

Downsbrook Middle School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	125894
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	381148
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2012
Lead inspector	Michael Pye

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

Type of school	Middle-deemed primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	8–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Glickman
Headteacher	Jonathan Grover
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 November 2008
School address	Dominion Road Worthing BN14 8GD
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Age group	8–12
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Pye

Additional inspector

Carolyn Steer

Additional inspector

Anthony Mundy

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Day one coincided with the Worthing school transition day which resulted in inspectors having to look at a large range of pupils' work. They also heard pupils read and observed teaching and learning in 14 lessons. A total of 14 teachers were seen. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers and held meetings with members of the governing body, pupils and staff. The inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at data relating to pupils' attainment and progress. The school's development plan, lesson and curriculum plans, governing body documentation and school policies and procedures, particularly those relating to the health, safety and safeguarding of pupils, were scrutinised. The inspectors also analysed 40 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as those returned by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Pupils in this larger-than-average primary school come from predominantly White British heritages. The next largest group is from an 'Any other' Asian background. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or those supported at school action plus is well above average. The main group consists of pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school has been nationally recognised through the Artsmark Gold and the Dyslexia Friendly awards. A privately run before- and after-school club is situated on the school site. This is inspected separately and the report can be found on the Ofsted website.

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 pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because there are inconsistencies in teaching and the tracking of the progress of pupil groups is insufficiently developed.
- Pupils achieve well given their starting points, and this includes those few pupils for whom English is an additional language.
- Teaching is good. A coaching programme, together with valuable feedback from senior leaders' observations, has brought improvement but a few inconsistencies remain. These relate to aspects of teachers' questioning and marking, including the use of consolidation periods to identify any gaps in learning.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Attendance is above average and pupils say they feel safe and enjoy their schooling.
- Leadership and management are good. Successful moves have been made to distribute leadership responsibilities and increase accountability. The school tracks the progress of pupils, but not all leaders and teachers have a sufficient knowledge of or involvement in the tracking of the progress of the various pupil groups. Strong leadership by the headteacher has ensured that there is a shared commitment to improving the quality of teaching but also retaining the personal feel of the school. Regular monitoring takes place and the management of teachers' performance is rigorous and successful in improving teaching. The governors monitor the school well. As a consequence of all these monitoring strategies, accurate self-evaluation takes place and very appropriate development priorities are identified.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and achievement further by eliminating the few inconsistencies between teachers by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use regular consolidation periods, focused, challenging questioning and effective marking to reinforce pupils' learning and to identify any gaps in their knowledge
 - giving pupils adequate time and opportunity to reflect on and respond to the comments of teachers when marking
- Build on the existing tracking of the progress of the various pupil groups through involving leaders at all levels and teachers in the process.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The very large majority of parents and carers returning the questionnaire believe progress to be good and inspectors endorse that view. The majority of pupils enter Year 4 with below expected levels of skills and knowledge for their age. They make good progress, and this includes pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. On leaving school their attainment is broadly average.

Pupils respond well and maintain good reading diaries. High-attaining readers are keen and enjoy reading. They divide (segment) difficult words into sounds and blend them to pronounce the word correctly. Low attainers also enjoy reading and can relate in detail about the book they are reading, including references to characters. The ability of some younger middle- and lower-attaining pupils to segment is less secure.

Pupils achieve well because they enjoy working in teams. During the inspection, Year 4 pupils enjoyed collaborating to produce a story conclusion. In Year 5 they willingly engaged when rehearsing a song and developed a composition based around a sea and beach theme. Pupils take a pride in their work and this helps them to make good progress in English. Year 4 pupils carefully wrote poems based around 'The Magic Box'. By Year 6 they write for different purposes when completing war diaries as part of the Second World War topic. By Year 7, pupils have made good progress and write detailed factual accounts and develop their own version of a speech by Harold Godwinson in 1066. The pupils concentrate well. For example, Year 7 pupils focused well on profit and loss calculations linked to Olympic artefacts and showed a determination to spend their £250 budget wisely. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, the pupils worked well to explore patterns of a geometric design.

Attainment at the end of Year 6 is usually average but dipped in 2011 to below average. The issues arising from this particular cohort were investigated thoroughly and have been addressed. The school's tracking procedures show that action has

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been effective and that current pupils in Year 6 are on track to attain at broadly average levels, and this includes reading. Given their starting points, this constitutes good progress. Findings from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and hearing pupils read confirm the school's assessment and that this level of work is continued into Year 7, including for reading.

Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs progress in line with their peers. The school has identified some weaker attainment in mathematics for pupils at school action and school action plus, and this is being addressed through appropriate interventions. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds make similarly good progress. No perceived difference in the progress of pupil groups was observed in lessons or in the work scrutiny.

Quality of teaching

The very large majority of parents and carers judged teaching to be good. Inspection evidence endorses these views and the profile of the quality of teaching is improving. Teachers prepare and organise the lessons well and this ensures good pace. A Year 6 mathematics lesson saw a variety of resources being used that engaged the pupils well. A well-taught Year 4 personal and social education lesson included good use of the interactive whiteboard to add pace and focus and well-prepared cards used to challenge pupils to make judgements about how they feel about change. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and show high energy and enthusiasm during lessons, thereby enthusing the pupils. In a Year 4 English lesson, the teacher skilfully hosted a recorded spelling challenge game. Pupils responded very well to acting as a leader, a motivator or a scribe as their teams tackled various problems based around contracting words such as 'I've' or identifying phonemes. This resulted in good learning. The 'advert break' gave an opportunity to check on the learning and understanding of pupils.

