

Downsell Primary School

Downsell Road, Leyton, London E15 2BS

Inspection dates

13–14 April 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The interim executive headteacher has brought greater rigour to school leadership. She has strengthened considerably systems for evaluating school performance and planning for improvement.
- Teaching has improved and is now good. Consequently, pupils' outcomes are rising across the school.
- Progress in reading and in writing has risen rapidly because of the carefully planned and structured approach to teaching in both areas.
- The new governing body has strong and robust systems to support its work. These have been established by the school working closely with the national lead for governance.
- Children, particularly those at an early stage of learning English, make good progress in the stimulating early years classes.
- The school uses funding to support disadvantaged pupils well. As a result, attainment gaps with other pupils nationally are narrow in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's position as a 'rights respecting school' underpins much that it does to support the pupils' personal development.
- High standards of behaviour and a desire to learn and be successful mean that the school is calm and orderly, and classrooms are full of purposeful learning.
- The school is successful in creating a safe and secure environment where pupils recognise that everyone has their welfare at heart.
- Promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is deeply embedded in all areas of the school. Staff also focus on ensuring that pupils understand and embrace British values.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The new governing body has not been in place for long enough to show it can fulfil its role fully.
- Not all leaders have the skills to evaluate performance and plan long term in their areas of responsibility.
- Teachers do not always give pupils the opportunity to deepen their understanding of new ideas in mathematics.
- The feedback pupils receive does not consistently meet school policy and give clear guidance on how to improve their work.
- Activities outdoors in the Reception classes do not always support learning inside as much as the interim executive headteacher would like to see.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - all leaders have the skills to evaluate performance in their areas of responsibility so they can plan long-term actions for improvement
 - the new governing body quickly becomes fully effective in undertaking its responsibilities.
- Improve the quality of teaching, and the rate of pupils' progress, by ensuring that:
 - teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding of mathematical ideas
 - feedback to pupils meets school policy fully and enables pupils to improve their work
 - activities in the outside area in the Reception classes support new learning more effectively by linking with what is being taught inside.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The interim executive headteacher has high expectations of staff. She has maintained the drive for high outcomes while making adaptations to procedures to ensure these improvements can be sustained. This includes bringing a sharper focus to long-term planning. She is tightening systems to check the school's performance and using this to focus action sharply and deploy resources effectively.
- School leaders have developed a culture in which the highest standards of behaviour are the norm. Teamwork between staff is strong, enabling them to support each other's teaching and development. Not all leaders have developed the skills to think and work strategically. This is partly because some are new in post while others have not acquired the set of skills needed to interpret evidence and identify priorities for action.
- Checks on the performance of teachers and the progress of pupils in their classes are tightly linked to training and salary progression. Teachers feel very well supported through professional development that meets their needs. Action is quickly taken where improvements in teaching are not rapid enough.
- Partnerships with the local authority and other schools are strong. They have supported improved teaching since the last inspection, brokered the interim leadership arrangements and supported urgently needed changes to governance.
- The curriculum promotes the pupils' academic development well through carefully designed programmes, particularly in reading and writing. It also very strongly supports their personal development. Leaders carefully track the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development so that any gaps can be identified and action taken.
- Promoting British values is at the heart of the school's work. A project run in school by the local authority over five weeks with pupils in Years 5 and 6 focused well on what 'belonging' means and how they can make a difference to their community. Project leaders also tackled concerns that arose with individuals such as about the risks of becoming involved in gangs.
- Each class looks at the various facets of being a 'rights respecting school' before annually writing their own class charter. These themes are often used for discussion in assembly or in class. The outcome is that pupils have grown in confidence as they know they should be respected. They also understand that with rights come responsibilities.
- Sports premium funding is used well and its impact monitored. It enables pupils to be taught skills effectively in physical education and to provide a reasonable range of sports clubs.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The national leader of governance has established rigorous and appropriate procedures by which governors can fulfil their responsibilities. She is already working with the new team to ensure their effective implementation. She has sharpened in particular the mechanisms by which governors hold the leadership of the school to account for outcomes, the quality of teaching and the effective deployment of resources. Training to ensure that governors have key skills such as understanding assessment information is already planned. The new team is led by an experienced governor and includes expertise in key areas such as finance.
 - Governors are fully aware of the good progress made by disadvantaged pupils. As a sign of their commitment, they have instigated a review of pupil premium spending to see if it can have an even greater impact.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have ensured that there is a culture of openness when considering the safety and welfare of all pupils. Effective training means that all staff are very vigilant and aware of the signs to look for when pupils might be at risk. Rigorous checks are undertaken when a pupil leaves so that their whereabouts are known and they are registered at a new school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Pupils fully understand their teachers' high expectations for their work and behaviour. Consequently, learning takes place in calm classrooms where rarely a moment is lost to distractions. The strong sense of purpose accounts for the pupils' good progress as they know they are in school to learn.

