

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Charles Dickens Primary School

Toulmin Street, London SE1 1AF

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 June 2025

Outcome

Charles Dickens Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Michael Eggleton. The school is part of the Charter Schools Educational Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Cassandra Buchanan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jonathan Slater.

What is it like to attend this school?

Charles Dickens Primary School gives pupils a positive experience that goes well beyond the ordinary. Pupils live and breathe the school's values. These are for every pupil to succeed academically, develop their creative skills and their personal, social and emotional skills. Pupils understand these values and say the values are at the heart of everything they do in school.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Pupils enjoy coming to this school. They are happy and are safe. One pupil, representative of many, said, 'I love coming to school because I can be myself and I do not have to hide anything.' Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Bullying is rare, and adults resolve any issues quickly.

The high-quality and ambitious curriculum is at the heart of the school. This promotes pupils' well-being and personal excellence. Subjects are interwoven seamlessly with a range of educational visits and global themes. Pupils from the early years onwards, including learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve exceptionally well.

Pupils attend numerous lunchtime and after-school clubs, some led by pupils. More than 35 clubs are free for pupils to attend each week. This is an example of inclusion being

ingrained in the school's culture. Pupils' participation in these opportunities is celebrated through the school's 'Greatness Award'.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The bedrock of the school's excellence is the highly ambitious curriculum for all year groups. The curriculum is well designed and gives pupils, including those with SEND, rich and demanding learning opportunities. The school uses up-to-date education research to keep the curriculum knowledge that pupils learn sharp. The school's curriculum model has been recognised as excellent practice by the Department of Education, both nationally and internationally.

Staff receive training on how to best support pupils to learn the curriculum. Key to pupils' learning is the strong subject knowledge of the teaching staff. Teachers are skilled at explaining the links to the previous knowledge pupils have learned. As a result, pupils produce high-quality work across different subjects, including English and mathematics. This leads to the very strong learning outcomes that pupils achieve.

Staff continually check pupils' understanding and whether they remember what they have learned previously. This enables pupils' misunderstandings to be identified and addressed quickly, so they learn extremely well. For example, older pupils can explain the different artistic styles of David Hockney and Vincent Van Gogh. Year 2 pupils can explain the links between plastics and decomposition in science. Pupils, including those in the Nursery and Reception Years, have discrete well-being lessons and weekly assemblies to develop their character.

The school teaches subject-specific vocabulary through the curriculum. Pupils use this knowledge in their writing about their learning. From the start, in the early years, pupils are given ample opportunity to practise their English and mathematics skills. Pupils between the early years and Year 6 learn French, and the older pupils also learn Mandarin. As a result, pupils from the early years and upwards achieve extremely well.

Pupils with SEND learn well and succeed. This is because staff identify the needs of pupils and put in place highly effective support. Staff adapt their provision skilfully to meet pupils' needs. The school provides a supportive and nurturing space known as 'the Pip class' for pupils who need more bespoke support to succeed with their learning.

Skilful staff teach pupils to read using phonics from the start of the Reception Year. Staff make regular checks on pupils' reading. They spot pupils who fall behind and put in place extra support so they can catch up. Almost all pupils become fluent readers by the end of Year 1. There is a careful choice of books to match the letters and sounds pupils know. This encourages pupils to love reading in school and at home.

Staff model high expectations of behaviour, which pupils mirror. This leads to pupils' impeccable behaviour and positive attitudes to their peers and the adults in the school. This starts in the early years where children learn to play safely, take turns and share. The conduct of pupils is commendable, in and out of lessons. Pupils attend school regularly.

This is because the school encourages and secures the regular attendance of pupils effectively.

The school's programme to promote pupils' broader development is worthy of being shared more widely. All pupils benefit from a vast range of educational activities, for example visits to museums, galleries and residential trips. These enhance their academic curriculum and help pupils to 'live-out' the school's values. Pupils learn the importance of fundamental British values, diversity, respecting the beliefs, religions and cultures of others and staying safe, including when online. They discuss these potentially sensitive topics with maturity.

The local governing body and the trust have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. They work closely with leaders and hold them to account. They meticulously maintain strategic oversight of the school. Leaders' planned priorities for school improvement are based on defined actions to sustain the school's effectiveness. Staff are proud to work at this school because leaders at all levels are considerate of their workload and are approachable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Charles Dickens Primary School, to be outstanding in September 2019.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	148012
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	10379176
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	480
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jonathan Slater
CEO of the trust	Cassandra Buchanan
Headteacher	Michael Eggleton
Website	www.charlesdickens.southwark.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Charles Dickens Primary School converted to become an academy school in July 2020. When its predecessor school, Charles Dickens Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding for overall effectiveness.
- The school is part of the Charter Schools Educational Trust.
- The school includes provision for two-year-olds. Children attend the provision either on a full-time or part-time basis.
- The school provides before- and after-school wraparound care on site.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the co-heads of school and other school leaders, including the SEND coordinator and the SEND trust leader.
- The inspector held meetings with members of the local governing body, including the chair. The inspector also met with trustees and representatives of the Charter Educational Trust, including the CEO and the chair of the trustees.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector spoke to a group of staff to gather their views of the school. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- The inspector spoke by phone with a senior leader of the alternative provision used by the school.
- The inspector observed behaviour in lessons and at other times of the day.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including nationally published outcomes data and the minutes of the local governing body meetings. Information relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and pupils' wider development was considered. The school's improvement plan and leaders' evaluation of the school were also considered.
- Responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, including parents' free-text comments were considered. The inspector also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Pamela Fearnley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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