

Downs Way School

Downs Way, Oxted, Surrey, RH8 0NZ

Inspection dates

22–23 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The proportion of good teaching is not yet high enough to ensure that pupils' learning is consistently good.
- Progress in writing and mathematics does not yet match the good achievement seen in reading, particularly for the more-able pupils.
- Teachers' performance has not, until recently, been managed with sufficient rigour to ensure that pupils' learning is rapid and consistent.
- The governing body has not challenged school leaders enough to make sure that the pace of pupils' learning is as fast as it should be..

The school has the following strengths

- Children make mostly good progress in the Reception classes because the teaching is good. Reading is also taught well, boosted by the recent implementation of a whole-school programme to support pupils' understanding of the relationship between sounds and letters.
- Senior leaders and the governing body are highly committed to the school and provide a nurturing environment much valued by parents and carers,
- Pupils are cared for very well. They are very proud of their school, feel very safe and are well behaved.
- The provision made for disabled pupils or those with special educational needs has improved and their progress is now at least in line with that of similar pupils nationally.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, all of which were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, the school's middle and senior leaders, and with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 49 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documentation, including records of the monitoring of teaching, the school improvement plan, records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, and extracts from the school's tracking of pupils' progress. A scrutiny of pupils' written work was also undertaken and the inspector listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Downs Way is a smaller-than-average infant school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action is well below average. The proportion of pupils at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium) is below the national average.
- The school has gained a number of awards, including the Inclusion Quality Mark.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are organised in three parallel classes, each with pupils from both year groups.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching enables pupils to achieve consistently well by:
 - providing well-paced activities which challenge the full range of pupils, particularly the more able
 - securing consistency and accuracy in the assessment of pupils' progress
 - establishing shared high expectations of the quality of presentation of pupils' written work and a consistent approach to classroom management.
- Improve pupils' achievement in mathematics and writing by:
 - rigorously checking to ensure that pupils' progress is at least at the expected level year on year
 - providing more frequent opportunities for pupils to record their work independently in mathematics
 - ensuring that staff are confident and accurate in their assessment of pupils' skills in writing
 - providing frequent, planned opportunities for pupils to apply their writing and mathematical skills in subjects across the curriculum.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that:
 - the roles and responsibilities of all members of the senior leadership team are reviewed and redefined
 - all members of the senior leadership team are held fully accountable for their work
 - the governing body fulfils its duty to challenge, as well as support, school leaders more robustly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Progress and pupil outcomes have been too variable since the last inspection because teaching has not provided sufficient sustained challenge.
- Progress in writing and mathematics does not match the consistency seen in reading. Only now is learning in these areas becoming rapid enough to compensate for weaker historic progress. Reading has been a focus area for the school as it implemented a robust programme for the teaching of phonics (the linking of sounds and letters) in Reception, later extended through the school. As a result, progress in reading is good.
- The attainment and progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs had been inconsistent. More-effective support for these pupils through more-rigorous leadership, more-targeted intervention groups, improved identification of needs and more-effective deployment of teaching assistants has ensured that, overall, these pupils now make much better progress, despite a few remaining inconsistencies.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 have varied significantly. More often than not, however, attainment is above average in reading and mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 has fluctuated. However overall, there has been a clear, if modest, trend of improvement at Level 3 in writing and, more robustly, in reading.
- Children enter Reception with skills mostly in line with those expected for their age, although aspects of communication and language are generally the weakest. Most children reach, and some exceed, the levels expected by the end of the year, so that their progress is, overall, good.
- The use of pupil premium funding to support an intensive specialist programme in mathematics, specifically focused on pupils in receipt of free school meals, resulted in a much higher proportion making at least the expected progress in 2012 than in the previous year. Other funding was deployed to enhance provision to support the development of pupils' self-esteem through, for example, a 'sheltered' activity club for selected pupils at lunchtimes.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Over time, there has not been sufficient good teaching to ensure that pupils, particularly the more able, make consistently good progress, other than in Reception.
- There have been inconsistencies in the way teachers assess how well pupils are doing. However, some aspects of assessment have improved. Until recently, teachers' marking had often been superficial. An agreed approach is now in place, although there is not always a clear record of the advice given to pupils as to the next steps in their learning. Pupils use a system of coloured cups to indicate their confidence in a particular task.
- While pupils' current work suggests that teachers have raised their expectations of the quality and presentation of written work, there is scope for further improvement. The quantity of work recorded in some subjects is modest.
- Despite consistently good relationships, the style of presentation in the less-effective lessons is sometimes uninspiring which, together with over-extended introductions, contributes to a slow pace of learning. This leads to restlessness by pupils and a loss of engagement, particularly for the more-able pupils.
- More-effective monitoring of teaching and more-rigorous implementation of the school's performance management processes, together with more-consistent approaches to the structuring of lessons, are helping to raise both teachers' expectations and the quality of teaching. Teachers now have greater access to data and greater confidence in analysing pupils' progress.
- Where the pace is brisker and learning is most effective, teachers match work closely to pupils' different abilities. In a successful Year 1 and 2 science lesson, on changing materials, lively presentation and the planning of work which caught pupils' interest produced a mature response

and ensured that pupils made good progress.

