

Downend Comprehensive School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	109321
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	377911
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2012
Lead inspector	Peter Limm HMI

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1371
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Sheath
Headteacher	William Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 March 2009
School address	Westerleigh Road Downend Bristol BS16 6XA
Telephone number	01454 862300
Fax number	01454 862301
Email address	admin@downend.com

Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	15–16 March 2012
Inspection number	377911



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
 Textphone: 0161 618 8524
 E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
 W: www.ofsted.gov.uk



Introduction

Inspection team

Peter Limm	Her Majesty's Inspector
Annette Rhodes	Additional inspector
Hugh Betterton	Additional inspector
Margaret Faull	Additional inspector
Sally Hall	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. They observed 41 lessons, including three joint observations with members of the senior team, taught by 40 teachers. Inspectors met with the school's senior leaders, three groups of students, governors, the headteacher of a partnership school, and staff. A telephone conversation was held with the school's local authority link consultant. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at its improvement plan, data on students' progress, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records of students' attendance, behaviour referrals, exclusions and records of any bullying. They reviewed the responses to questionnaires from 266 parents and carers, 210 students and 75 staff.

Information about the school

Downend is a larger-than-average comprehensive school. A new headteacher started in September 2011. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below that found nationally. The proportion of students with disabilities or with special educational needs is also below the national average. The great majority of students are White British, with a small proportion of students whose first language is believed not to be English. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The school has had specialist technology college status since 1999. It is a member of the Kingswood Partnership, providing shared courses for students aged 14 to 19 in the local area.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It has made rapid improvement over the past year after a period of steady improvement since its previous inspection. Most of the 266 parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are positive about the school and feel that their child is kept safe and makes good progress. The attainment of Year 11 students has improved and although still below the national average, the gap is closing rapidly. Students make at least satisfactory progress from their starting points but their progress in mathematics, and especially that of boys during Key Stage 3, is slower than in other subjects.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall and an increasing amount is good. However, teachers' use of assessment does not always lead to the sharply focused activities which provide the highly effective and appropriate challenge seen in the best lessons.
- Most students behave satisfactorily in lessons and around the school. A review of the school's log of any bullying and conversations with students indicate that almost all students feel safe and effective systems are in place to deal with any problems. Attendance is average.
- The sixth form is satisfactory. Teaching enables students to achieve satisfactorily by the end of their sixth form courses and students indicate that they feel well supported, both in and out of lessons.
- The new headteacher has developed a strong ethos of improvement and an increasingly important role for middle leaders in the leadership of the school. These leaders take full responsibility for driving improvements but the quality and effectiveness of departmental self-evaluation and improvement planning is inconsistent across subjects. The clarity of direction in relation to school improvement is increasingly effective and the governing body contributes satisfactorily to setting a clear vision for the school, based on improving teaching and students' achievement. Leadership of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' attainment and achievement by:
 - increasing the rate of students' progress in mathematics, and especially that of boys during Key Stage 3, by checking carefully during lessons that they understand what they are doing and can demonstrate a better grasp of basic mathematical skills
 - increasing substantially the proportion of good teaching through ensuring that all teachers use assessment data carefully to plan activities that match students' differing needs more effectively so that they are challenged at the right level
 - ensuring that all middle leaders have the skills to interrogate performance data more rigorously so that self-evaluation is accurate, and improvement plans are more sharply focused on how the identified targets and priorities are to be achieved.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students enter the school with attainment that is often below average and make the expected progress by the end of Year 11, so that achievement is satisfactory. Over the past two years, the gap with the national average has been reduced and current school data indicate strongly that this gap is now being reduced rapidly. The school recorded its best ever set of results in 2011. The proportion of lower- and higher-ability students who attained five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics in 2011 was in line with the national average. However, some middle-ability students did not attain quite as well in mathematics, which has slowed the pace of overall improvement. The development of boys' basic mathematical skills during Key Stage 3 is not rapid enough. Despite this, the achievement of different groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs is satisfactory. Achievement is also satisfactory in the sixth form where attainment is broadly average.

In lessons, most students settle to work promptly and enjoy practical tasks which require them to apply their knowledge and skills, for example constructing products that could be sold at the Olympic Games. They work together well, for example organising tasks in groups to prepare a performance in music. Most parents and carers feel that their children make good progress. Inspectors found that progress is satisfactory over time and good in just over half the lessons observed. The school recognises that literacy skills are weak for an increasing number of Year 7 students. Staff have introduced a specific literacy programme for these students and a literacy strategy across other subjects. Both are beginning to demonstrate positive impact on students' achievement.