A few inconsistencies exist between teachers. Not all consistently use consolidation periods or sufficiently in-depth questioning to challenge and ascertain the depth of pupils' learning and then change the direction of the lesson to meet any apparent needs of the pupils. Good marking exists where pupils are challenged and given clear guidance on how to improve; most, but not all marking does this. References to learning targets in lessons and marking, and the degree to which pupils are given opportunities to reflect on the marking, are inconsistent. Besides opportunities for teamwork, lesson observations show numerous, good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils show respect for others' achievements. Some effective intervention work aids the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The great majority of staff, parents, pupils and carers support this view. The pupils also say that the school deals quickly in reaction to any reported incidents. Consequently, the school is a well-

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ordered and safe place. There is a strong contribution to pupil safety promoted through the curriculum. For example, pupils know the dangers of cyber-bullying and internet safety, as a result of an in-school presentation by the police as well as the school's rules. The pupils know how to keep safe. The recently appointed behaviour specialist has successfully developed, in negotiation with the pupils, a broad range of strategies to support good behaviour, including the 'Fantastic Frank' guidance. The great majority of parents and carers believe that their children are safe at school. While the attitudes of the great majority of pupils are positive and they engage well in lessons, there are a very few examples of this positive behaviour not being totally sustained. For example, in the occasional lesson, there is some low-level disruption from very few pupils. Behavioural records and discussions with pupils indicate that behaviour over time is good.

Leadership and management

The very large majority of parents and carers rightly believe the school to be well led. One parent echoed others when writing, 'The children come first at Downsbrook. The school encourages, nurtures and cherishes the children.' The relatively new senior management team has successfully raised expectations. Regular progress meetings raise relevant issues, help to identify underachieving pupils and hold teachers to account. Through such actions, issues relating to equality of opportunity are addressed well. The school acknowledges the need to review the processes relating to the tracking of different pupil groups. The curriculum emphasises that discrimination will not be tolerated. Stereotyping is challenged. An embedded rigorous cycle of monitoring and self-evaluation exists and this usefully involves governors, senior leaders and subject coordinators. Appropriate priorities are consequently identified. For example, through the use of a wide range of monitoring strategies, including pupil conferencing, work scrutiny and planning surveys, the English coordinator identified the need for more variety in terms of what variety of books the pupils experience. The introduction of a 'mystery' text is the result and appeals to any reluctant readers.

The school is developing the roles of leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics. This is to ensure that all have a clear knowledge of attainment and progress in their areas of responsibility, and that their action plans demonstrate how their area supports the priorities of the whole-school improvement plan. Teaching and learning are robustly monitored and bringing improvement, though a few inconsistencies remain. The governors are full participants in monitoring; they visit regularly, have a good knowledge of the strengths and areas for development, and consequently challenge the school well. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and governors have clear systems for the oversight of checks for adults working in the school. Their immediate reaction to the 2011 dip in attainment was to request reports from the subject coordinators to ensure that issues arising were quickly addressed. This, alongside improving attendance and attainment and progress levels, reflects a secure capacity to sustain improvement.

Performance management is embedded and well linked to school priorities and

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professional development. Partnerships are very good and add well to the curriculum. For example, the local school network helped train learning mentors, while a bank contributed expertise to the 'Money Week'. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their literacy and numeracy skills in the topics. Pupils carry out research about medieval England, and the impact of the Artsmark award is seen in the three-dimensional work produced by pupils. A beautiful, woven panel of the Bayeux Tapestry manifestly came from the pupils' high motivation. One parent echoed the views of others when writing, 'My son has also had lots of opportunities to try many different activities and has become more confident as a result.' The curriculum provides good opportunities for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. An assembly included pupils reflecting and empathising with a seriously disabled adult who without limbs managed to get up off the floor. Pupils readily identified with the message that if you get hit down in life then with continuous effort you can always succeed. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers would recommend the school to others.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil 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 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.
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 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.



July 6 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Downsbrook Middle School, Worthing BN14 8GD

You may remember our recent inspection. You were eager to tell us about your school and we listened carefully to what you told us. Like you, we judge Downsbrook to be a good school. Some of you completed a questionnaire for us – thank you. These showed that the great majority of you are happy to come to school and that you learn a lot in lessons.

We particularly liked the way you behave well, have good attitudes to work and that you get along well together. Your attendance is above average. We also liked your reaction to the opportunities you have to think deeply about life around you. I could see how you were very moved by the video of the disabled man whose message was to get up from the blows of life, and work hard to succeed.

You told us that you enjoy lessons and that 'Teachers make learning fun.' We judge teaching to be good and like the various activities that the teachers plan for you. We also like the way that your teachers plan work that challenges you to think hard. You can help by telling your teachers when the work is too easy or too hard for you. We have asked that all teachers use challenging questioning and that they allow you time to report back to them about what you understand or are uncertain about. We have also asked that all teachers give you time to think about, and carry out any instructions they give you in marking. Finally, we have asked that they remind you more often about your learning targets.

Your school has improved and the adults want things to get even better. They keep a close eye on what happens in school and, along with the governors they identify very good priorities for the school's future. The school also tracks your individual progress closely. They are going to make sure that they look at the progress of the different groups of pupils within the school, for example those who have English as an additional language.

Thank you once again for your help and I wish you all the very best for the future.
Yours sincerely

Michael Pye
Lead inspector

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