- Reading is taught well and progress is generally good. The introduction of an intensive programme to promote pupils' knowledge of phonics and their reading skills is ensuring consistent practice across the school.
- Following recent reorganisation, support staff are now deployed flexibly to support the most vulnerable pupils. This is contributing to the improved progress of these pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is almost always good. Where teaching provides some challenge, pupils are well motivated and eager to learn. Even in less stimulating lessons, they remain patient and attentive, though their engagement dips. Most parents and carers who expressed a view feel that behaviour is good.
- There is no record of any recent exclusions. Pupils love school and have few concerns about behaviour. Racist incidents, inappropriate behaviour or disruption of lessons are rare. Pupils are very confident in the adults around them and feel that they are easily approachable. If any incidents occur, robust procedures ensure that they are managed effectively.
- The school is inclusive and provides for pupils with a wide range of needs. Pupils who are identified as vulnerable are supported effectively.
- There are no current reports of any type of bullying. In so far as their age permits, pupils have some awareness that bullying may take different forms, such as internet bullying or in response to physical differences.
- Pupils have a good understanding of risk, through the school's input on personal safety, particularly road safety. Pupils have some awareness of the need to keep themselves safe in different circumstances. The school provides swimming lessons for Year 2 pupils, prior to their leaving the school.
- Effective systems ensure that pupils' attendance has been at least in line with the national average, year on year. Persistent absence is rare. Pupils generally arrive punctually.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders, including the governing body, have not been rigorous enough until recently in addressing inconsistencies in teaching and learning. There have been weaknesses within the senior leadership team. For example, the responsibilities of the assistant headteacher and the timescales for the completion of assigned duties have not been defined with sufficient precision. This has constrained the efficiency of the leadership team.
- The school has recognised these shortcomings and is becoming more effective as a result of broadly accurate school self-evaluation. Leaders have an appropriate agenda for further improvement centred on improving teaching, learning and pupils' progress. Monitoring and evaluation, including the monitoring of teaching, are now much more rigorous.
- The school is making better use of performance management processes. Although not evidently the case in the past, salary progression decisions are now firmly linked to pupils' progress. Staff are very positive about the improved opportunities for professional development. They feel that this has made the staff more cohesive and aspirational, and has provided support for the improvement of both teaching and middle management skills. For example, middle leaders have more opportunities to carry out their roles, such as checking teaching and learning.
- Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. While the proportion of pupils attaining Level 3 has increased in some subjects, the trajectory of improvement has been erratic. However, more-cohesive leadership and a robust improvement programme are ensuring that the school has capacity to improve and is moving in the right direction. The school has received good support from its local authority and this has contributed significantly to the increased

momentum of progress recently.

- Priority is given to teaching reading, writing and mathematics. The remaining subjects are taught through a programme of themes and topics. While current year evidence is limited, pupils' response to activities such as outings suggests that they enjoy their learning. However, as almost all of the after-school clubs involve a cost to parents and carers, this could, potentially, exclude some pupils and hinder their progress.
- Pupils' spiritual and moral development is supported well through collective worship and religious education. Although pupils have relatively few planned opportunities to engage with other cultures, this is increasingly offset by the growing diversity of the school's intake.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is gaining a new momentum, following an external audit of its operations. The restructuring of committees and the beneficial impact of active new members is giving governors a much greater understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and an increasingly accurate perception of its overall effectiveness. Although always thorough in their approach to school business affairs, governors are becoming more robust in challenging the school's performance and this is evident in minutes of recent meetings. They understand the quality of teaching across the school and are aware of the need to ensure that pay and promotion are rigorously aligned to teachers' effectiveness. Governors undertake regular training. They understand how well pupils achieve and are aware of the school's responsibility to ensure equality of opportunity and to tackle discrimination. They have been involved in decisions relating to the deployment of pupil premium funding and in analysing its impact. As a result, they can demonstrate that this additional funding is helping to close the gap in pupils' achievement, regardless of initial disadvantage. Governors ensure, along with senior leaders, that safeguarding arrangements are secure and, at the time of the inspection, effective.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	125043
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	402304

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	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Weightman
Headteacher	Susan Palmer
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2010
Telephone number	01883 712518
Fax number	01883 716904
Email address	office@downs-way.surrey.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', 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.



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 and as part of the inspection.

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

© Crown copyright 2012