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

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers feel that their children are taught well. Although inspectors did not observe any inadequate teaching, they found that some teachers missed opportunities to challenge students sufficiently and, consequently, judged the quality of teaching, including that in the sixth form, to be satisfactory and improving. A comprehensive programme of training, coaching and support helps teachers improve their skills, especially to secure good progress for students. Most teachers plan lessons well, with clear objectives and the teaching supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and introduce concepts clearly. They ensure through the curriculum that students receive a broad and balanced programme. Teachers often set specific expectations for students of differing abilities but the ensuing work is not necessarily matched closely enough to their current attainment, resulting too often in most students doing the same level of task. In the best lessons, teachers engage students through lively presentations or challenging problems, broadening their understanding of social and cultural issues. For example, in history, students had to apply their knowledge of a whole historical period in order to assess how much had changed significantly by the end of it. Teachers use questions to assess students' understanding and give them responsibility for organising their learning, but too many opportunities are missed to evaluate how well students are progressing during lessons. The marking of students' work is regular and, in most cases, teachers provide students with clear guidance on how to improve their work, often linked to achieving a particular level, target or grade.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In the questionnaires, 91% of students said that they felt safe and this was endorsed by 91% of the parents and carers who responded. However, parents and carers, students and staff were less confident about behaviour in lessons and around the school. Inspectors did not observe any inadequate behaviour. They explored school documents carefully, such as records of incidents and exclusions, and took into account what students told them in interviews and short impromptu discussions during the inspection. These activities confirmed that behaviour was typically satisfactory. The rate of exclusion, having fallen in recent years, has risen slightly this academic year, but this is due to the new policy of 'zero tolerance' of poor behaviour. The school's records are comprehensive and show that the school takes any reports of bullying seriously. Students confirmed that they know how to keep themselves safe and know about different forms of bullying. Students' attendance has improved steadily over the last three years and is in line with the national average. Staff monitor absences closely and provide prompt notification of any concerns. Students whose circumstances at times make them vulnerable spoke very highly of the guidance and assistance they had received which helped them to improve their performance and their learning. The school has effective links with a wide range of services and agencies which provide good additional support to students.

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

Leadership and management

Since his appointment, the headteacher has successfully built on the strengths of the school, with an unrelenting focus on raising achievement and providing improved provision for all students. He has introduced greater responsibility for middle leaders to support students who are in danger of underachieving, and linked this to better professional development for teachers. The effect of this can be seen in the improvements in progress made by, for example, groups of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The successful strategies used to improve attainment and progress in English have been applied more widely and the results of this are evident in the improvement in a number of key attainment indicators. However, the pace of improvement in mathematics is slower.

Members of the governing body are knowledgeable and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have high expectations for improvement in outcomes for students and hold senior leaders adequately to account. Staff have a shared vision for the work of the school as was confirmed by the large majority of positive responses from staff relating to leadership and management. Nevertheless, school leaders are well aware that there is more work to do in order to meet their own high aspirations. In particular, the quality of departmental self-evaluation is inconsistent and improvement plans too often lack sufficient detail about how improvement is to be achieved. However, the improvements achieved and the good safeguarding procedures demonstrate a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Leadership of the sixth form is also satisfactory, resulting in a clear trend in improved outcomes and provision for students. The school has been working on the improvement of the curriculum, with a particular focus on developing more vocational and life-skills courses to improve the outcomes for less-able students. Plans are in place to introduce appropriate courses. This improved curriculum should enhance the already good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



19 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Downend Comprehensive School, Bristol, BS16 6XA

Following the recent inspection, your school has been judged satisfactory. After the last inspection in 2009, examination results improved steadily but when your headteacher arrived at the beginning of the year, he remodelled the leadership team and put a big emphasis on making sure that all students achieve their targets. Senior leaders have also worked to improve the quality of teaching and reduce the number of dull lessons. As a result, you are starting to make much better progress in lessons and attain better results.

You told us that you enjoy school and that you feel safe. You said that bullying is rare and usually dealt with well. We took note of what some of you said about behaviour and followed this up with the school. We judged behaviour to be satisfactory. Some lessons set the same work for all students, which is too hard for some and too easy for others. The marking of your books is regular and your teachers generally show you how to improve your work. Most of you said that teaching is usually good. We found that just over half of the lessons we saw were good or better, and none was inadequate, which means that teaching is satisfactory overall.

To improve the school and help you to make faster progress in your learning, we have asked the school to make sure that:

- lessons meet the different needs of all groups of students
- your teachers check regularly in lessons to see how well you are learning, especially in mathematics
- middle leaders evaluate more carefully how well they are providing you with the right teaching to enable you to make even better progress.

I should like to thank you all for the welcome we received, and to thank especially those of you who gave up your time to talk to us or to complete our questionnaires.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**