

Downend School

Westerleigh Road, Downend, Bristol, BS16 6XA

Inspection dates 23–24 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The inspirational headteacher has developed an aspirational culture throughout the school. Consequently, teachers diligently ensure that students achieve well. Teaching and behaviour have improved and students are making better progress.
- Students, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs and those who receive the pupil premium, make good progress.
- Teachers have high expectations, plan lessons carefully and use resources effectively.
- Students' attitudes to learning are good and they conduct themselves well around the school.
- The school has good procedures to keep students safe. Students know about risk, including when they are online.
- Governors have worked hard to ensure that the school continues to improve. As a result, students make better progress and standards have risen.
- The social, moral, spiritual and cultural provision for students' development is good. Students are well prepared to take their place in modern British society.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress. Many go on to university. All leavers are either in education, employment or training.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teachers do not consistently use information about students' progress and attainment to set work that is at the right level, especially for the most able.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 43 lessons, seven of them jointly with school leaders
- Inspectors looked at students’ work and case studies of individuals, including the frequency and quality of marking and the progress students made.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils, three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and senior and middle managers.
- Inspectors took account of the 67 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 85 staff questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, and looked at a number of documents, including: the school’s self-evaluation and development plan; the school’s information on students’ current progress; and records relating to monitoring, behaviour and attendance, and safeguarding.

Inspection team

John Mallone, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kieran Earley	Additional Inspector
Teresa Gilpin	Additional Inspector
Duncan Millard	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Downend School is a larger-than-average sized secondary school with a sixth form. It converted to become an academy school on 1 March 2013. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is low. The school has not yet established education, health and care plans.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for those in care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is lower than average.
- The students come from predominantly White British backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is also below average. Some are recent arrivals in this country.
- The school provides part of the education for a very few of its students at KTS Training, City of Bristol College, The Junction (South Gloucestershire Educated Other Than At School Service) and Broad Plain Boys' Club, Bristol.
- The school receives support from The Castle School Education Trust and South Gloucestershire Council.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4. It also meets the interim minimum standards for sixth form students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all students, especially the most able, make more rapid progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers make consistently effective use of information about students' progress and attainment so they always set work which challenges them.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and other leaders have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They produce clear, detailed and effective plans to address weaknesses. As a result, there have been big improvements in teaching, behaviour and attendance, and students are making better progress.
- There are clear processes in place for monitoring the progress of students. