabilised in recent years and the number of pupils who move into and out of the school throughout the year is similar to other schools. The school has received a number of awards, including Activemark, National Healthy Schools status and the Inclusion Chartermark. The Beagle pre-school is housed in the school building. This provision, which is not managed by the governing body, is subject to a separate inspection. The latest report is available on the Ofsted website.

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

Charles Darwin is a good school. It has some outstanding features, such as the exceptional care and support it provides for pupils and the extremely strong engagement with parents, carers and other partners to support the learning and well-being of all pupils. This welcoming and harmonious school has improved considerably since the last inspection. Strong leadership and a shared drive and determination among the school community have led to better teaching and good outcomes for pupils. Warm relationships, consistently good behaviour and positive pupil attitudes enable pupils to fully live up to their school motto. Charles Darwin clearly is a school, 'where learning is a joy'.

Although most children enter Reception with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age, their skills in calculating numbers and their letter-sound knowledge is lower than expected. They make good progress across the school and leave Year 6 with attainment levels that match the national average. Pupils' achievement in English is strong because pupils' writing skills are well developed. In contrast, pupils perform less well in reading. Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in the average attendance figures, which have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils' well developed personal qualities and their enthusiasm for learning make a positive contribution to their good social, moral and spiritual development. They have a well developed sense of their own culture but their knowledge of other cultures is limited. Secure basic skills, average attendance and positive attitudes mean pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next phase of their school career. However, as the school recognises, the opportunities for pupils to apply their skills across all areas of learning are underdeveloped.

Pupils make good progress across the school because teaching is consistently good. In most lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lively and relevant activities which capture the pupils' interest and make their learning meaningful and fun. Pupil activities are matched correctly to the needs of all pupils, so all groups, including girls and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.

The headteacher, ably assisted by an increasingly strong leadership team, has been relentless in driving forward improvement. As a result, all the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection have been successfully tackled. Pupils' achievement is good and the quality of the school's care, guidance and support to pupils is better than at the last inspection. This good track record of improvement coupled with the rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school contribute to the school's good capacity to secure further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress in reading by:

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- raising the profile of reading across the whole school so it has a similar focus to writing
 - embedding current assessment systems to identify precise targets for improvement
 - using guided reading sessions more effectively to teach reading skills while encouraging pupils to read for a purpose and for pleasure.
- Provide greater opportunities for pupils to use their secure basic skills in writing and mathematics across the full range of curriculum subjects.

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

Pupils enjoy their lessons. They work hard and apply themselves well. Their good attitudes to learning and consistently good behaviour make a significant contribution to their good progress. In a Year 6 English lesson pupils participated in a drama activity with relish, working cooperatively to act out scenes using appropriate voices. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, there was excellent collaboration between pupils as they discussed and explored multiplication problems. These pupils were able to identify the challenges in their work and the strategies they were using to overcome them. Such activities enable pupils to become confident and independent learners who are prepared to persevere even when they find tasks demanding.

Pupils' academic achievement is good overall. In 2010, attainment and progress in Key Stage 2 improved and was higher than at the previous inspection. Good progress in writing and mathematics resulted in broadly average attainment in English and mathematics. Although attainment in Key Stage 1 fell slightly in 2010, it remains in line with the national average. Across the school, pupils make slower progress in reading because there are inconsistent opportunities for them to read for purpose and pleasure. Nonetheless, work in lessons, in books and the school's own information on pupil progress show that pupils are making good progress overall. The achievement gap between boys and girls is reducing. Intervention programmes are used very effectively to support pupils who are not making the expected progress and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result there is little difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils.

Different groups of pupils say they feel safe at all times in school and that instances of bullying are rare. All pupils are confident any issues or concerns they have are quickly resolved by school staff. They have a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle and know the dangers associated with smoking and the misuse of alcohol and drugs. Pupils are proud of their school and keen to contribute towards its success by acting as monitors, school councillors and buddies to younger children. They make a good contribution towards the wider community through their strong links with local schools.

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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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Positive relationships result in pupils feeling safe, confident and ready to tackle new challenges. Teachers use assessment information well to plan activities which meet the needs of all pupils. In the best lessons, teachers have very high expectations and use their strong subject knowledge to provide a good level of challenge and opportunities for pupils to learn independently. In these lessons, the pace of learning is brisk because classroom routines are well established and time is used effectively. In the small minority of less effective lessons, teachers' instructions lack clarity or tasks set for pupils are not sufficiently demanding. Throughout the school pupils' work is thoroughly marked and their efforts are affirmed. In English and mathematics books, teachers provide clear guidance to pupils about what they need to do to improve their work.

The creative curriculum is successfully linking subjects together to provide more relevant and enjoyable activities for all pupils, although the opportunity for pupils to fully extend their skills in reading, writing and mathematics is not fully embedded. The successful emphasis on writing is reflected in the quality and quantity of work produced by pupils of all ages. A greater emphasis on developing pupils' letter-sound knowledge in Key Stage 1 is beginning to have a positive impact on younger pupils' reading skills. Although time is allocated to reading in Key Stage 2, it is not always used to maximum effect.

Consequently, the opportunities for pupils to extend their skills and to read for purpose and pleasure are inconsistent across the school. The good range of visits and visitors to

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the school, in addition to the well-attended extra-curricular activities effectively enhance pupils' learning experiences.

