

Downs Way School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125043
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	340705
Inspection dates	28–29 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Peter Clifton

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Weightman
Headteacher	Susan Palmer
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors spent the majority of their time looking at learning, visited eight lessons and observed all five teaching staff who worked in school on the days of the inspection. Meetings were held with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including development planning, recent monitoring reports, safeguarding procedures and pupils' books. They analysed 68 responses to the parents' questionnaire and took account of the views of parents with whom they talked during the inspection.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the extent to which teaching promotes good progress for all groups of pupils in each year group, especially those who are more able
- the effectiveness of the provision to promote higher standards in mathematics and writing
- how effectively leaders have used
- self-evaluation to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- information about pupils' progress to identify weaknesses and implement improvement.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average-size school. There are five classes. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes which have an outside learning area. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught in three mixed-age classes. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is below average. Most pupils are of White British origin, with the next largest groups being of mixed heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, and most of these have literacy and numeracy needs.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Children start school with skills at least in line with expectations and often with a good base in terms of their social development, attitudes to learning and knowledge of number. Good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that they make good progress and their attainment is above average in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception Year. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics remains above average. However, more able pupils do not always make the gains that they should, which means that the proportion that reach Level 3 at the end of Year 2 is not high enough. At times, the activities that these pupils are given in lessons lack sufficient challenge to take their learning on.

Satisfactory progress has been made in addressing the issues raised when the school was last inspected. There are more opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas and share their thinking during 'paired talk' activities. Opportunities for pupils to get involved in problem-solving activities in mathematics are improving. Lesson observations have had an impact in improving some aspects of teaching but are not regular or focused enough on the learning of different groups of pupils. Sound self-evaluation ensures the headteacher and other leaders have a broadly accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and what areas still need to be tackled. The school's success in enhancing provision for mathematics and improving use of the outdoor areas for learning indicate satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. Analysis of pupils' progress has enabled the leadership to accurately identify key areas for further focus. However, the work of subject leaders in planning for improvements in provision in their areas of responsibility lacks sharpness, particularly in relation to increasing the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels at the end of Year 2. The use of targets in lessons is inconsistent and this results in pupils not having a clear enough idea about what they need to do to improve, particularly when they are writing.

The school has a lively atmosphere during lessons and playtimes. This is mainly because pupils express their views with considerable assurance. They are quick to respond to questions and give their views. On a few occasions this bubbles over and teachers have to remind the pupils about taking turns to speak. Relationships in lessons are good and teaching assistants effectively support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Adults ensure that there is a positive learning environment. Nearly all pupils say they are very happy. The pupils are cared for well and have a good understanding of how to keep safe. They know about healthy foods and regularly eat fruit. Additional opportunities to take exercise, for example, through attending sports clubs, are popular. The strength of pupils' social development is seen in the way they work together and cooperate, for instance, during wet play.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all groups of pupils make progress at a consistent rate by:
 - sharpening the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to give more regular and focused feedback about the effectiveness of provision for different groups of learners
 - improving the match of work to pupils' needs, particularly for more able pupils, and ensuring that they are clear about their targets for improvement
 - strengthening the role of subject coordinators in evaluating and leading developments in their areas of responsibility.
- Increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 so that, by the summer of 2011, results are significantly above those achieved nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

During the inspection, learning seen in most lessons was satisfactory. Pupils' interest and engagement was a positive feature of learning. They develop good information and communication technology (ICT) skills and are willing to help each other in group work. However, their learning slows, for example, in writing, when they are not sufficiently clear about what they are expected to achieve. Leaders have identified that a few boys make inconsistent progress in reading and secure strategies are in place to tackle this. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other pupils, often because of good additional support provided.

Pupils behave well, play safely together in the playground and are confident in the adults who look after them. They say that sometimes there is some silly behaviour but it is dealt with effectively by adults. Pupils contribute well to the school community by taking on a range of responsibilities. For example, they help to keep the extensive grounds looking attractive by planting bulbs and annuals. They are very active during playtimes, enjoying using skipping ropes and chasing around playing football. Their positive attitudes and good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT prepare them well for the move to their next school. The pupils show a strong curiosity about the world around them. In a celebration assembly, the pupils participated confidently and joined in well with the singing. Most responded appropriately when given time to reflect and join in with the prayer. Over the past year attendance has been average. The most recent information shows an improving picture.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Good relationships and use of questioning are strengths in teaching. Teachers foster good discussion to help the pupils develop their thinking and explain their ideas. During the inspection, good teaching using the text of Little Red Riding Hood was used well in a Year 1/2 class to promote good reading and thinking skills. The teacher ensured all the pupils were actively engaged; their responses were well thought out. In contrast to this, learning in a few lessons slows because pupils are kept on the carpet for too long and work given is too easy. The pupils have targets for improvement. However, these are not detailed enough nor used to their fullest extent to help the pupils understand what they are aiming for.

