

Downland School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	126550
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	381246
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2012
Lead inspector	Steffi Penny HMI

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

The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of students	11–16
Gender of students	Boys
Number of students on the school roll	66
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Evans
Headteacher	Phil Beaumont
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2008
School address	Downlands Road Devizes Wiltshire SN10 5EF
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Residential provision	Downland School
Social care unique reference number	SCO39019
Social care inspector	Thomas Webber

Age group	11–16
Inspection date(s)	13–14 June 2012
Inspection number	381246



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Introduction

Inspection team

Steffi Penny

Her Majesty's Inspector

Thomas Webber

Social care inspector

Peter Clifton

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons taught by 12 staff and looked at students' work. In addition they observed other activities taking place, for example the breakfast club, break times, lunchtimes and the residential provision. Discussions were held with staff, students and members of the governing body. In planning the inspection, the lead inspector found no responses made by parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including that relating to: students' achievement, behaviour and attendance; the quality of teaching; and safeguarding. The team analysed one parents' and carers' questionnaire and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

In this average-sized special school, most students are of White British heritage, with a few coming from other backgrounds including a small proportion that belong to the Traveller community. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is double that seen nationally and increasing. Students are admitted from a wide catchment area and a considerably greater number than is usual join or leave the school part-way through their school career. All students have a statement of educational needs relating to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The vast majority of students have additional complex difficulties, often relating to autistic spectrum conditions, dyslexia, dyspraxia and a few are also disabled. Most are vulnerable students for whom mainstream settings have previously proved unsuccessful.

The school has a weekly residential facility used by up to 22 students each evening. There are additional clubs, including the breakfast club and a residential provision that are managed by the governing body.

Since the previous inspection, refurbishment of the science laboratory, food technology room and several classrooms has been undertaken. Also, there has been considerable turbulence in staffing with prolonged illness of staff in key positions. There is currently an acting head of care and deputy head of care, and acting deputy headteacher.

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	2
Achievement of students	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of students	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school; it is not yet outstanding because greater focus is required on students' literacy and numeracy skills, and the professional development of staff requires improvement to ensure increased student achievement along with the enhancement of strategic leadership skills. In addition, some students are too dependent on adults to identify when they have reached their targets and how to reach the next level.
- The good curriculum and provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are underpinned by good teaching. Thorough, accurate, and regular assessment helps teachers to meet students' individual needs effectively. Students are known as individuals, with any additional support that they require being of good quality so they make good progress and achieve well.
- The school works very effectively with a range of agencies to ensure the safety and mental well-being of students and provides a caring, safe and inclusive environment. Through this work, and the clear expectations demonstrated by staff, students' behaviour is typically good. As a result, learning is good and students are able to effectively manage their own behaviour and conduct. A consequence is that an impressive 90% of students continue in further education, with the others gaining apprenticeships and/or employment when they leave school.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, senior staff and governing body know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Nevertheless, the senior leadership team has needed to take on several additional roles and responsibilities. Its members are aware that while the management of performance has been maintained this has hampered their ability to ensure that the professional development of all staff has a strong enough focus within the school and residential provision. There have been insufficient opportunities to share good practice among staff and to moderate

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work with other schools.

- The residential provision is good and is a significant benefit to the students who use it. However, not all minimum standards are met.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase students' independence by ensuring that in all subjects, and in all year groups, they can knowledgeably inform adults when they think they have reached their learning targets or can demonstrate that they are performing at a higher level.
- Improve the professional development of staff by increasing the opportunities for staff to:
 - see outstanding examples of work in the areas that they lead and manage
 - share students' work more often so that all staff have a good understanding about the capabilities of each student in different contexts
 - conduct moderation of students' work with other schools.
- Build on the very best work in the school to raise attainment in English and mathematics, so that in all lessons staff ensure that they also focus on developing students' literacy and numeracy skills based on an accurate knowledge of the students' current individual targets.
- The school must ensure that it meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools that have not been met.

Main report

Achievement of students

Students enter the school generally with attainment that is low compared with age-related expectation. Students' progress from their individual starting points is good, and achievement is good across the school with students gaining external accreditation in a wide range of GCSE and vocational subjects, sometimes at the higher levels. Those students who have been at the school the longest, those who are most vulnerable due to their circumstances and those in residential units, make better progress than their classmates. Conversely, those few students who do not attend as often as they should make less progress.

Although students can readily explain what their learning targets are, not enough of them can identify for themselves when they have achieved their target or have a clear idea how they can improve their work to reach the next level. Where students could do this, generally those in Key Stage 4, it was because teachers provided them with written information which identified their current attainment in the different

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aspects of their subject and clearly demonstrated what was specifically needed to be done or improved on to reach the next level.

