

Dartford Primary Academy

York Road, Dartford, Kent DA1 1SQ

Inspection dates

23–24 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive principal has a clear vision for the school and has worked successfully to ensure that pupils are cared for and achieve well.
- Trust leaders and governors provide effective strategic direction. They support the executive principal well in her work to improve the school.
- Teachers and leaders benefit from working with other trust schools and leaders. As a result, they provide pupils with a good standard of education.
- Changes to the teaching of English have engaged pupils well and helped them to make good progress.
- The school's new approach to mathematics has had a positive impact on pupils' learning. Nevertheless, leaders appreciate that this new approach is yet to be fully embedded.
- Teaching is good and is continuing to improve. However, on occasions, some teachers do not adapt learning quickly enough to sustain pupils' focus and ensure that their learning is kept on track.
- Pupils attend regularly and behave well. They show positive attitudes towards their learning. They have positive relationships with each other and with adults.
- Provision for children in the early years is good. Children are safe and happy. They enjoy the good range of interesting activities the school provides.
- Pupils are given clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work and make good progress. Their written work is well presented.
- The school provides good support for the well-being and attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- In some classes, the most able pupils are not consistently challenged as well as they could be.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress. However, these pupils currently attain less well than their peers.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils so that the gap between these pupils' outcomes and those of other pupils diminishes further.
- Strengthen the quality of teaching in order to improve outcomes further by ensuring that:
 - teachers provide more consistent challenge for the most able pupils
 - teachers intervene more rapidly when pupils do not understand their tasks, lose focus or begin to fall behind in their learning
 - the school's new approach to the teaching of mathematics is embedded fully in all classes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders of the Leigh Academies Trust and the executive principal have an ambitious vision for the school, which is shared by staff. They understand the school's strengths and areas where further improvements can be made. For example, during joint observations of teaching and learning with inspectors, leaders were accurate in their analysis of strengths and areas for development.
- School leaders make good use of advice from the trust and external consultants to help them evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has led to well-focused school improvement priorities. As a result, leaders have successfully improved aspects of the school's work, including the teaching of phonics and pupils making better use of their phonics skills to support their reading.
- Leaders analyse the strengths and weaknesses of teaching accurately. They have used performance management effectively to raise the quality of teaching across the school. Where teachers are inexperienced or need additional support, school leaders either provide this themselves or draw on expertise from the trust in order to continue to improve teaching in the school.
- Arrangements for managing the performance of staff are well organised. They ensure that all teachers are held to account for developing the quality of their teaching and for making sure that the pupils they teach make good progress.
- The curriculum is suitably broad. Pupils are able to make connections between different areas of the curriculum, such as the relationship between history lessons and the current book being read in English. There is a commitment to preparing children for the future through supporting their well-being and preparing them for future careers.
- The school's provision for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is well led. Systems and procedures are in place to precisely target intervention and monitor its impact. The pupil premium funding is used efficiently. Funding is reviewed by senior leaders and governors to ensure that it supports individual pupils' needs.
- Leaders provide a range of opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. An understanding of British values, such as respect and tolerance, has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes towards others. The school is a harmonious community where pupils get along well together.
- The school uses sports funding effectively to promote pupils' physical well-being. Pupils are able to experience a variety of sports and engage in competitions with other schools. Teachers are increasing their skills so that their planning and teaching provide pupils with the best possible experiences.
- Most parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire were complimentary about the school's communication, although some felt that they would like more information about ways to support their child's learning.

- The level of support provided by the trust has been instrumental in helping the school to move forward. This includes support with the training and coaching of staff to continue to strengthen teaching and learning.