- At its most effective, teaching focuses on ensuring that the learning of the most-able pupils is challenged and extended. These pupils are curious and interested in their learning as they are made to think deeply. Pupils learn particularly well when their understanding of new ideas is checked through probing questions that require them to explain their thinking. A significant feature of almost all teaching is the way pupils are expected to learn with and from each other. This might be by discussing answers or taking on different roles when working in groups.
- Teaching of basic reading skills, such as the sounds made by letters and how they can be combined, is good. The teaching of writing is also effective in enabling pupils to develop and improve their work over time before embarking on the finished version.
- Additional adults are deployed well so their support for learning can be maximised. They generally make sure that pupils they work with have to think rather than leading them directly to answers.
- The most effective feedback given to pupils is in Year 6. This enables pupils to see how they can correct mistakes and take their learning forward by responding to their teacher's comments. Marking is regular elsewhere but this aim of school policy is not consistently met beyond Year 6.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop skills of enquiry in mathematics. This is because they do not explore new ideas deeply enough and are not always asked to explain their reasoning when answering questions.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils develop strong moral values. Their attitudes are shaped by the school's position as a 'rights respecting school'. Pupils show great respect and tolerance for differences. They relate to each other very well and value greatly learning about the customs and cultures of others.
- There is a strong ethos of collaborative working throughout the school, which is demonstrated by adults and adopted by pupils. This is successful because of the very strong relationships between pupils. Their support for each other's learning is highly effective. They readily discuss ideas, work productively in groups and constructively offer suggestions about how each other's work can be improved.
- Pupils enjoy school, where they say they feel happy and safe. They learn how to look after themselves including through regular work on anti-bullying and e-safety. Pupils do not see bullying as a problem for them and when any occurs they know it is dealt with swiftly. Learning mentors are seen as people pupils can talk to and confide in if they have any concerns.
- Pupils make a significant contribution to school life through the roles they take on maturely and with pride. Prefects help with the daily running of areas, buddies support those new to the school to settle in, the school council has a say in developments and digital leaders support e-safety.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils work hard and want to do well. They very quickly respond to adult instructions so no learning time is wasted. The school successfully develops resilience in pupils. They know they can learn by their mistakes and so they confidently explore new ideas.
- The pupils' behaviour in lessons, when moving around the school and on the playground is often exemplary. Pupils show great pride in the school environment and take great care in the presentation of their work.
- Pupils are very eager and self-assured when talking about their learning with visitors. They are keen to learn about the world around them. When putting the difference between fact and opinion in context, a Year 6 pupil said, 'We need to understand what is happening in the world like the debate about staying in the European Union.'

Outcomes for pupils are good

- The progress made by pupils has risen considerably since the last inspection and is now consistently good across all subjects and year groups. Consequently, attainment is rising. Most pupils in Year 6 in 2015 were prepared well for secondary school.

