

Darlinghurst Academy

Pavilion Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 3JS

Inspection dates

6–7 June 2019

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal, multi-academy trust (MAT) and other leaders, have worked determinedly since the previous inspection to raise standards in the school. As a result, the school's overall effectiveness is now good.
- Outcomes for pupils have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils now make strong progress from their starting points and are well prepared for their next phase in education.
- Pupils enjoy a rich and varied curriculum, enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. They are happy and settled and make good gains from their starting points.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Leaders provide staff with effective training and support.
- A strong culture of safeguarding is evident throughout the school. Pupils behave safely and act with respect for the safety of others.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress. So, too, do disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils are polite and respectful.
- Senior leaders make rigorous checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, a few inconsistencies remain, for example the use of resources to support all pupils in their learning.
- Not all teachers plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their skills in their work.
- Writing is not strongly developed in subjects other than English.
- Relationships with the majority of parents and carers are very good. However, some expressed concerns. This is because they do not receive clear enough or frequent enough information about some of the actions the school takes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that there is effective communication with all stakeholders so that they understand the rationale behind the programmes the school implements to support all pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers maximise the use of resources to support pupils' learning
 - increasing pupils' stamina and resilience in writing by applying their writing skills across the curriculum
 - developing more opportunities for pupils to apply their skills within their work so that they become more confident and resilient learners.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection the principal and senior leaders have formed a cohesive leadership team. They have successfully identified the areas to improve and tackled weaknesses. High expectations and aspirations are clearly embedded throughout the school. The focus is firmly on providing pupils with the best possible life chances.
- Leaders have been receptive to the support they have received from the multi-academy trust (MAT) since the previous inspection. This has contributed significantly to the pace of improvement, particularly in building leadership capacity and in raising the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders ensure that pupils receive a rich and varied curriculum. Because teaching is good, pupils develop knowledge in subjects such as art, physical education (PE) and science.
- The curriculum provides extensively for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are knowledgeable about the wide range of cultures and beliefs in modern Britain. They are taught fundamental British values. The school's curriculum and ethos are strongly committed to promoting equality of opportunity and all pupils are valued and treated equally.
- Pupils enjoy the curriculum and talked enthusiastically about the trips and enrichment activities available. The curriculum leader provides extensive provision for more-vulnerable pupils, including developing life skills.
- All staff benefit from a wide range of professional development to improve teaching. Coaching, performance management and good-quality training are specifically designed to make sure teachers have the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of pupils in the school.
- There is strong leadership of provision for sports and PE. The primary school PE and sports funding has been used well to invest in sports coaching and new equipment, which enhance pupils' experiences. Pupils enjoy taking part in competitive tournaments. They are proud of their success. The school recently achieved the Gold School Games Mark award for their commitment, engagement and delivery of competitive school sport.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is knowledgeable and provides clear direction for the work of teaching assistants. Pupils with SEND receive precisely targeted support and make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders make use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively to support pupils' academic, emotional and physical well-being. Overall, disadvantaged pupils make good progress; they have positive attitudes to learning and their attendance is improving.
- Most parents who spoke to the inspectors or who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are highly supportive of the school. They praise the staff and the care that their children receive. However, a number of parents say that their concerns are not listened to, that bullying is not dealt with and that they do not receive

valuable information about the school. There is still more work to do to gain the trust and confidence of all parents.