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are exceptional. Very good use is made of external partners and agencies to support pupils' learning and well-being. The school is alert to any barriers pupils may have in their learning. In partnership with parents and carers they ensure appropriate support is provided to overcome any challenges. This is true for pupils of all abilities, as the school strives to provide additional support to the most-able pupils to ensure they make the progress of which they are capable. Arrangements for inducting new arrivals and for transition are very strong. The dual focus on learning and well-being mean pupils are well prepared and settle quickly into their new environment. Secure systems to monitor pupils' attendance and punctuality have been successful in improving attendance rates across the school. Targeted support and intervention with parents and carers has led to a rapid improvement in the attendance rates for those pupils with the highest levels of absence.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong leadership. His ambition for the school is shared by the school community. As a consequence, there is a common sense of purpose and a shared commitment to improving the school further. Activities to monitor the effectiveness of the school are regular and rigorous leading to accurate self-evaluation. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well. Plans for school development are sharply focused on accurate priorities. Members of the governing body provide effective management, offering good levels of support and challenge to school leaders and managers through their well-developed role in monitoring the work of the school.

Very positive relationships with parents and carers are enhanced through good systems of communication and regular opportunities for them to share their views. Strong provision for adult learning ensures parents and carers are confident in supporting their child's learning at home. The school makes excellent use of other partners to support and enhance the learning and well-being of all pupils. For example, specialist teachers from the high school have enriched the opportunities for physical activity and for pupils to learn a variety of modern foreign languages. In addition, a link with a local supermarket is supporting pupils' understanding of healthy eating.

The systems for keeping pupils safe are good. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers agree the school keeps pupils safe. Thorough systems to monitor the academic achievement of all pupils are effective in ensuring equality of opportunity. Any gaps

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between groups are promptly identified and swift action is taken to ensure all pupils make the progress of which they are capable. All forms of discrimination are tackled appropriately. The school is a very cohesive community. Strong links with a neighbouring special school and recently forged partnerships with a school in South Africa provide some opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge of different religions and cultures. This work is having a satisfactory impact in promoting community cohesion.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children join the Early Years Foundation Stage what they know and what they can do is generally typical for their age, apart from their letter-sound knowledge and their skills in calculating, which are lower than expected. Children get off to a flying start and make good progress in all areas of their learning.

Children make good progress because they receive good quality teaching and learning opportunities. Planning is thorough and takes good account of children's interests and needs. Children are curious and confident learners who can work and play well with other children. Their behaviour is consistently good and they show respect and consideration to adults and to each other. They enjoy the learning opportunities available to them. This was very apparent in their delight and amazement as the eggs in the incubator began to hatch and a chick appeared! The outdoor environment has improved since the previous inspection. Most of the outdoor learning opportunities are purposeful but there is still some work to be done to ensure this provision is as sharply focused as the activities provided indoors.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader provides strong leadership and management to a cohesive team. Adults work seamlessly to support children's learning. The systematic assessment of children's progress and the well-developed Learning Journeys ensure

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provision is matched accurately to the needs of each individual. There are effective links with the pre-school which contribute to the strong procedures for induction and transition into Reception. Good links have been established with parents and carers through effective communication and partnership work. Policies and procedures are adhered to by all adults and appropriate steps are taken to safeguard children.

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

Almost all parents and carers who returned questionnaires are happy with their children's overall experience of school and all consider their children are kept safe. The overwhelming majority feel their children are happy at school and that teaching is good. Parents and carers were supportive of other aspects of the school's work. A few were not so content with the manner in which unacceptable behaviour is dealt with and a very small number did not feel that the school took account of their suggestions or concerns. Inspectors looked at these concerns carefully by observing pupils at work and play, by talking to pupils, parents and carers and by scrutinising school documentation. The findings from these activities are included within this report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Charles Darwin 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 147 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 223 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	95	65	47	32	3	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	100	68	46	31	0	0	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	90	61	54	37	1	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	100	68	41	28	3	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	104	71	41	28	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	91	62	55	37	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	41	84	57	1	1	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)	74	50	65	44	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	90	61	53	36	3	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	64	44	63	43	9	6	7	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	58	39	78	53	7	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	94	64	48	33	3	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	99	67	44	30	1	1	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 all 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



18 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Charles Darwin Community Primary School, Northwich, CW8 1BN

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we recently came to inspect your school. All of the team found it a pleasure to talk with you, to look at your work and listen to views about your school. We consider Charles Darwin to be a good school. These are the main things we found out about your school.

- You make good progress in writing and mathematics and your attainment is average.
- You enjoy school; feel very safe and trust the adults who care for you.
- You have very good attitudes to learning; you behave well and are enthusiastic about all of the activities you do in school during the day and in the after-school clubs.
- Teachers are good at making your learning interesting and fun.
- Teachers mark your work regularly and help you to improve.
- The headteacher and staff provide very good care, guidance and support to help you learn and be happy at school.

In order to make your school even better we have asked the governing body to work with the headteacher and staff to focus on a few key areas. We have asked them to help you make better progress in reading by giving you more occasions to read and use books in your work. We have also asked them to provide more opportunities for you to use your skills in reading, writing and mathematics across other subjects.

We are sure that with such positive personal qualities you will help your teachers and headteacher to further improve the school. Please accept our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Olsson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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