

Dalmain Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100677
Local Authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	323326
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Thrusell

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	340
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Mary Lindsay
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Booth
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Grove Close Brockley Rise London SE23 1AS
Telephone number	020 8699 2675
Fax number	020 8291 4546

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Dalmain Primary School is larger than average. Pupils come from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, with White British, Caribbean and Black African being the largest groups. Almost a third of pupils have a home language other than English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is about twice the national average. A very high proportion of pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These pupils have a range of needs including speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the normal starting time is high. The school has gained a number of awards including Healthy School and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Dalmain Primary is a good school. It has some outstanding features. The very highly dedicated headteacher, greatly admired by parents, is supported by an outstanding governing body and a committed leadership team and staff. Together they ensure an extremely high level of care for pupils so that everyone is fully included in the life of the school, whatever their ability or background. Excellent links with parents, the community and outside agencies effectively contribute to this. Parents greatly appreciate the lengths to which the school goes to support both its pupils and their families. As one parent commented, 'We have found the staff to be very caring and supportive of both children and adults'. An outstanding curriculum, focused strongly on both the personal and educational needs of pupils, ensures an excellent level of personal development and good academic achievement. Pupils fully enjoy their time at school and express their great pride in belonging to Dalmain. This is shown in the much improved rate of attendance, which is now above average. This has been brought about by the concerted efforts of the school to improve both this and pupils' punctuality. Pupils particularly enjoy the very wide range of well-attended clubs provided for them and the opportunities to be a part of the school's strong musical tradition. Sport also features strongly in their enjoyment and pupils talk eagerly of the 'pen', a purpose-built and enclosed sports area used by both the school and the community. Pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes contribute to the progress they make in their learning. Pupils achieve well. From their below-average starting points in Year 1, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards by the end of Key Stage 1 are average. They have risen steadily in the last few years, more recently in writing, which is a current focus for school improvement. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. They have risen following a dip in 2008, with a considerable improvement in writing over the last year. Despite this level of achievement, there is some inconsistency in the progress made by pupils across the school towards the challenging end-of-year targets set for them. Teachers are accurate in their assessments of pupils' learning and progress. They recognise the different levels at which pupils are working, including those identified as more able or as having learning difficulties. As a result, they are becoming more skilled at identifying what pupils need to learn next to ensure that good progress is maintained. Nevertheless, some teaching is not sufficiently focused on the progress that pupils are making when planning the next steps in their learning, so that progress slows. The school is generally accurate in its self-evaluation, which involves all members of the school community. As a result, the right areas for improvement are identified and recognised by all. For example, the school identified where further improvements were needed in writing. There are now more opportunities for role play, drama and writing in different subjects. This has helped to extend the range of writing and improve its content and vocabulary. As a result, standards are rising and boys are starting to catch up with the girls. Although the quality of teaching and learning is regularly monitored and evaluated by leaders, and areas for development identified, insufficient attention has sometimes been paid to the progress made by pupils when making judgements on the quality of teaching. Given the school's very strong determination for continuing development, it has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Nursery and Reception classes provide a happy and very safe environment for children, which is well led and managed. There are well-established induction arrangements for all Nursery

children, which include a home visit. Parents and children have further opportunities to visit before starting in Reception. This ensures that children settle well into the setting and quickly gain in confidence. Many of the children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills, knowledge and understanding below the levels expected for their age. They thoroughly enjoy the challenging and interesting activities created for them in the bright and stimulating environment. Outdoor activities, such as the range of climbing apparatus, are particularly good and develop all of the areas of learning, a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff work hard to develop the personal, social and emotional areas of learning as well as language and communication. Children quickly develop independent learning skills. The majority of teaching is good, with some very good use of support staff to enhance and develop pupils' learning and acquisition of spoken English. Staff establish very good relationships with children and foster an excellent level of care. These qualities inspire confidence in parents who have opportunities for daily contact with staff. In Reception, there are daily opportunities for children to develop their reading and writing skills. However, more focused opportunities for children of different abilities are too infrequent and therefore reduce the rate of progress in these areas. Children make good progress in the Nursery. There is a regular programme of focused assessment, which shows children's progression in the different areas of learning throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is being developed further in the Nursery to help identify children's starting points more clearly and the progress made before they enter Reception. Children continue to make good progress in Reception, with the majority working securely towards the expected learning goals as they enter Year 1. A substantial minority are below the expected level for their age in emotional development, writing and calculation.