Governance of the school

- The board of trustees took the decision to appoint a rapid improvement board after the previous inspection in 2016 to strengthen governance. The rapid improvement board is made up of the board of trustees.
- The board of trustees, including the chief executive officer (CEO), know the school well and are determined to improve outcomes for all pupils.
- The support and challenge that the board of trustees provides are rigorous, and they hold leaders to account for the outcomes that pupils achieve.
- The board of trustees is now in a position to step back and allow more self-governance for the school. A shadow governing body was introduced during the academic year ready to take full responsibility in the new year.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is secure practice in the school, with clear procedures to safeguard pupils.
- Leaders and key staff are tenacious in their approach to supporting the children. They ensure that their concerns are followed up quickly so that advice and intervention are in place. In this way, leaders help to support the most vulnerable pupils to keep them safe.
- Training of staff and volunteers is up-to-date and regular. Pre-employment checks are fully in place. Leaders use staff meeting time well to update staff on different types of risk facing children in our society today. Consequently, staff understand their responsibilities well for keeping pupils safe.
- Leaders and the board regularly check on safeguarding and how effectively the extra funding that the school receives for disadvantaged pupils is being spent.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is characterised by positive relationships and high expectations. Teaching mostly builds well on what pupils know and can do. As a result, teaching over time is effective. Pupils engage well in their learning and make good progress.
- Occasionally, teachers do not allow enough time for pupils to practise the skills that are being taught, which slows down the progress they make and limits opportunities to develop their independence.
- The teaching of writing is improving. The presentation of work is consistently good; handwriting is neat, well-formed and legible. Teachers have good dialogue with children, which makes learning interactive and formative. Pupils are taught specific

language skills, for example how to use fronted adverbials, this is then modelled, and pupils are given the opportunity to apply their skills in their work.

- Editing plays a strong role in writing, with the school strategy of 'book on book' allowing pupils to edit each other's writing by making specific suggestions.
- Pupils use a range of creative and ambitious vocabulary within their work and punctuation is typically accurate. However, there are some occasions when teachers do not address pupils' spelling errors.
- There are less opportunities for pupils, including the most able, to write independently across a range of subjects, using choice of genre to ensure that they extend and apply skills learned in English. Pupils also felt they would like this opportunity.
- In the best classroom environments, the working walls are interactive, contain vocabulary to support learning and are referred to during the learning process. However, not all teachers are equally skilled at making the best use of these resources to support pupils' learning. This hampers the progress pupils make in these classes.
- Following the previous inspection, leaders took the decision to review the school's approach to the teaching of phonics. The teaching of phonics is now effective. Staff access regular training to ensure that their teaching is enabling pupils to make strong progress in their early reading skills.
- There has been a full review of the teaching of reading. As a result, leaders have invested heavily in ensuring that reading books and resources motivate pupils to read and inspire a love of reading. They use high-quality and more-demanding texts to teach reading. Teachers now place a high priority on teaching reading skills and comprehension.
- The teaching of mathematics across the school is effective. Teachers use lots of practical resources to support pupils to visualise mathematical concepts. Much time is spent on securing pupils' ability to recall and deepen their knowledge before progressing to the next concept. This is leading to pupils' improving rates of progress in all year groups.
- Teaching assistants make a positive difference in lessons. They work well with the teachers to develop pupils' understanding, working with individual pupils and small groups.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils spoke with confidence and were able to articulate their thoughts carefully and sensitively.
- Pupils were able to recall some of the work and themes that they have studied and chose various examples of work that they have enjoyed learning. Examples included, a book review, Egyptians hieroglyphs; Guatemala; and work on the European Union, Brexit and D-Day.

- There is a strong school-led ethos from leadership about the importance of healthy living which is reflected across the school.
- Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take, including cyber bullying, and are confident in how to stay safe. They say that there are no incidents of bullying, but if they have any concerns they know they would be addressed quickly. The school has very clear guidance about staying safe online, and pupils explained the risks clearly, showing good understanding.
- Junior governors, the head boy and girl and the eco warriors promote the school well and have contributed to improving the school. For instance, basketball has been introduced into the curriculum as a result of pupils' suggestion. This has resulted in pupils feeling a part of the whole school, with their ideas and suggestions being taken into account.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well, rising to adults' high expectations of them. They are polite, welcoming and respectful. This creates a calm atmosphere in the school.
- Leaders have successfully reduced pupils' absences and have brought attendance rates in line with average. Leaders have achieved this through a number of strategies, including ensuring a thorough system for following up absences and any pupils' falling attendance rates. Additionally, pupils now learn about the importance of good attendance. As a result, pupils value their education and understand the part it plays in shaping their futures.
- Pupils listen well to staff and are well mannered. During the inspection, pupils were seen holding doors open for adults and some pupils thanked the inspectors following discussions with them.
- Leaders have started to make changes to improve pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes. The introduction of play leaders has already had a positive impact and leaders have begun training midday staff to ensure that the school's behaviour policy is being consistently followed.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Following the appointment of the principal, a complete review of all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment was conducted. This resulted in much greater accuracy of information on what pupils know and can do, and identified gaps in their learning. Teaching was sharply focused on helping pupils to catch up. There was also a significant shift in the expectations staff have of pupils' achievements. As a result, progress has improved. Evidence gathered during the inspection found that current pupils make good progress from their different starting points in most subjects, especially in reading and writing.