Governance of the school

- The academy trust is providing challenge and support for school leaders, particularly around what they identify as areas for improvement. They make sure that statutory duties are fulfilled and that there is capacity for further improvement in the school.
- The governing body has made a significant contribution to the school's improvement, and governors articulate an ambitious vision for the school's future. They have a wide range of experience, skills and expertise. They know the school well and have an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas that need further improvement. They check that school leaders' evaluation of their improvement work is realistic.
- The academy trust has provided high-quality professional development for senior leaders and other staff. Through trust collaboration, senior leaders have opportunities to work with and learn from their counterparts in other primary schools.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding record-keeping meets statutory requirements, is up to date and is administered thoroughly. The trust carefully monitors the school's safeguarding practice. School leaders comply with the requirements of safer recruitment.
- Leaders provide significant training for both staff and pupils so that the school remains a safe environment. Staff are diligent in their duties and are attentive to the needs of the pupils. Systems to report concerns are known to all staff. Leaders work well with other agencies and with families to care for pupils.
- Pupils feel safe in school and are taught how to stay safe. They have internet safety weeks, road safety talks and assemblies to support them. Supervision in the playground is good and makes sure that pupils are safe. Parents agree that pupils are safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good because leaders have identified strategies that work well and have trained staff to use these effectively. This is particularly evident in the development of literacy. Leaders identified the need to increase pupils' vocabulary, comprehension and inference skills. Teachers now focus on enriching pupils' language skills. This is leading to improvements in pupils' reading and writing skills.
- Teaching is generally characterised by positive working relationships. Pupils are clear about what is expected of them and comply with requests from staff very quickly. Teachers often make effective use of pupil discussion to develop pupils' understanding.

Pupils respond well to this approach and are able to support the learning of others through sensible dialogue.

- Reading has been a particular focus as, previously, pupils had not always been able to use their phonics skills well when reading. Some pupils had also found it difficult to discuss what they had read. This has been successfully addressed by using a range of activities. More pupils now read for pleasure. In class, high-quality texts are linked to other areas of the curriculum, and support a wider appreciation of literature.
- Phonics teaching has also been a focus for improvement and staff development. Consistent and systematic teaching is now in place. This is allowing younger pupils to develop their phonics skills more rapidly. Pupils are able to use phonics to help them read unfamiliar words. This was very apparent when inspectors read with less-confident readers.
- Mathematics teaching develops basic arithmetical skills and pupils' reasoning abilities. Teachers typically make effective use of a range of resources to support learning. Pupils are given three learning phases to work at in order to allow them to develop their skills at an appropriate level. Nevertheless, leaders acknowledge that the school's new approach to mathematics is not yet fully embedded in some classes. As a result, on occasions, some teachers do not set work that consistently meets the needs of all pupils.
- Teachers usually plan and provide learning activities that interest and engage pupils. However, on occasions, some teaching is not demanding enough for the most able pupils and, as a consequence, some of these pupils do not progress as rapidly as they could. In addition, there are times when some teachers do not intervene quickly when pupils are struggling to maintain their focus and complete their tasks.
- Teachers provide clear explanations of what they want pupils to learn and guidance on how pupils can check how well they are doing. Teachers and teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning. As one pupil commented, 'Teachers will always go over something you don't understand and they don't get mad.'
- Homework is used effectively to support learning. This includes opportunities to practise basic skills, complete projects or use internet resources.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- School leaders have focused on making learning relevant to pupils and helping them to understand how this prepares them for the future. They are actively developing pupils' self-awareness and self-improvement. Leaders are also working with the local secondary schools to strengthen pupils' understanding of the world of work.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. Nevertheless, leaders are aware that a small number of pupils are still too dependent on adult support. Leaders are taking appropriate steps to enable all pupils to develop greater resilience and independence.

- Leaders and staff provide effective support for pupils who need additional support for their social and emotional well-being. This is helping many of these pupils become more successful learners.
- Building works on the key stage 2 site have limited the space for play and have led to a reduction of the number of clubs which can be offered. However, school leaders have managed this change well. They have made sure that pupils can still access wider opportunities, both in the school and with other schools. They maintain effective routines and provide good levels of supervision. Pupils were observed playing well together at break and lunchtime.
- Older pupils are given opportunities to take a lead as peer mentors or house captains. Pupils speak positively about these opportunities and the way they are able to contribute to the school community.
- Parents report that the school is caring and supports them in helping their children. They say that teachers help pupils to become more confident.
- Pupils respect one another's differences and support each other well. Racist incidents are extremely rare. One pupil commented that 'regardless of race, gender or culture – everyone is treated the same in our school.' Pupils do not feel that any bullying takes place. Equally, they know that, if they do have any worries, they can go to an adult who will help them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils and adults have good relationships. Pupils follow instructions, pay attention and are respectful of the opinions of others. They also show pride in their work. In lessons where activities and learning are well planned, pupils are enthusiastic and hard-working. However, on the few occasions when work is either not challenging enough or when teachers do not adapt tasks quickly enough, a small number of pupils lose focus and this adversely affects their learning.
- Behaviour incident logs are well kept. The behaviour policy is used consistently and effectively. Parents and pupils recognise the effectiveness of the systems which are in place to support good behaviour.
- Leaders have used a range of effective strategies to promote good attendance, including the use of a minibus, access to the breakfast club, awards and house points. Most pupils now attend well. Strategies to support the good attendance of pupils who have previously not attended school regularly have been effective. This has led to a significant reduction in the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2017, at the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average. Leaders have introduced a number of well-judged new teaching and support strategies. As a result, the majority of current pupils are making good progress.

