

Dulwich Wood Nursery School

Lyall Avenue, London, SE21 8QS

Inspection dates 13–14 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is school that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Children do not achieve strongly enough or make strong enough progress to equip them well for entering the next stage of schooling.
- Not enough teaching is good or better and the activities do not always provide enough chances for the children to develop their language and number skills.
- Activities do not always appeal sufficiently strongly to the children’s imagination and natural curiosity.
- The most-able children are not always encouraged to think, use language or do number work at a high enough level.
- Behaviour is not good because children are not always fully engaged in their learning.
- Leadership has not ensured that the quality of teaching and activities is consistently strong. There have been too few observations of the children’s learning by senior and middle leaders. Adults have not received clear and exacting enough guidance on how to improve.
- Children’s progress is not recorded clearly enough to enable all adults to judge how well the children are doing. The progress of some groups, notably the most able, is not always recorded with sufficient clarity to provide high-quality tailor-made learning for them.

The school has the following strengths:

- The executive headteacher has made an energetic start in identifying what needs to be done and in planning improvements. Plans for the future cover the right priorities.
- Children with a range of additional needs are provided for well.
- The school is popular with parents and carers. Attendance is rising.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed the work of the nursery jointly with the deputy headteacher, and on occasions with the executive headteacher, looking at the children's learning in the indoor and outdoor play areas. She observed the children eating lunch, tidying up and participating in group singing and story-time sessions. She also attended the before- and after-school childcare provision.
- Meetings were held with the executive and deputy headteachers, the latter also being the manager in charge of special educational needs, two representatives of the local authority, and the Chair of the Governing Body, vice chair and one other member. The inspector took account of the views of staff in 11 questionnaires.
- The inspector took account of the 15 responses to Parent View, the online survey of the views of parents and carers, and spoke to a number of parents and carers during the inspection.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including the school's own views of how well it is doing, its plans for the future, information on the children's attainment and progress, safeguarding information and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Natalia Power, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Dulwich Wood Nursery is an average-sized nursery school with a children's centre on site. The children's centre is subject to separate inspection.
- On 1 January 2014, the school and the children's centre federated with a nearby primary school. The executive headteacher has responsibility for the Dulwich Wood Federation. The highest manager with responsibility solely for the nursery school is its deputy headteacher. The nursery school has its own separate governing body.
- The before-school and after-school childcare are managed by the governing body, and both were observed as part of the inspection. There is also provision for children under the age of three, and this is subject to separate inspection.
- Some children attend full time while others attend for varying lengths of time.
- The proportion of children attending the nursery school who are known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than usual.
- Around two thirds of children come from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages, and around a quarter speak English as an additional language. These proportions are higher than average.
- The proportion of children supported through school action is higher than average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to raise children's achievement, improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure that all the adults:
 - seize every opportunity to develop the children's language and number skills whenever they help them with their activities
 - provide more opportunities for children to develop their imagination and experience wonder and awe at the world around them
 - in order to improve behaviour, organise a wider range of activities in the outdoor play area, so that the indoor areas do not become too crowded
 - make sure that the most-able children have many activities that help them to think, understand and use language at the highest possible level for their age.
- Make sure that the new leadership team urgently tackles important areas of the school's work by:
 - keeping a close and rigorous watch over the quality of the teaching, and reporting clearly and often to the adults the best ways of ensuring that the children learn well
 - improving ways of recording how well the children are learning, so that the progress of each child is clearly recorded and available to staff, and so that the progress of groups, particularly that of the most able, can be clearly identified.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children's achievement requires improvement because their learning and progress are not good. They start with varying levels of language, number and social skills which are generally lower than those of others of the same age. Because the quality of the teaching is not strong enough to enable them to make rapid progress, they leave with basic skills that remain below the levels expected for their age.
- During their time at the school, the children adequately learn the rudiments of reading, writing and number work, and begin to learn to get on with one another.
- The most-able children do not always do well enough. Though there is some teaching aimed at higher-attaining learners, it is not sharply enough focused on their needs or challenging enough to enable them to make strong progress in their learning. Taking into account this slight imbalance in the quality of learning of different groups, the school's effectiveness in providing equality of opportunity for all children is not yet entirely secure.
- Children with a range of complex additional needs are well supported by adults trained in developing their speech and language skills. These children are encouraged to use sign language and pictures to aid their understanding and support their language. For example, pictures of sad, happy or tired faces are sometimes used to encourage the children to use words to describe how they are feeling.
- Children from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language receive helpful support, and the experienced coordinator of special educational needs works closely with parents and carers to make sure that difficulties with speaking the language do not mask any wider difficulties children may have.
- Children enjoy looking at picture books as a first step towards reading. There are cosy areas, both indoors and outside, where children feel secure while sharing a book with an adult.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good and pupils do not always make as much progress as they should.
- The most-able children are not always given activities that extend their thinking and language skills sufficiently, and tasks specifically for them are not always demanding enough to promote the highest quality learning.
- Occasionally teaching does not help the children to extend their learning. This is sometimes seen when children are engaged in such practical activities as cutting and sticking or experimenting with water. In such cases, the children are not always encouraged to describe the activity in their own words, or to count objects, or to say whether they are larger or longer than other objects.
- Some activities, however, give the children good opportunities to develop their basic skills. For example, children enjoyed listening to a talk by a paramedic volunteer, and then practising what they had learnt in the role-play area which was fitted out as a hospital. The children were able to learn the names of bones and of medical equipment, and to make marks on paper as a precursor to writing.
- Some activities promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. For example, the inspector observed children being encouraged to act out the Goldilocks story. Here, the enactment of the story was well managed by the teacher and the children were absorbed in their collaborative play. Occasionally, however, children's interest is not fully captured and sustained, and their natural curiosity is then not fully exploited.
- The large outdoor areas provide plenty of chances for the children to test their bodies in

climbing, sliding and digging. However, the activities are not always used imaginatively enough to develop the children's language, number or science skills.