Good personal and social provision makes a considerable contribution to the pupils' positive attitudes and well-being. Pupils say they like going to after-school clubs and making visits to different places. Curriculum organisation through themes helps teachers to make meaningful links between different subjects and there is an emphasis on outdoor learning, which the boys particularly enjoy. However, daily planning is not always detailed enough and, as a result, activities provided do not promote learning sufficiently well or meet the needs of pupils of differing abilities.

Arrangements to support and care for all pupils are good. Additional help and support is provided for those pupils who find it difficult to socialise and work together and this makes a real difference to the way they integrate with their peers. The 'buddy' system enables

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pupils of different ages to work together. For example, Year 2 pupils read regularly with groups of Reception children.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders are keen to seek further improvement. In joint observations with the headteacher during the inspection, she demonstrated an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the lessons seen. However, this type of observation is not carried out regularly enough to gain a clear view of the effectiveness of teaching in ensuring that all groups of pupils are making equally good progress. The school's system to track the progress of pupils is regularly updated and the information is used to target groups who might need additional support. Provision to secure equal opportunities and tackle discrimination for all pupils is satisfactory. Governors meet their statutory responsibilities and a number of them regularly visit the school. They provide a satisfactory level of challenge to leaders. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure the pupils are kept safe and all staff have received child protection training. Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's local context and there are some good links with the immediate community. However pupils' awareness of life in multicultural Britain is underdeveloped and planning to strengthen this aspect of community cohesion is at an early stage of development.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Strengths in provision include the strong relationships and a well-planned curriculum that ensures that children learn effectively. The outdoor area is used well to promote learning. This was evident as the children and adults set up a 'stage' to encourage creative performance. Children sang and waved their pompoms with considerable energy, showing their good speaking skills. Children use equipment safely and share willingly. They use ICT confidently to support their learning. Planning ensures an effective balance between adult-led activities and those the children choose for themselves. On the writing table, purposeful intervention by a teaching assistant encouraged the writing of simple words and sentences. A boy proudly read back what he had written. However, adults sometimes miss opportunities to intervene and prompt learning during children's independent activities. Leadership and management of the setting are good. The children's development is effectively tracked through the 'learning journals' to which parents are encouraged to contribute. The quality of provision is regularly evaluated by leaders and changes implemented to improve learning, for example, by enhancing children's use of the reading area.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Stage	
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Views of parents and carers

The questionnaires reflect a positive relationship with nearly all parents and carers. There were many positive comments indicating that their children are happy and doing well. Parents particularly appreciate the school's nurturing environment, the approachable and friendly staff and the great start made in the Early Years Foundation Stage. One parent commented: 'The school has a very welcoming atmosphere, very open to parents' involvement' a collaboration between the parents and school.' A few parents raised concerns about the progress their children make. Inspectors found some evidence to support these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Downs Way School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 142 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	78	14	21	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	50	74	18	26	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	37	54	30	44	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	54	30	44	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	42	62	21	31	4	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	57	26	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	60	25	37	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	32	47	23	34	2	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	49	29	43	3	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	32	36	53	5	7	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	44	32	47	4	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	38	56	27	40	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	66	21	31	2	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Downs Way School, Oxted RH8 0NZ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed looking at your work, seeing you in lessons and talking to so many of you. We were very impressed by your friendliness and how clearly and confidently you expressed your opinions. You go to a satisfactory school. The adults in the school care for you well. We were impressed by the very positive attitudes that nearly all of you have to learning.

This is what we found.

- You get off to a great start in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- In Years 1 and 2 you make satisfactory progress in your lessons and reach standards which are above average.
- You are helpful to others and nearly all of you say that you are very happy in school.
- Teachers ensure you have good opportunities to answer questions and discuss your ideas with each other.
- You are active during playtimes and contribute eagerly in lessons.
- There are a growing number of opportunities for you to solve problems in mathematics.
- You develop good skills which prepare you well for junior school.

We have asked your headteacher and the other adults to do these things so that you can do even better in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Make sure that you all make as much progress as you can by giving you work that is just at the right level, helping you to understand your targets and checking regularly that you are learning as much as possible in lessons.
- Make sure that those of you who are quick to learn reach the highest possible levels in your reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2.

You can help by always coming to school unless you are unwell.

Yours sincerely

Peter Clifton

Lead Inspector

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