

# Downham Feoffees Primary School

Main Street, Little Downham, Ely, CB6 2ST

**Inspection dates** 2–3 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Outstanding leadership from the headteacher has forged a very strong staff team which, together with the governing body, has brought about significant improvements in teaching and achievement since the last inspection.
- Pupils achieve well from expected starting points, and standards are above average. Achievement in Key Stage 2 has improved rapidly.
- Teaching is confident and lessons run at a brisk pace, making good use of resources to interest and engage pupils.
- Pupils behave extremely well both in class and around the school. They are very keen to learn and join in enthusiastically with the activities.
- Pupils feel very safe in school and have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe.
- The impact of leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, has been most considerable in driving improvement. Staff are united in wanting the best for the pupils.
- Pupils and parents say how much the school has changed since the new headteacher arrived, and how much better it is now.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always make the best use of data to plan activities that are sufficiently challenging for all pupils.
- Pupils do not always have time to respond to the helpful guidance in their exercise books.
- Older pupils have some gaps in their knowledge of mathematics because of weaker teaching when they were younger.
- Some pupils find it difficult to work out mathematical problems in their heads.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons, some of which were joint observations with the headteacher. They also visited some 'golden time' activities.
- The inspectors heard pupils read, attended assemblies and looked closely at examples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, evidence of the school's partnership work and information for families.
- Meetings were held with pupils chosen at random. Discussions were held with the headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, subject leaders, Early Years leader, the special educational needs coordinator, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 14 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke with several parents and carers outside school.
- The inspectors considered 28 staff questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Edgar Hastings

Additional Inspector

## Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families) is low.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics.
- In January 2012, the school was given a notice to improve because it required significant improvement. In September 2012, it was reported to be making good progress in tackling the areas for improvement when it was visited by Her Majesty's Inspector.
- The headteacher joined the school as interim headteacher in February 2012 and became the permanent headteacher in April 2013.
- At the time of this inspection, the deputy headteacher was on maternity leave and there was an acting deputy headteacher.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
  - using progress information even more effectively to plan challenging activities that are precisely matched to pupils' abilities
  - making sure that pupils have time to respond to the good advice that teachers offer when marking their books.
- Speed up progress in mathematics by:
  - plugging any remaining gaps in older pupils' knowledge and understanding
  - increasing all pupils' proficiency in mental mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Good achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 has been maintained over several years because of consistently good teaching. Achievement in Key Stage 2 has improved considerably and is now good because of measures introduced by the new leadership team to speed up pupils' progress and enhance teaching.
- When children join the school in Reception their skills and abilities are typical for their age. They settle quickly and do well because the activities are interesting and enjoyable, and designed to promote their early literacy and numeracy skills. Children gain a good grounding in phonics (the sounds that letters make) so that they can begin to read and spell with confidence.
- Pupils' good progress continues in Key Stage 1. In the Year 1 phonics reading check of 2012, pupils' scores were above average. Pupils continue to improve their reading skills and write well. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been consistently above average over time.
- In the past, pupils underachieved in Key Stage 2 but this is no longer the case. Leaders have eliminated all inadequate teaching and teaching is now consistently good. In 2012, pupils did not do as well in mathematics as they did in English because of some residual gaps in their understanding. The school has worked hard to plug these and the current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach above-average standards in both English and mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress in reading throughout the school. The headteacher introduced reading-record books to encourage a dialogue between home and school, and this has proved successful. Younger pupils use their phonic skills well to read new words and older pupils read widely and discuss the books and authors they enjoy.
- Some pupils are not fully confident in working out mathematical problems in their heads, and this is an area the school has identified for development.
- The school keeps very careful records of the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and frequently reviews how well they are doing, adjusting support accordingly. As a result, standards are rising and pupils make good progress.
- The school has spent its pupil premium funding on additional teaching to meet particular needs. This has resulted in eligible pupils making faster progress. In 2012, there were too few eligible pupils to comment on their performance. Currently, there are no gaps in attainment between eligible pupils and the others.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Very good relationships in class mean that pupils are motivated to learn. Lessons are planned well to appeal to pupils and interesting resources engage them. For example, a lower ability group of Year 6 pupils enjoyed a walk around the school to photograph any perpendicular or parallel lines they could find. They then turned their results into a poster to share with their classmates.
- Teachers keep pupils active in lessons as, for instance, Year 1 pupils kept moving from table to

table to investigate their five senses as part of a science project. The pace of lessons is swift, and teachers use a wide range of approaches to make learning interesting.

- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They are trained well and well briefed, so they know what pupils need to help them speed up their progress and meet individual targets.
- Reading is taught well across the school. Lively phonics sessions capture younger pupils' enthusiasm as they learn the sounds that letters make. Well-planned guided reading helps older pupils to focus on the meaning in text and practise their skills.
- Teachers are skilled at picking up gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge and making sure that they have a secure foundation to build on. The legacy of underachievement from poor teaching in the past is being tackled successfully, although some pupils still struggle with their mental mathematics.
- Children in Reception select activities that are enjoyable, purposeful and planned to interest them. For example, they were writing two-digit numbers on rockets and counting back from twenty. Adults question the children well and take every opportunity to share rich language with them.
- Teaching promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils have studied the poetry of Benjamin Zephaniah and learnt about India and Hinduism. A recent multi-cultural book week was popular, as pupils learnt about different aspects of a range of cultures.
- While teachers generally plan work to meet the needs of most groups of pupils, occasionally the level of challenge is not quite as precise as it could be, so that progress for these pupils slows down.
- Marking is regular and teachers make helpful comments in pupils' books about how they can improve their work. However, they do not always give pupils enough time to respond to these and to act upon them.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. Their behaviour in class and around the school is impeccable. Their behaviour has improved considerably since the last inspection, when it required improvement. This is because the new headteacher has brought in a new approach to managing behaviour, which has proven highly successful. Pupils summed this up as being 'very strict about most things'.
- Pupils say that bullying is no longer a problem, when once it was. This is because any concerns they may have are taken seriously and dealt with immediately. A pupil speaking of the headteacher said: 'She deals with everything. If she says she's going to do something she does it.' Pupils have a very good understanding of different types of bullying, such as cyber bullying.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour consistently and extremely well. Everybody understands the 'golden rules' and abides by them. Pupils who once had difficulty with their behaviour have improved; the school is a calm and purposeful place, where learning takes place uninterrupted.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school, and their parents and carers agree. They understand about

taking risks through the school's highly effective programme of personal, social and health education. They also undertake cycle training and visit the 'life bus' to find out about other potential hazards, such as fire and illegal drugs. They know to 'walk calmly to the end of the field' when the fire alarm sounds.

- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility around the school and perform regular duties. The school council has organised fund raising for table-tennis tables. Pupils enjoy taking part in a wide range of 'golden time' activities with schoolmates of different ages.

## **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- In the short time she has been in post, the headteacher has brought about a dramatic transformation in the school and won over the whole school community. She has combined a relentless and uncompromising drive for improvement with an inspiring vision that gives staff confidence, and enables them to make a real difference to the pupils.
- Teaching, which just over a year ago was bordering on inadequate, is now solidly good and moving close to outstanding. This has improved so rapidly because of excellent coaching and mentoring, which has equipped teachers to take the steps necessary to change their practice.
- A legacy of underachievement in Key Stage 2 from previously poor teaching has been tackled robustly and mainly overcome, with just a few gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge remaining.
- The key to the school's success is highly rigorous checking of all its work, and prompt follow-up to make sure that improvements are secure. The headteacher knows exactly what is going on, but also gives staff the freedom to take responsibility and show initiative. Subject leaders value the opportunity to grow in their roles and to have a greater influence on the work of the school.
- Open and professional dialogue ensures that everybody is clear about the school's strengths and what needs to be improved, and their role in bringing this about. The management of teachers' performance is robust and sets challenging targets for improvement, which are monitored over time. Staff say how much they appreciate having a common goal and moving forward together.
- The curriculum is lively and exciting and gives pupils memorable experiences. Year 6 pupils enjoyed making models of Inca temples as part of their history project. 'Golden time' activities, such as hunting for minibeasts, making cards and mathematical games enable pupils to pursue their own interests in mixed-aged groups. Year 1 pupils recreated the Great Fire of London in the school grounds, setting fire to their model houses to watch the conflagration spread. Then, like Samuel Pepys before them, they wrote about it (although no cheese was buried on this occasion).
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of clubs and visits and visitors, such as an opera singer and a harpist. The school promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well. This ensures that they have equality of opportunity and that no discrimination is tolerated.
- Leaders have worked hard to win the confidence of parents. Responses to Parent View show that this is the case, and that parents are now extremely proud of their school and the way it supports their children.
- The local authority has provided excellent support for the school through each stage of its development, and has worked intensively with teachers and leaders to help secure very positive

outcomes for pupils.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Under new leadership, the governing body has worked very hard to remedy the many weaknesses identified at the last inspection. It has brought high levels of skill and expertise in supporting the school and in providing challenge.
- Governors have a very good understanding of the quality of teaching, the way targets are set for teachers and the progress they are making in reaching them. They know what the school is doing to reward good teaching and to tackle any underperformance.
- Governors know about how well pupils are achieving and how this compares with similar schools. Through regular visits and discussions with subject leaders they keep abreast of improvements.
- Governors keep a close eye on the school's finances; they know how the pupil premium is being spent and the impact it is having on achievement. They make sure that all safeguarding arrangements are in place and up to date.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110799
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	399665

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	194
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stuart Berriman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michelle Siequien
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 September 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01353 699325
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