- Scrapbooks for each child containing samples of their work at the school and photographs from home provide a pleasant link between school and home, and give the children something to take away with them when they leave. However, these are no substitute for robust records recording how well each child is making progress. Currently, systems for recording children's progress are not well maintained and it is not always easy to trace how well an individual child is doing over time.
- Children with various conditions causing delay in acquiring speech and language benefit from early diagnosis of their needs and strong support. Therapists use their knowledge and training to provide focused support in small groups. As a result, these children learn well.
- Singing and story groups, led by the class teacher and by the children's key persons, provide an enjoyable winding-down time just before the children are collected by their parents and carers. Occasionally, however, some children do not join in fully because they find the activities either too demanding or not demanding enough.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- The behaviour of children requires improvement, because they tend to become distracted and lose concentration sooner than is often found in children of their age.
- Although there is no actual bullying or name calling, there are occasional instances when children momentarily behave aggressively towards others. These can occur, for example, when the children are too crowded in the classroom and not encouraged to conduct their learning out of doors. However, the adults are quick to step in and calm things down, and children are cared for and looked after well.
- Children from all heritages and backgrounds get on well with one another and are usually ready to share and take turns. This shows that there is no discrimination.
- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is good. All the staff are trained in emergency first aid, and staff trained in paediatric first aid are always on duty. Any concerns relating to children's medical needs are prominently displayed. Parents and carers told the inspector that they are confident that the school is safe, and all those who responded to Parent View agreed that their children are safe and happy. The school encourages the children to keep themselves safe. For example adults teach the children to meet a potential threat by saying in a loud voice, 'Stop, I don't like that!'
- Children who stay for lunch are taught good manners. They sit in family style, with an adult at each table, and are encouraged to eat with a knife and fork, and to choose their own portion size. In this way they begin to learn to take responsibility for their own manners.
- The breakfast and tea clubs, which provide additional childcare outside normal nursery hours, provide healthy food and a range of interesting activities.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership requires improvement because some areas of the school's work, such as record-keeping on children's progress, have declined since the previous inspection. The school is no longer judged to be good.
- The quality of teaching has declined since the previous inspection, when it was judged to be good. Adults receive too few formal observations, and are not told clearly enough how to improve. Senior and middle leaders are not sufficiently involved in judging the quality of the teaching or of the activities offered to the children. As a result, teaching does not always enable children to develop their language and number skills fully.
- Nevertheless, there are promising signs of improvement. The executive headteacher took overall responsibility for the federation in January 2014, and has been energetic in identifying areas of

the school's work that require considerable improvement. For example, he and his leadership team have drawn up insightful plans for the future of the school which put a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and improving record-keeping. However, it is still too early to see the outcome of these plans on the children's learning.

- Leaders and middle leaders are successful in making sure that children with a range of additional needs receive the right support, enabling them to join in all activities and receive support tailored to their needs. However, the most-able children do not always receive the best quality support to enable them to forge ahead.
- The school is adequately placed to improve. Leaders in discussion show that they know their school well and the executive headteacher is impatient to bring about much-needed change. Some areas of its work have improved. Two out of three of the recommendations from the previous inspection have been met, so that attendance has improved and children's preferences are now taken fully into account when planning activities. However, the school has been less successful in meeting the recommendation to improve systems for checking and recording children's progress.
- The local authority knows the school well and agrees that it requires improvement. Over time, however, it has not probed sufficiently to check whether the school has been continuing to provide a good education.
- The curriculum is adequate. Children have opportunities to learn how to make marks and begin the process of writing, to count and to learn about the world around them. The forest school, with its opportunities for studying nature, working collaboratively and taking managed risks, is a valuable resource. Children's physical skills are developed well in the outdoor play areas. However, children, particularly the most able, have too few opportunities to build a sufficiently wide vocabulary or to learn enough number and science skills to promote the best learning.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - A number of key governors, including the Chair of the governing Body and vice chair, are relatively new to post. Nevertheless, they know the school and the community it serves well, and take an active interest, visiting the school wherever possible.
 - Governors have a good understanding of how well the children achieve within the school, and know how it is seen in the local community. This does not mean, however, that they take its good reputation on trust. They are proactive in seeking out parents' and carers' views. They know that children with a range of additional needs are served well and that there are too few resources to promote the best learning for the most-able children.
 - Governors are ready to ask searching questions and to hold the school to account, particularly when it comes to managing the continuing changes involved in creating the federation.
 - Governors know the proportion of teachers who are on the upper and leadership pay bands. However, as new governors, they have not yet had sufficient time to establish a strong connection between this proportion and the learning and progress of the children.
 - Governors in only a short space of time have shown their enthusiasm and commitment by attending a wide range of training courses, including safeguarding training and safer recruitment. They effectively carry out their statutory obligation to keep the children safe.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	100769
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	430835

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Wilkins
Executive headteacher	Colin Lavelle
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2011
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