

Inspection of Whitehill Primary School

Sun Lane, Gravesend, Kent DA12 5HN

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 February 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Angela Carpenter. This school is part of The Decus 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, Geoff Wybar, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Graham Stedman.

What is it like to attend this school?

This inclusive school strives for pupils to be harmonious, autonomous, noble, determined and spirited. Since the last inspection, behaviour has improved. Previously, pupils were worried about behaviour outside, but playtimes are now happier and safer. Pupils trust staff to help them resolve any worries. When pupils need help to manage their emotions, pastoral support is compassionate and effective.

Well-planned assemblies and community events enrich pupils' personal development. Highlights include visits from the police community support officer, a pupil-led assembly about neurodiversity, and charity cake sales and fashion shows. Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons help pupils to be safe and responsible citizens.

Early years continues to offer children a happy and successful start, with high expectations, care and support across both Nursery and Reception. However, as pupils move through the school, achievement remains low. Before the current leaders joined the school, the curriculum had been narrowed. All subjects are now planned and taught, but with mixed success. Standards do not reflect consistently high expectations. Leaders, governors and trustees have ensured that support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is more effective. However, they have not identified and addressed inconsistencies in teaching and assessment. These weaknesses continue to prevent pupils from achieving well.

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

Children flourish in early years. The environment is rich with language and well-planned activities. Children show engagement, enthusiasm and collaboration. Transition is impressive, and provision for pupils with SEND is effective from early years onwards. Staff routinely review pupils' needs and put plans swiftly in place to help them. The school encourages staff to share expertise to ensure that provision is inclusive, by using helpful resources and adaptations. Partnerships with external agencies help the school to access specialist support.

Leaders introduced a new reading programme in September 2023, as phonics achievement was significantly below national average. Whole-school training has ensured that staff knowledge is secure, and the scheme is being delivered well. Catch-up activities and one-to-one reading sessions are helping more pupils to become fluent and confident readers. Teachers read a wide range of texts with pupils, who enjoy voting for class books.

At the time of the last inspection, the curriculum was poorly planned. All subjects are now mapped with clear end points. In the most developed subjects, such as design and technology, pupils acquire skills with success. However, in some weaker subjects such as physical education and history, the school has not precisely defined the knowledge they intend pupils to study. As a result, pupils demonstrate

inconsistent recall of their learning. Lesson activities do not ensure that pupils learn and remember key content consistently. Another barrier to pupils achieving well is how staff give feedback to pupils. Mistakes are sometimes missed or accepted as correct. When misconceptions are not addressed, pupils struggle to improve their work. Despite a great start in early years, pupils progress through the school with low achievement. In particular, pupils' understanding in mathematics is not secure, reflected in significantly below average progress and attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2023. This does not prepare them well for their next steps.

Behaviour has significantly improved and is now good overall. Staff manage minor distractions well, and conduct around school is positive. The school's focus on emotional regulation has helped pupils who struggle with their feelings. This thoughtful work has led to a reduction in the number of suspensions. The school's approach to improve attendance has also been successful. Attendance for all, and particularly disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, has greatly improved. Motivational approaches and impressive support for families have made a tangible difference.

The school promotes personal development well. Clubs are diverse, with something for everyone. Pupils are proud to apply for the new role of 'peer mediator'. The PSHE curriculum is working well. Pupils understand healthy relationships, embrace diversity and demonstrate a secure knowledge of online, water, fire and road safety. Pupils debate moral issues such as environmental challenges. They appreciate opportunities for mindfulness, which enhances their well-being. Talent shows and pantomimes celebrate talents further.

Governors and trustees provide some challenge through relevant questioning and visits. They understand the school and fulfil statutory duties. Leaders show dedication and passion. However, pupils underachieve because the quality of education is not good enough. Engagement with parents can be successful, but some families are unhappy about communication. They are concerned about how well their children are doing. Staff have a mixed view about workload and well-being. Some are positive, but morale is low for others. Leaders at all levels are beginning to recognise and address these weaknesses.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not identified precise knowledge for pupils to learn in all subjects. As a result, lessons do not consistently ensure that pupils learn and remember essential content. The school needs to identify key knowledge more precisely and

ensure the activities that pupils complete help them to learn and remember it successfully.

- Staff do not consistently identify pupils' mistakes or misconceptions. As a result, pupils do not know how well they are doing, and mistakes are not addressed. The school must ensure that knowledge gaps are identified and addressed swiftly, to help pupils achieve more highly across the curriculum.
- Stakeholder engagement remains a challenge. The school has not yet ensured that all parents and staff feel positive about the school. The school must redouble their efforts with communication and engagement to ensure that all stakeholders feel better supported and informed.

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 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	140800
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10321988
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	655
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
CEO of the trust	Geoff Wybar
Chair of trust	Graham Stedman
Headteacher	Angela Carpenter
Website	www.whitehillprimary.com
Dates of previous inspection	23 and 24 March 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of The Decus Educational Trust, which includes one other school, Gravesend Grammar School.
- The school currently does not use any alternative providers.
- The school offers a before- and after-school club, overseen by the school.
- There are two Nurseries for three-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, phase leaders, subject leaders, early years leader, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer, trustees and governors, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, design and technology, history and physical education. For deep dives, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to a range of pupils read. The inspector observed catch-up interventions to learn how staff provide extra support to pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors evaluated responses to the pupil survey and spoke with pupils during lessons and breaktimes.
- Inspectors spoke to a sample of parents and took account of their responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and free-text responses.

Inspection team

Scott Reece, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Martin Smith	His Majesty's Inspector
Zoe Harris	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Clarke	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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