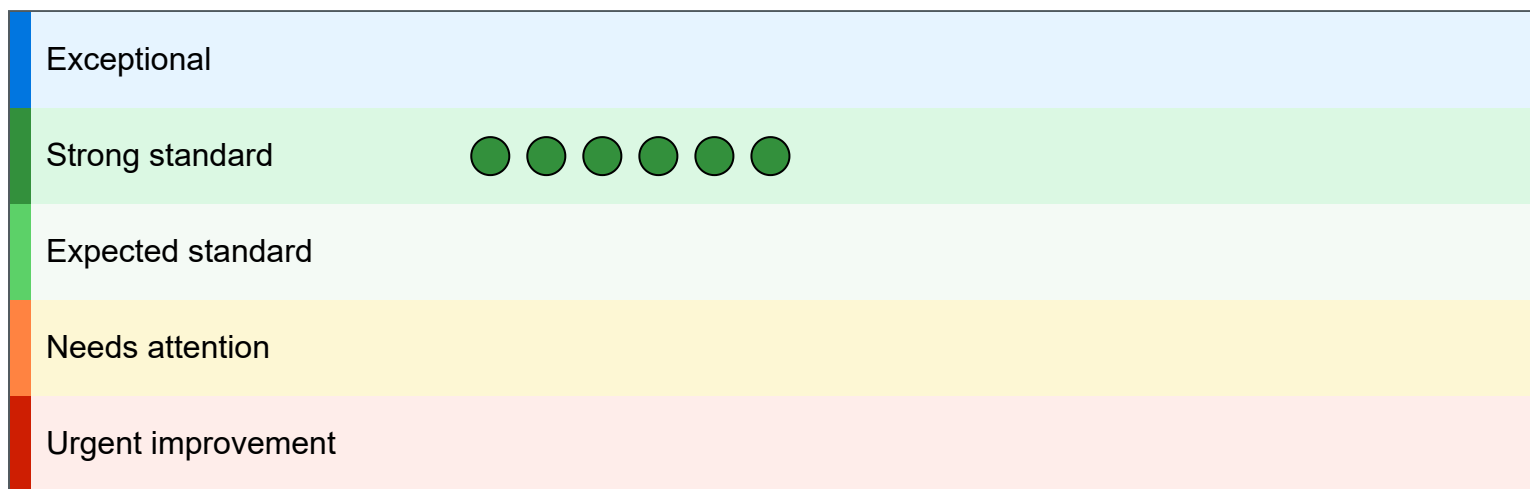


Dulwich Wood Nursery School

Address: Lyall Avenue, Dulwich, London, SE21 8QS

Unique reference number (URN): 100769

Inspection report: 24 February 2026



✔ **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Children in Nursery make secure progress from their individual starting points. This is because they are taught the key skills they need and are supported to build these over time. The focused emphasis on communication and language leads to clear gains in children's vocabulary. Their confidence in speaking and ability to sustain conversation develop well. Early writing and mathematical understanding develop securely. This is because the curriculum is carefully sequenced and consistently delivered. Children begin to understand that letters carry meaning. This is done through recognising the sounds in their names and engaging with stories.

Disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make positive progress. Targeted speech and language support, teaching that is tailored to children's needs and regular pupil-focused reviews reduce barriers to learning. Leaders monitor the impact of interventions termly and adjust provision where needed.

Daily observations and children's work show that they are gaining the key skills and confidence needed for Reception. By the time they leave, children achieve well from their starting points. They are increasingly independent, socially confident and ready for the next stage of their education.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders recognise that children being in school is important for their learning. Attendance is improving. Leaders place clear emphasis on the importance of regular attendance. They communicate this consistently to parents and carers. Expectations are shared before children start school. This is done through home visits and induction meetings. Where absence occurs, staff promptly follow up and work supportively with families to address any barriers. Leaders track attendance patterns. They consider the needs of vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Where necessary, they make reasonable adjustments and provide support to encourage regular attendance. Leaders remain vigilant and proactive in promoting consistent routines that support children's learning and wellbeing.

Behaviour is a strength. Leaders have established a calm, orderly and nurturing environment. Staff use approaches that help them respond calmly and sensitively to children's feelings and behaviours. As a result, children learn to think about their emotions. They begin to resolve disagreements constructively. Children show positive attitudes to learning. They focus well in group sessions and join in both adult-led and child-initiated activities with enthusiasm. Staff understand and follow the school's behaviour policies. This ensures a consistent approach throughout.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

The early years curriculum is carefully designed so that children aged 2 to 4 years learn new skills in a logical sequence. It is shaped around the needs of local families and organised

across two classes. There is clear progression as children move through Nursery. Leaders prioritise communication and language, early reading, early writing and mathematics. This helps to ensure that children secure firm foundations for Reception. Experiences such as visits to the local woods, trips and cultural celebrations are woven naturally into everyday learning. Daily story sessions promote reading. Older children develop early sound awareness in a structured way.

Leaders recognise the strengths of the provision and identify what needs improvement. Staff training is mapped across the year so that knowledge and skills build progressively. It begins with core priorities and extends into wider areas of learning. This strengthens staff subject knowledge and promotes consistency.