Students take pride in the presentation of their work. During the inspection some outstanding learning was seen, mainly in Year 10. In an English lesson the enthusiasm of students was palpable in the way they discussed and wrote extensively about the text *Of Mice and Men* they were studying; in large part due to the energy and enthusiasm of the teacher. In a mathematics lesson, students were avidly working through problems on percentages. Here, their workbooks showed the excellent breadth, depth and range of work they had covered in a short space of time. Students' work throughout the school in art and design is exemplary, given their starting points. However, in spite of all these aspects of outstanding work currently seen in the school these levels of excellence are not yet consistent and the impact of the improved quality of teaching has not resulted in significantly improved attainment and achievement of students. In particular, the proportion of students gaining GCSEs in English and mathematics is not high enough, and the gaps for students known to be eligible for free school meals could close even more rapidly.

Quality of teaching

Teaching seen during the inspection was generally good or better. Lesson plans now concentrate more effectively on what students are expected to learn, rather than the activities to be undertaken. Because of this, teachers frequently refer to students' individual subject-specific learning targets and what the learning intention of the lesson is. Most students are very positive about the teaching and learning in the school.

During the inspection some outstanding teaching was seen, most notably in English, mathematics and science. In a Year 8 science lesson students accurately investigated a wide range of data by considering a number of different variables and were able to identify a fair test. Adept questioning by the teacher, along with the use of peer and group work to extend the students' listening, speaking, recording and thinking skills, were the key to the lesson's success. However, in some lessons the pace of learning slows when introductions are too long and the teacher talks too much. In these lessons, the more-able students have fewer opportunities to get on with the challenging, problem-solving activities that really make them think hard.

While English and mathematics are taught very effectively as discrete subjects, not all teachers, support and residential staff ensure that aspects of literacy and numeracy are developed in other lessons or everyday situations. This dampens the acceleration that students make in honing their skills. Part of the reason why literacy and numeracy do not have a strong enough focus throughout the school is due to weaknesses in the professional development of teachers, teaching support and residential staff.

Good communication systems and working arrangements are established between the teaching and residential staff. This enables care staff to contribute and

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participate in the educational progress of the residential pupils and ensures that a cohesive and holistic approach is undertaken.

Behaviour and safety of students

Typically students are keen to learn because lessons are interesting and relevant to the world about them and their examination courses. Behaviour over time is good and students know how to keep safe. They apply this knowledge in practical subjects where they use equipment with care and consideration for the safety of others; most students say they feel safe in school.

The school maintains a zero tolerance in respect to bullying. Overall, students know about different forms of bullying such as cyber-bullying, persistent name-calling and repeated emotional, verbal and physical abuse. Most students say that bullying is quickly and effectively dealt with. Actions taken during the inspection and school records are in concord with these views. Staff who are specifically responsible for the safeguarding of students are assiduous and tenacious in their endeavours to secure the safety of students.

Attendance is around average for this type of school. The attendance of residential students is higher than for their classmates. The school has rightly worked extremely hard with other services to ensure that attendance has improved, in particular, for students who are persistently absent from school. Nevertheless, there remain a few students who are not sufficiently supported by their families to ensure that they attend regularly enough to secure a good education.

Leadership and management

The school maintains good and effective leadership. This also ensures that the management of the residential provision is good. Staff have been working hard since the previous inspection in the face of adversity. They have pulled together to fill in teaching and management gaps and continue to drive improvement, although not at the pace that leaders had originally planned. Strong leadership is provided by the team which has supported the residential provision when key personnel have been absent. The school continues to head in the right direction and students continue to make good progress and achieve well in all aspects of their academic and personal development. The school and the governing body are fully aware that the interim arrangements in the school, including the residential side, need to come swiftly to a close in order to increase its capacity to improve further.

The increased rigour with which students' attainment and progress are assessed has led to early identification of, and swift actions to prevent, any increased falling behind and to set even more challenging targets. The school is very inclusive and leaders are persistent in gaining access for students and their families to any necessary outside support along with adapting the school's provision, for example, the new sensory room. This demonstrates the leadership's good promotion of equal opportunities and their tackling of any discrimination.

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Safeguarding arrangements are robust and all staff undertake appropriate training. Staff have an excellent understanding of the needs of all students and how to safeguard them. The school has appropriate procedures for ensuring that all adults who work in the school are suitably checked for their ability to work with the students. The single central register meets all requirements.

The governing body has several new recruits who complement the existing team very effectively. Training for their roles has begun and they are already actively supporting and challenging the school. The school has found it difficult to recruit more parents and carers, and is investigating ways to ensure that they have a greater involvement with school governance and improvement.

In all subjects there is a good range of different types of work that is completed and increases in complexity, demonstrating a broad breadth and depth of subject coverage. Themes which ensure the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are integrated through all of the work of the school. The school provides residential pupils with excellent opportunities to engage and participate in a wide range of activities both within the school and in the wider community. A good balance is maintained between free time and organised activities.

