

Downhills Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132252
Local Authority	Haringey
Inspection number	360418
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Chris Kessell

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	463
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Share
Headteacher	Leslie Church
Date of previous school inspection	13 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 18 lessons, observing 15 teachers. They also held meetings with members of the senior leadership team, other staff, governors and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including health and safety and safeguarding information, assessment and tracking data, the school development plan, school policies, monitoring reports and pupils' work. Inspection questionnaires were analysed, including 136 from parents and carers, 20 from members of staff and 110 from pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas:

- learning and progress, to assess whether they were improving securely and rapidly
- whether all pupil groups, especially those identified by the school as causing concern, were making sufficient progress
- the effectiveness of the school's actions to improve the overall quality of teaching and whether improvements can be sustained
- the extent of the school's current priorities in driving and sustaining improvement.

Information about the school

Downhills Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. Pupils come from a wide range of minority-ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are those from Caribbean, Bangladeshi, African, Gypsy Roma and Eastern European backgrounds. A large majority of pupils speak English as an additional language and over 40 languages are spoken at the school. A significant proportion of pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. A high number of pupils enter or leave the school other than at the normal times of the year. An average percentage of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a

Nursery and two Reception classes. The school has achieved Healthy Status and Active Mark.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could be reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to attainment in English and mathematics.

Attainment has been consistently low in the school for many years and there is evidence of underachievement in the past. Standards in English and mathematics are well below average in Year 6 and pupils' writing has been a particular weakness. Although there have been improvements since the previous inspection, for example in the quality of teaching, improvement is taking time to embed. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and this is leading to improvements in pupils' learning and progress. However, there are inconsistencies in teaching. This means there is not enough good teaching to ensure that all pupils make the good progress they need to improve their attainment sufficiently. The academic guidance provided for pupils is variable. Pupils are not always given work that is appropriate to their level of understanding. Consequently, they can find their work either too easy or too hard. More-able pupils are especially affected by this. Not all teachers follow the school's agreed policy and so their marking

does not consistently help pupils to improve their work. Target setting for pupils is ineffective and is not making a significant contribution to pupils' learning.

Teachers have good relationships with pupils. Pupils' behaviour is good, and they are enthusiastic about learning and enjoy school. School leaders have worked successfully with community groups to improve attendance. Despite still being well below average, levels of attendance are improving rapidly as a result of the school's hard work in this area.

Pastoral care, guidance and support are strengths of the school. This is reflected in the pupils' strong sense of well-being. They feel safe at school and know there is someone they can turn to if they have any issues or concerns. The support provided to pupils who face challenging circumstances is especially effective, and pupils who join school in the middle of term settle in quickly. Good work has been undertaken to extend the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum into Year 1. Although, children are still some way off attaining the expected goals for their age by the end of the Reception Year. However, higher up the school, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunity to develop their literacy skills in subjects across curriculum.

◆ Leadership and management are satisfactory. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully and regular pupil progress meetings are successfully used to identify individuals or groups who might require extra support and help. Consequently, senior staff, subject leaders and teachers know exactly how everyone is doing. This improved focus is starting to have an impact and, in parts of the school where teaching is most effective, pupils' progress and learning is accelerating. Self-evaluation is accurate and senior staff and governors have a secure and realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Although teaching is monitored and evaluated, senior staff rightly acknowledge that they need to monitor teaching more rigorously to ensure consistency of practice. Recent improvements in attendance, areas of accelerated progress and accurate self-evaluation indicate that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment across the school and the quality of pupils' learning and progress through improving teaching so that the great majority of lessons are good by February 2012 by:
 - improving teachers' use of assessment information so that pupils' individual needs are always taken into account when planning lessons

- providing more challenging work for the more-able pupils
- following agreed school policies for academic guidance, especially marking.
- Improve target setting with pupils, and their involvement in learning, by:
 - ensuring that the agreed target setting guidance is used in all classes for English and mathematics
 - clearly explaining to pupils the importance of their targets and the relevance to their learning.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in other subjects of the curriculum.
- Extend the current monitoring and evaluation procedures with more regular checks to ensure that the quality of teaching becomes more consistent.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

Children start school with low levels of attainment. Pupils are working at levels well below those expected nationally at both key stages. This is despite improvement in the number of pupils who reached expected levels at Year 6 for 2010. Pupils' achievement is inadequate because learning and progress are not improving quickly enough. Senior leaders have worked hard to raise standards by introducing appropriate strategies for tracking pupils' progress. This has led to some success, and a number of pupils are making good progress. In a Year 2 numeracy lesson, for example, pupils successfully developed their understanding of division because good attention was paid to pupils' individual needs. Talented mathematicians were given individual work, while lower-attaining pupils were effectively supported by other adults. Although this kind of lesson is becoming more typical, there are still a number of classes where inadequate attention is paid to pupils' individual needs. Inspection evidence from lesson observations did not identify any particular group of pupils who were doing less well than others, although there were occasions when pupils who are more-able could have been challenged more. School leaders have identified several groups that require additional support, such as those from Turkish and Gypsy Roma backgrounds and as a result, they make satisfactory progress, as do other pupils who speak English as an additional language. Meetings with parent groups, home learning sessions and steadily improving attendance are beginning to address previous underachievement. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making the same progress as their peers because they are provided with effective support.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles, which reflects the school's Healthy Status and Active Mark awards. They like taking on responsibilities as school council members and developing links with charities. Pupils successfully develop wider social skills and personal qualities such as working in teams and organising activities. They participate in enterprise activities such as selling vegetables grown in the school garden. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well together and they show confident and mature behaviour.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	4
Pupils' attainment ¹	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	3
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:	4
Pupils' attendance ¹	
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?