Teaching is purposeful. Adults model language, extend vocabulary and deepen children's thinking during adult-led and child-initiated activities. The environment promotes independence, curiosity and meaningful play. Assessment identifies starting points. It informs adaptations, particularly for disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff target support so that every child can access the curriculum successfully. Partnerships with parents support continuity between home and school.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders ensure that every child feels welcomed and included. Staff identify children's needs early through careful baseline assessments and effective screening. They also use valuable information gathered from home visits. There is a clear focus on developing children's communication and language skills. The needs of disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are quickly recognised. Staff provide tailored support through precise, individualised plans that help these children thrive.

Leaders use additional funding strategically. They have a clear focus on reducing barriers to learning, especially in speech and language. The school works with a speech and language specialist. This supports staff training and ensures children receive appropriate provision. Staff adapt activities and support to meet children's differing needs. The consistent use of visuals and structured approaches helps children with additional needs access the full curriculum.

Staff meet daily to review children's learning. Leaders analyse termly progress to check the impact of additional support. Staff receive regular training linked to specific children's needs. Leaders work closely with families and external professionals. Together, they shape provision and raise aspirations. Inclusion is embedded in daily practice and has a positive effect on children's learning and wellbeing.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. They maintain a clear focus on communication and language, inclusion and behaviour. Leaders also ensure that staff are supported to deliver these effectively. Self-evaluation is reflective and grounded in evidence. This includes assessment information and regular review of provision for disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and/or

disabilities (SEND). Leaders identify development priorities promptly and ensure that work is focused in the right areas.

Vulnerable children are central to decision-making. Leaders use additional funding strategically, particularly to enhance speech and language support. Leaders monitor its impact and adjust provision where necessary. Staff training is carefully planned and matched to the needs of the children and the school. Leaders sequence training across the year and include safeguarding, curriculum priorities and provision for pupils with SEND. Early career staff and those new to roles receive targeted support. Staff report that their workload is manageable and that they feel well supported.

Governors understand their statutory duties and receive regular reports on all areas of the school's work. They provide appropriate challenge and support. Leadership and governance are aligned and focused on securing positive outcomes for all children.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Personal development is a key part of everything the school does. This is especially true for children's personal, social, and emotional growth. Leaders have designed a coherent approach that prioritises emotional literacy, independence and respect. Through consistent emotion coaching, children learn to recognise feelings. They understand right and wrong as well as resolve conflict constructively. Staff model empathy. They reinforce that being sorry involves repairing relationships, not simply words.

Children develop strong social skills. They learn to take turns, cooperate and listen to others during structured group times and collaborative play. Visits to local shops, markets, and transport links help children see their role in the community. Celebrating festivals like Eid, Diwali, Christmas, and Lunar New Year fosters respect for various beliefs and cultures. Events such as Black History Month and shared reading experiences expand children's understanding of diversity.

Leaders promote healthy lifestyles effectively. Participation in the supervised toothbrushing programme, visits to the local woods, yoga and physical play support children's physical and mental wellbeing. Children learn about keeping safe, including when out in the community.

Disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the full range of experiences. Pastoral support is effective. Leaders work closely with families to help children develop confidence, resilience and curiosity. Children are well prepared socially and emotionally for the expectations of Reception.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Children enjoy coming to this nurturing and purposeful nursery. From the moment they arrive, they are welcomed into calm, well-organised classrooms. Children settle quickly and learn to play and learn alongside one another. They behave well. Staff model kindness and help children to understand and talk about their feelings. Disagreements are resolved

thoughtfully. If children become upset or overwhelmed, adults provide gentle, consistent support. This helps children to calm down and return to their learning.

Children feel safe. Staff know families well. They build positive relationships through home visits and regular communication. This close knowledge ensures that any worries are identified quickly and acted on. Adults supervise carefully as children move freely between indoor and outdoor spaces. They teach children how to keep themselves safe, for example when climbing large equipment, using tools to prepare fruit at snack time or serving themselves at lunchtime.

Children enjoy learning. They listen intently to well-chosen books, join in with repeated refrains and borrow books to share at home. Adults encourage rich conversation. They introduce new vocabulary skilfully. Children make up their own stories. They grow plants from seed, follow simple recipes and confidently use bikes and scooters in the outdoor area. These experiences build their language, physical development and early mathematical understanding. Local visits and festival celebrations help children to learn about the community around them and the wider world.

Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or who are disadvantaged, achieve well from their starting points. Accurate assessment and well-targeted support, particularly in speech and language, help to reduce barriers to learning. Staff work closely with families to promote regular attendance and punctuality. This helps children make the most of their time in school. By the time they leave, children are confident, increasingly independent and well-prepared for Reception.

Next steps

- Leaders should sustain the high-quality provision already in place and ensure that ongoing curriculum review and refinement maintains strong practice and builds on the effective approaches established across the school.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Taryn McLelland.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff.

The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority. He also spoke with a group of governors that included the chair of the governing body.

Inspectors visited lessons, spoke with pupils and looked at curriculum information and children's learning journeys. They reviewed school documentation that included the school's self-evaluation document and the school development plan.

Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not currently make use of alternative provision.

The headteacher is also the headteacher of Dulwich Wood Primary School and Dulwich Wood Children's Centre.

Headteacher: Helen Rowe

Lead inspector:

Adam Vincent, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Paul Robinson, Ofsted Inspector

Guy Forbat, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 24 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

80

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

13.6%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

0.00%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

43.75%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Our grades explained

Exceptional ●

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard ●

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard ●

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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