- In 2017, at the end of key stage 1, too few pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Current pupils in key stage 1 are making good progress from their different starting points.
- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils in all subject areas. School leaders have improved the support for disadvantaged pupils. Teachers and leaders track the progress of this group and have focused on strategies to improve pupils' learning. This group of pupils are now making better progress. However, these pupils currently attain less well than their peers.
- In recent years, the proportion of pupils who attain the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has declined and was lower than the national average in 2017. Leaders responded to this by changing the way in which phonics is taught. Teachers and support staff have received additional training and the progress of pupils is monitored on a regular basis. More pupils in Year 1 are now on track to achieve the expected standard compared to the previous year.
- Across the school, pupils' progress in English is improving because of the consistently effective teaching. Pupils of different ages can use phonics to sound out unfamiliar words and reading is improving rapidly. Pupils are also now reading for meaning. The school promotes reading well through activities such as reading competitions and the use of stimulating texts which capture the interests of both boys and girls.
- Outcomes in mathematics are improving as a result of the school's new approach to the teaching of mathematics. In the majority of classes, pupils are making good progress.

Early years provision

Good

- In 2017, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development at the end of the early years was close to the national average.
- The new early years leader is supported well by another school in the trust. She has used this support to help her accurately evaluate strengths and weaknesses and implement positive changes. This has led to significant improvements to the outside learning environment and provision for children in Reception.
- A high priority is placed on professional development. Staff work with other settings to check the standards of work and share best practice. All staff are continually seeking ways to improve the early years provision.
- Transition arrangements are well planned so that children can make a good start. Effective links between home and school enable parents to engage with their children's learning.
- In the Nursery and Reception, the atmosphere is calm and purposeful. There are rich opportunities, both in the classroom and outdoors, that excite children and encourage their independence. There is an appropriate balance of self-initiated activities and direct teaching. Staff provide good role models through their use of language and questioning.

- Children in both Reception and Nursery engage well in their learning. Children in the Reception class respond well to their 'rainbow challenges', which encourage them to participate in all areas of learning.
- Adults make regular assessments of children and plan learning in response to this information. Activities are carefully planned and learning is checked frequently to make sure that children are achieving well.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged children is used effectively to make sure that they achieve as well as they should.
- Adults ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed rigorously. All adults are clear about safeguarding procedures. Risk assessments and training are in place. Children are taught how to keep themselves safe in the classroom and beyond.

School details

Unique reference number	141534
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10040895

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	673
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of Trustees	Robert Findlay
Executive Principal	Mrs Karen Major
Telephone number	01322 224 453
Website	www.dartfordprimary.org.uk/
Email address	karen.major@dartfordprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Dartford Primary Academy is larger than the average-sized primary school. It was formed in February 2015 when St Alban's Road Infant and Nursery School joined with York Road Junior Academy. It is a member of Leigh Academies Trust.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is similar to the national average. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Discussions were held with representatives of the Leigh Academies Trust, members of the academy board and the development group of governors. Inspectors also met with the executive headteacher, school leaders and other members of staff. Inspectors took account of the 23 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.
- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classrooms, including joint observations with the executive principal and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work from all year groups and in different subjects, both during visits to classrooms and through a separate work scrutiny.
- Meetings were held with pupils to discuss their learning and gather their views about the school, the curriculum, behaviour, safety and leadership opportunities. Inspectors listened to pupils read and observed pupils in classes and around the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents and policies from the governing body and the trust. Inspectors also considered the school's self-evaluation and improvement documents and information about pupils' learning and progress.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding policies and procedures, including the records of checks on the suitability of staff. Behaviour and attendance records were also reviewed.
- Inspectors took account of the 130 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 53 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered parents' written responses to questionnaires from the school and spoke with parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Ann McCarthy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Peter Wibroe	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Hogarth	Ofsted Inspector

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