- Strengthened leadership in all areas has ensured that current pupils progress well. Additional teaching, provided in response to ongoing assessments, is often effective in preventing pupils from falling behind and in helping them to catch up.
- In 2018, the great majority of Year 1 pupils met the expected standard in the phonics screening check. This is because pupils make very strong progress when learning to read throughout Reception and into Year 1.
- The proportion of pupils in Year 2 reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in 2018 was in line with that expected for their age nationally. From their starting points, this represented good progress.
- In key stages 1 and 2, current pupils are making good progress. The observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' writing and mathematics books show that the majority are working at age-related expectations. A good proportion are working towards greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Current pupils' English books show that most pupils' work is of a high standard and consists of accurate punctuation, ambitious vocabulary and increasingly demanding sentence structures. However, some pupils, particularly lower-attaining pupils, do not always spell common words accurately. This prevents them from making better progress and attaining more highly.

Early years provision

Good

- There is strong leadership of the early years, demonstrating equally high expectations of both the children and adults in the setting.
- Last academic year, pupils entered Reception with abilities that were generally in line with those expected for their age, but with some aspects, such as writing and speaking, below average. They left Reception with development that was in line with national average and, therefore, made at least expected progress from their starting points. This means that they are well prepared for their next stage of education.
- Children play happily and safely in the early years. Staff have created a stimulating learning environment, both inside and outside. Activities are engaging, so children sustain their interest in their play.
- The teaching of phonics demonstrates good subject knowledge, using a range of strategies and opportunities to encourage children to read and form letters.
- Children demonstrated the ability to count, some to 10 and beyond, and showed how their phonics knowledge is used across the other areas of learning. For example, one child picked up a 'W' printing block upside down and pronounced the 'mmmmm' sound, thus demonstrating their learning.
- Adults have high expectations of children's behaviour. They also promote children's social and personal development well. As a result, children conduct themselves well and cooperate effectively with each other.
- Learning journals show a range of activities and progress across all areas of learning. They include evidence of parental involvement, including posts being 'liked' or commented

upon, as well as specific homework tasks such as cutting and ordering numbers. The postings contain a photograph and parental comment. Parents find this very beneficial.

- Children talk confidently to adults and are able to engage deeply in role play, such as a group in a builder's yard, and feeding babies, demonstrating sustained concentration.

School details

Unique reference number	140536
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10088679

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	697
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Christopher Hatton
Principal	Emma Nicholls
Telephone number	01702 478379
Website	www.darlinghurst.uk
Email address	generalenquiries@darlinghurst.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 December 2016

Information about this school

- The principal was appointed after the previous Ofsted inspection.
- Darlinghurst Academy is part of the Legra Academy Trust. The school is governed by a rapid improvement board who are members of the Legra Academy Trust board.
- The school is a larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Only a small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEND, including those with an education, health and care plan, is below average.
- The school runs a before- and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of teaching and learning across the school, mostly jointly with senior leaders. During observations, inspectors sampled pupils' books and talked with pupils about their learning and their experience of school.
- Inspectors spoke with the principal and other leaders. Inspectors also met with board members, including the chair and the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust.
- Discussions took place with parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors held meetings with group of pupils. Pupils' views of the school were also gathered through many informal conversations and the pupil survey.
- Inspectors observed playtime and lunchtimes and noted pupils' conduct around the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness and improvement plans, policies, assessment information, curriculum planning and records of checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors also looked at records of attendance, behaviour and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of the views of staff, through the 48 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. They also considered 175 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 149 free-text comments.

Inspection team

Sean Tobin, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Angela Savill	Ofsted Inspector
Heather Hann	Ofsted Inspector
David Milligan	Ofsted Inspector

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