- The pupils' progress in writing has risen very quickly since the last inspection. Their work shows they develop the stamina to write extended pieces in a range of styles and increasingly creatively. They apply skills learned to ensure that their work is grammatically correct and their writing becomes neat and in a joined style as pupils move up the school.
- Pupils become keen readers who approach different texts with interest. They develop secure comprehension skills by Year 6 which supports their learning across subjects. Pupils make good progress in understanding the sounds made by letters. They use the skills learned when faced by unfamiliar words and to help with their spelling. This helps them to read fluently and to understand the meaning of texts.
- Pupils develop basic skills of calculation well. They have less secure reasoning skills and are not always able to explain why they have arrived at certain answers. This means they are not always able to apply their skills when presented with challenging or unfamiliar problems.
- The progress of the most-able pupils has improved and is now good. This is because teaching challenges them to think more deeply, particularly in reading and writing. Consequently, increasing numbers of pupils are showing a deeper understanding of new ideas.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has risen since the school's last inspection and is now good. Gaps in attainment with other pupils nationally are narrow and amounted to less than one term in reading and writing and six months in mathematics in 2015.
- Most pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress. This is because their specific needs are carefully identified, sharply focused individual targets set and effective support programmes put in place.
- The sharp focus on developing communication skills means that pupils new to learning English, including newcomers to the school, make similarly good progress to others. There are no patterns to any variations in outcomes for pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds.

Early years provision

is good

- Classrooms across the early years are welcoming, stimulating, and secure inside and out. Children make good progress and attainment by the end of Reception is rising. Children are prepared well for their future learning at key stage 1 in a purposeful and busy setting.
- The lower attainment of boys in the past in writing is being tackled rigorously, including by providing them with incentives to engage in writing. One example is that they have to make a plan of what they want to build and label it before using construction materials. Writing books for all children are now showing consistently strong progress.
- The children's excellent behaviour and desire to explore contributes significantly to their learning. They respond immediately to adults and interact well with each other. They are very respectful, tolerant of others and use resources sensibly. Children are very clear about expectations for their behaviour and how to act safely. When playing as pirates, one boy explained, 'We have to be careful not to hit each other with our swords.'
- The direct teaching of key skills of reading, writing and mathematics is skilfully handled by all adults. They engage children's attention for extended periods of time with a continual focus on the development of their language skills. This is particularly successful in helping children at an early stage of learning English to access all areas of learning and make good progress.
- Leadership is having a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and the children's progress. Accurate assessment information enables adults to identify clearly where support is needed. The school's aim for learning to flow freely between inside and out is met well in the Nursery but not always in Reception. Some activities outside lack a clear learning purpose and do not consistently challenge the most able.

School details

Unique reference number	103044
Local authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10001963
This inspection 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	583
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Doré
Interim executive headteacher	Jill Augustin
Telephone number	020 8556 0103
Website	www.downsellprimary.org
Email address	school@downsellprimary.waltham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 November 2013

Information about this school

- This school is well above average in size compared with other primary schools.
- Almost all pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. This figure is very high.
- More than three quarters of pupils speak English as an additional language. This figure is high.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- Children in the early years provision attend the Nursery part time and the three Reception classes full time.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave part-way through their primary education is higher than in the large majority of primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by funding through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding which, in this school, supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club.
- The substantive headteacher left the school in December 2015. A new headteacher has been appointed to take up the post from September 2016. In the meantime, the school is led by an interim executive headteacher who supports the deputy headteacher for two days each week in her role as head of school.
- A review by the local authority of the previous governing body identified that its members did not have the capacity to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. It was disbanded in March 2016 and a new group established. Its chair has just been elected. It will continue to work in the short term under the guidance of a national leader of governance who has been supporting the governing body since January 2016.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 32 lessons. Senior leaders accompanied inspectors to nine of these. They looked at work in pupils' books from the current academic year.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff and the national leader of governance. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and written contributions from six parents. They also met informally with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors also took account of the 38 responses to the staff questionnaire and 48 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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