The quality of teaching is variable across the school. This inconsistency prevents pupils' learning and progress from being good. Teachers' expectations are sometimes too low, especially for more-able pupils. As a result, a few lessons lack sufficient challenge because work is not consistently matched to pupils' abilities. Many pupils do not know how to improve their work because marking is too variable. It does not relate closely

enough to what pupils need to do to move to the next stage of their learning. When marking is effective, not only is it supportive but it also provides good advice on how to improve. School leaders have developed a new marking policy but this is not yet being followed by all teachers. Teaching assistants' contribution to pupils' learning is satisfactory. Where they are deployed well, they make a good contribution to the learning of small groups of pupils and individuals.

Provision in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. The school's leaders have understandably focused on these two subjects because of the history of low attainment. However, pupils are not always provided with sufficient opportunities to develop their literacy skills in other subjects. Occasionally, activities presented to them in their topic work are low-level tasks such as colouring worksheets. School leaders have worked effectively to improve the science curriculum after disappointing standards were achieved in this subject last year. Pupils are provided with opportunities to learn French and their art work is of good quality. An appropriate range of extra-curricular activities enhances pupils' experience of school.

Good procedures for the care, guidance and support of pupils ensure that they are kept very safe. Work with pupils who find school challenging, and their families, is especially strong. Leaders can provide many examples of where the school has made a significant impact in overcoming barriers to education. Learning mentors are held in high regard by pupils because of the good quality advice and guidance they provide. The monitoring and promoting of better attendance has had a good impact.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher works with the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher to satisfactorily lead the drive for improvement. The subject leaders for English and mathematics have a secure understanding of what needs to improve to raise standards

further and good ideas about bringing about improvement. School improvement planning clearly identifies what needs to be done to improve pupils' achievement and the quality of provision. Although the monitoring of teaching has improved, with checks on the quality of lessons, learning and progress are not yet improving rapidly enough.

The governing body fulfils its statutory duties satisfactorily. They attend lessons and are ambitious for the school but rely too heavily on the leadership team to gain a full understanding of the work of the school. Governors are now providing more challenge to the school about the standards of pupils' work. The senior managers, supported by all staff, satisfactorily promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination across all aspects of the school's work. They now use the information they have on different groups of pupils to evaluate their performance. School leaders have been successful in improving the performance of some individuals and groups, although more-able pupils are not always challenged effectively. Effective procedures for safeguarding are in place and good attention is paid to pupils' safety. The school has robust procedures and policies for protecting pupils. Links with parents and carers are good, reflecting the school's supportive and friendly ethos. Parents speak highly of the school and appreciate, for example, the classes the school runs to support home learning. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily. International links have been developed in Sierra Leone, as well as links with other local communities in London. Work with other communities within the United Kingdom is more limited. The school is a very cohesive community and diversity is celebrated.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

There have been a number of improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage since the school's previous inspection, especially in provision and in leadership and management. The majority of children are at the early stages of learning English when they start school. Children make satisfactory progress overall but do well in their personal, social and emotional development and developing their early language skills. Although children are still some way off attaining the expected goals for their age by the end of the Reception Year, it is a rapidly improving picture because of good leadership and management. Closer attention is now being paid to those areas of learning where children have been less successful in the past. The learning environment has improved significantly since the previous inspection, especially the outdoor provision. As a result, classrooms are more welcoming and interesting and children enjoy their learning. Positive relationships between children and adults are reflected in good standards of behaviour. Learning opportunities are broad, balanced and stimulating. Occasionally, more attention could be paid to individuals' needs, especially in the teaching of the sounds that letters and words make (phonics). Good work has been undertaken to improve the transition from Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1. This is a recent initiative and it is too early to judge the impact overall. However, initial findings indicate it is improving pupils' achievement.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The parental questionnaire responses were mainly positive about the school, as were additional written comments. 'My child is very happy and secure at the school', 'My child has settled really well' and 'Downhills is a very caring school' are typical comments, and these views are supported by inspection evidence. A few parents felt that their children

were not making enough progress and that the school does not deal with unacceptable behaviour effectively. Inspectors found that there were inconsistencies in pupils' learning and progress and looked at behaviour closely. This is reported upon elsewhere in the report. Parents' positive views, such as those supporting pupils' enjoyment and safety at school, are supported by inspection evidence.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Downhills 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 136 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 463 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	84	62	46	34	5	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	70	51	57	42	4	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	73	54	56	41	6	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	43	63	46	13	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	40	69	51	6	4	3	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	63	46	61	45	9	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	37	81	60	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)	45	33	62	46	8	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	35	70	51	9	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable	54	40	63	46	11	8	0	0

behaviour								
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	50	37	72	53	7	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	64	47	62	46	5	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	76	56	43	32	10	7	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 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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)
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Type of school	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: 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.

- 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.



28 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Downhills Primary School, London N15 4AB

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when we visited your school recently. This letter is to let you know what we found during our visit. You are well behaved and know how important it is to live healthy lifestyles. The adults at the school make sure

you are all safe. They take good care of you. The school has good relationships with your parents and carers.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to do a number of things to make the school better because it requires significant improvement. This means that inspectors will visit again to see how the school is dealing with these issues. We have asked the school to improve the standards you achieve, especially in English and mathematics. We would like the school's leaders to improve the quality of teaching and provide you with targets for your learning in English and mathematics that you understand and use regularly. We have asked the school to give you more opportunities to use your writing skills in other subjects. We would also like teachers' marking to be more helpful to you in improving your work. Finally, we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to check the quality of teaching more regularly.

You can also help improve standards and your learning and progress by making sure that you all come to school every day and continuing to work hard and always doing your best.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Kessell

Lead inspector

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