What the school should do to improve further

- In order to raise standards, ensure that teachers maintain a focus on the progress pupils are making and the levels at which they are working when planning the next steps in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 6, overall standards are broadly average. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress, due to the high level of support they receive. The considerable number of pupils who join the school beyond the normal starting points are quickly assessed and integrated into the school, so that they also make good progress. Pupils in Year 6 receive additional well-focused support, which is helping to accelerate their progress towards the levels predicted for them. In Year 5, the more able pupils also benefit from further support in writing and mathematics. A dip in standards at the end of Year 6 in 2008 resulted partly from weaknesses in analysing information on progress. This is being addressed, along with effective actions to raise achievement and standards. In mathematics, there is a strong focus on written and mental calculation. In some lessons observed during the inspection, it was evident that pupils are becoming more confident in selecting and using a range of calculation strategies. Training for all staff in teaching sounds and letters has resulted in a systematic approach to teaching these skills, contributing to improvements in reading and writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school goes out of its way to build up pupils' confidence and self-esteem so that they value their own and others' achievements and their various cultural backgrounds. Pupils really enjoy coming to school and respond with enthusiasm saying, 'The school environment is really safe because the teachers and support staff resolve problems and help us with our learning'. Behaviour is excellent and any issues are dealt with appropriately. Strategies, such as anger management and nurture groups, are very effective and 'zone park players' help to resolve problems in the playground. Pupils learn to take responsibility and make an excellent contribution to the life of the school. The school council and eco warriors are involved in decision-making and have initiated improvements such as energy saving, recycling and reward systems. Pupils reach out to the wider community and are involved in charitable fundraising, collaborative work with other schools and schools abroad. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of keeping fit and healthy, enjoying the new 'pen' area for sport and growing a range of vegetables and herbs. This is recognised in several national awards. Given their progress in acquiring basic skills and this level of personal development, pupils are well prepared for their future life and learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Although good overall, the quality of teaching and learning is variable, but with some outstanding practice. Teachers' good relationships with pupils contribute to the effective management of lessons and pupils' eagerness to learn. Interactive whiteboards are used well to enliven and support teaching and learning. They are used to show pupils what they are going to be learning and the points by which they can check and evaluate how well they are doing. Opportunities for self-assessment are proving to be especially effective in improving writing, where pupils are shown how to look critically at the structure and content of their work. Lessons generally provide good opportunities for pupils to talk about their work and to develop their ideas and understanding. In a minority of lessons, planned activities do not take sufficient account of the progress pupils are making and the different levels at which they should be working. Consequently, they are not all fully involved in learning and some lose interest in what they are doing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum effectively meets the needs of all pupils, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who are gifted and talented. Additional sports training and courses for young musicians encourage pupils who are talented in these areas. The school is progressing extremely well in developing a skills-based, creative curriculum that is adapted to pupils' needs and interests. This is providing more interesting and purposeful learning experiences, with good opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their different skills, including their literacy, numeracy and computer skills. In the process, it is carefully considering pupils' views. Their comments show how much they value this. One boy said it made him feel, 'motivated and determined to learn'. Artwork and displays around the school show how the

curriculum fully reflects cultural diversity. Pupils experience a wide range of activities and special events including trips, for example to the Science and Imperial War Museums in Year 5 and the residential trip to the Isle of Wight in Year 6. Pupils benefit immensely from the visitors in school, particularly the theatre group 'Punchdrunk' who led a major project, exploring a story and enhancing creative writing and speaking and listening across the school. The wide and popular range of extra-curricular activities, such as homework, cooking, football, drama, music, astronomy and art clubs, further support pupils' achievement and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils are rightly proud of their school which provides a highly caring and respectful ethos. Systems to ensure pupils' health and safety are securely in place. The enhanced system for tracking progress is developing well and is enabling the school to quickly identify where pupils are not making the expected progress and to organise additional support. Pupils who have speech, language and communication difficulties or other complex learning needs respond enthusiastically to the extremely good range of support they are given from the highly skilled learning mentor and the special needs coordinator. Those who speak English as an additional language are equally well supported. Excellent links with outside agencies contribute to this very high level of support. Pupils are set their own curriculum targets to aim for. They understand their purpose in showing them how to improve their work. These are regularly reviewed, shared with pupils, their parents and carers, and are helping to raise achievement and standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

School improvement is driven by strong, very effective leadership from the headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team. The school is highly inclusive and successfully ensures equal opportunities for all pupils. They are set challenging end-of-year targets and teachers plan work accordingly. New tracking systems enable the progress of all pupils to be carefully monitored and show that all groups make similar but variable progress between year groups. Teachers are accountable for the progress pupils make towards these targets as part of their performance management. The school's systems for monitoring and evaluating of the quality of teaching and learning have helped to improve lesson planning, the quality of marking and the management of lessons, but have not paid sufficient attention to the progress made by pupils when forming judgements. Governors are very supportive and have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are extremely well aware of the importance of safeguarding issues and fully prepared to challenge the school on its performance. An exceptional strength is the way the school has developed very strong links with the local community and considered the impact of these in drawing different groups together and developing pupils' tolerance and understanding of them. There are also developing links with communities further afield, including a school in Australia.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

03 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dalmain Primary School, London, SE23 1AS

On behalf of your inspectors, I am writing to let you know what we found when we visited your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection. We spoke with some of you during our visit and you were always interesting to talk to, extremely polite and helpful. You spoke very enthusiastically about enjoying school and all of the things in which you take part. Dalmain Primary is a good school. It has some excellent features. We liked these things the most.

- Children get a good start to school in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- You work hard in lessons and your behaviour is excellent.
- You are rightfully proud of your school and all the excellent opportunities that are provided.
- The school values and respects each one of you and makes sure that you are all extremely safe and well looked after.
- Those of you who find learning difficult or are new to learning English are given very good quality help.
- You thoroughly enjoy school and are all extremely keen to keep fit and eat the right things.
- You are very keen to take on responsibilities and want to make the school even better and more environmentally friendly.
- Your headteacher is doing an excellent job; she is well supported by all staff and especially the governors.

We have asked the school to improve on one area of its work.

- Teachers must ensure that they look closely at how well you are doing in lessons when planning what you need to learn next. Work needs to be just right for each one of you, neither too difficult nor too easy. This will ensure that you all make the best progress possible in your learning.

We did enjoy visiting your school and watching you learn. Yours faithfully

Peter Thrussell

Lead Inspector