

Downs Infant School

Ditching Road, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 6JA

Inspection dates 26–27 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Leaders and managers, including governors, have ensured that the school has sustained improvements over a considerable period. Achievement is high and teaching is outstanding.
- Children make very rapid progress from starting points which are below those typically expected for their age. By the time they leave at the end of Year 2 their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is well above national averages.
- Pupils from different groups, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and pupils with additional funding, make progress at rates faster than that found nationally.
- Pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are well cared for and flourish within a safe and happy, learning environment. They are very enthusiastic about learning and love coming to school. Consequently, attendance levels are high.
- A strong focus on developing their creative and artistic skills makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
- Teachers work well together in teams to ensure that activities in all subject areas and year groups are stimulating and engaging. The school recognises that leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in literacy needs to be sharper to maintain these high expectations.
- Parents are unanimous in their praise for the school, and speak warmly about the staff.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 18 lessons or part lessons. All of the teachers were observed.
- Many of the lesson observations were shared with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Short visits were made to observe the quality of teaching and how pupils engaged with the learning.
- Pupils were heard reading and work from each year group was looked at with the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents, including the school's checks on how well it is doing and improvement plan, the school's records of monitoring, tracking information showing the progress of pupils, minutes of meetings of the governing body, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- They met with pupils, interviewed a sample of staff, and spoke to parents. They also spoke to members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of parents were obtained through the school's surveys and the 116 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Written comments from 27 members of staff were also considered. Six parents took the opportunity to write to the inspectors and their views were also considered.

Inspection team

Brian Netto, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Carolyn Steer

Additional Inspector

Stephanie Rogers

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is average. This is additional funding provided for looked after children, pupils eligible for free school meals and children of service families. In this school it applies to the first group only.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- Pupils from the school attend an off-site breakfast and after-school club called A Class of Their Own. This was not part of the inspection. The latest report can be viewed on the Ofsted website.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes to staff and within the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that all teachers with extra responsibilities are able to check regularly on learning so that the school maintains its high achievement, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children's skills are below those expected for their age when children start in Reception, particularly in writing. They quickly settle into routines so that they catch up and experience a rich and stimulating curriculum which promotes rapid acquisition of key skills. They show a high degree of independence and concentration in their work; so that by the time they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage, skills are well above typical expectations.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been well above national averages for over three years, and progress is rapid and sustained.
- Pupils in Year 1 and 2 have made rapid progress in their letters and sounds (phonics). Learning is fun and engages their attention, so they quickly acquire new vocabulary and apply their skills well to understand unfamiliar words. This ensures that their reading improves rapidly. For example, Year 1 quickly saw links between different words which sound the same, but are spelled differently, during a phonics lesson. This enabled the pupils to successfully write sentences using the words in different contexts.
- Pupil premium funding is targeted well to provide support both in class and on a one-to-one basis. Well trained teaching assistants ensure that these pupils make outstanding progress. In the 2012 national tests the attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals was higher than other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence from pupils' work shows that the attainment gap between these pupils and their peers is also narrowing quickly because of this support.
- Careful attention is given to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, by specially trained teaching assistants. As a result, they make progress in line with their peers from often lower starting points.
- The progress of pupils is carefully tracked so that leaders can identify trends in pupil performance. Action is quickly taken so that fast progress is maintained. As a result, more-able girls are making faster progress in mathematics than previously.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers plan lessons which fully engage the pupils, adopting a 'stunning start, marvellous middle and fabulous finish' so that pupils' interests are maintained for long periods. Consequently, teaching is at least good and often outstanding, and pupils acquire knowledge and skills rapidly.
- The best teaching is characterised by effective questioning which probes understanding and challenges pupils to think and reflect. Year 1 made very good progress in their understanding of acrostic poems as the teacher's skilful questions encouraged the use of imaginative descriptions of seascapes. One pupil was delighted to notice that an acrostic was 'words made out of words'!
- The school makes the most of teachers from outside the school who offer expertise in subjects like music and dance. In these lessons, pupils make outstanding progress in acquiring new skills and thoroughly enjoy the activities.
- Calculation is taught very well, and pupils are given challenges which extend their learning and encourage them to work things out for themselves. This helps them to develop resilience when solving problems. For example, Year 2 pupils developed their mathematical language by being challenged to apply logic to identify patterns in numbers, and as a result made good progress.
- Teachers provide detailed and frequent feedback and written guidance so that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to improve their skills.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They use this well to help pupils develop the correct mathematical and grammatical language, and so contribute to outstanding progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils say they feel safe as 'everyone here is nice to you and helps you'. As a result, behaviour is exemplary and pupils are extremely well prepared for their next stage of life. Children in Reception showed an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe from the sun when on holiday, describing a wide range of practical things they could do.
- At the core of the school is the care for the well-being of each individual pupil. This is most clearly evident in the support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Pupils with complex needs are fully integrated into lessons, and this ensures that the school is highly inclusive, and no discrimination is tolerated. Parents spoke in glowing terms of the warm and welcoming environment where no one is left behind.
- Pupils report that bullying is rare and that they are confident that teachers deal fairly with any problems they have.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes towards learning. Relationships with each other and with staff are strong. This helps learning to proceed at a fast pace.
- Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their attendance, which is above the national average.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body use their long standing experience to promote high aspirations, and this has ensured continuous improvements in all aspects of the school over many years.
- All leaders and managers display strong professional standards in their work, and regular checks on learning help teachers with extra responsibilities ensure that the quality of teaching is improving. However, the absence of leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that this area is not as effectively monitored as other areas.
- Staff make the most of opportunities to improve their teaching, particularly through the links with other local schools. A robust system for checking how well they are doing ensures that pay is closely linked to how well the pupils learn and to the school's main priorities for improvement.
- Effective arrangements are in place which help the pupils to move up the school, and good relationships with the local junior school ensure a smooth transition.
- The topics and themes are further enriched by a wide range of after-school activities organised by the school itself, and specialist teaching such as dance and music. Pupils take part in yoga and different sporting and cultural activities which make a strong contribution to their excellent spiritual, social and moral development. Pupils say they enjoy some subjects like art and physical education 'because there are no right or wrong answers'.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who completed the school and inspection surveys, as well as those spoken to, were extremely happy with the school. The following comments reflect these views. 'Downs Infant School is a brilliant school.' 'The way the curriculum is taught enables the children to learn but without too much pressure and parents are actively encouraged to be involved in the process.' One parent said they were proud their child was 'part of such a progressive, nurturing and quite brilliant teaching provider'.
- The local authority rightly gives light touch support to this highly effective school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well informed about the school's performance over the last few years, and take decisive action to hold the school to account for any areas of relative weakness. For example, changes to the way that teachers assess the pupils' understanding of letters and the sounds they make have resulted in rapid improvements. Governors share expertise picked up from training sessions, and a buddy system ensures that new governors are kept fully informed. They support the rewarding of high performance by teachers through the rigorous checking of

how well the pupils are doing. They check that funds are used effectively to support the improvements in pupils' learning, including the pupil premium. They support the school's strong focus on keeping the pupils safe, and ensure that all statutory requirements are in place, including those related to safeguarding.

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	114367
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	412450

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	356
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachel Attwell
Headteacher	Regine Kruger
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2006
Telephone number	01273 296868
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Email address	office@downsinf.brighton-hove.sch.uk

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