The curriculum has been successfully reviewed to ensure that students develop their skills sequentially and that students in Years 10 and 11 have equality of access to the optional courses available. The timing of these optional courses enables students to work for a prolonged period in the afternoon on a single subject. Students and staff told inspectors how much they appreciated this. During the inspection it was clear how this arrangement had increased students' levels of concentration and had enabled the completion of larger and more complicated practical work in photography, and in art and design. Also, in history, students wrote more extensively and learned more.

All courses in Key Stage 4 provide opportunities for students to gain nationally recognised qualifications through 'Unit awards', Entry Level, BTEC or GCSE. Activities and personal interests are also accredited, for example sailing, sports leadership, and speedboat safety; a new innovative feature is the external accreditation of fishing activities.

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Residential provision

The overall effectiveness of the residential provision and outcomes for residential students are good. The previous recommendations identified have been addressed.

Records relating to complaints, restraints, medication and staff training are not being consistently and comprehensively maintained. New recommendations and areas for further improvement reflect the deficiencies which are due, in part, to the key post of head of care being vacant. In order to meet the national minimum standards the school must ensure that:

- comprehensive daily records are maintained for the administration of medication
- comprehensive records are maintained when residential pupils go missing
- behaviour management plans are established.

Residential students are looked after by a staff team who are trained to meet statutory requirements and are competent to meet their needs. However, additional training provided to staff is somewhat limited. Staff are very committed to providing the best level of pastoral care and support to residential students. Routines run very smoothly to ensure that they are very well cared for. A friendly, caring and relaxed atmosphere is evident with positive and relaxed relationships existing between residential students and staff.

Residential students receive continuity and consistency of care from a stable core staff team. Effective systems are established to ensure good communication is maintained between the different staff disciplines within the school and with students' parents and carers. They live in an environment where their social, emotional and healthcare needs are met. They enjoy a healthy, varied and nutritious diet and speak positively about the quality and quantity of meals provided.

Residential students are provided with a good choice of leisure and recreational opportunities. These promote their personal interests and provide opportunities for them to enjoy new experiences. Incidents of residential students going missing are rare. Bullying is not seen as a cause for concern. Residential students stated that any incidents are dealt with promptly. They are fully aware of how to complain and are supported to raise any issues openly with staff who ensure that any concerns are addressed.

Residential students are fully supported to develop socially acceptable behaviour. This promotes their self-esteem and provides them with a sense of achievement. As a result, residential students have made significant progress in improving and managing their behaviour more effectively. They spoke enthusiastically about their overall experience of living at the school and how this has had a positive impact on their behaviour.

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The practice of safeguarding and protection of all students is paramount to the school, with staff acting as strong advocates for them. Robust recruitment practices are also established for the protection of students. Health and safety practices are in place to ensure that staff and students are fully safeguarded.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- Prescribed medicines are given only to the children to whom they are prescribed. Children allowed to self-medicate are assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so (NMS 3.7).
- A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any physical intervention. Records may include the information in Appendix 2 (use of physical restraint). The record is made within 24 hours of the sanction being applied and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of physical intervention restraint and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice (NMS 12.6).
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate (NMS 13.3).
- The school’s procedures are compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. Where children placed out of authority go missing, the Head of Care follows the local RMFHC protocol and complies with and makes staff aware of any other processes required by the placing authority (NMS 15.7).
- Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children as they relate to the purpose of the setting. Training keeps them up to date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the school (NMS 19.1).

These are the grades for the boarding provision/These are the grades for the residential provision

Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience/ Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	2
Outcomes for residential students	2
Quality of residential provision and care	2
Residential students’ safety	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	2

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 students' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its students well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its students.
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 students. 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Student referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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 student in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the students' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of students at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well students behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Students' 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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 students 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 students are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the students' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe students are in school, including in lessons, and their understanding of risks. Students' 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.

15 June 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of Downland School, Devizes SN10 5EF

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school and the residential provision recently. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

You go to a good school, which is well led and managed so that it is steadily improving. You are keen to do well and staff are very committed to helping you fulfil your potential. Most teaching is good or better because lessons are interesting, relevant and your behaviour is good. As a result those of you who attend regularly make at least good progress and achieve well. Those students who have been at the school the longest, those who are most vulnerable due to their circumstances and those who board achieve the best. Residential students benefit greatly from the care, guidance and support they receive. There are a few students who do not attend school as often as they should.

The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body know what needs to be done to make the school even better. To enhance your achievement and that of other students we have asked them to:

- make sure that all students can identify when they have reached their learning targets or can demonstrate that they are performing at a higher level
- improve the professional development of all staff
- make sure that in all lessons staff help to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills
- ensure that the school meets all of the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

The adults in your school want it to be even better. You can all help by coming to school as often as you can, trying as hard as you can in all of your lessons and letting adults know if your work is too easy or too hard.

Thank you once again for helping us. It was a great pleasure to meet and talk with some of you. We wish all of you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

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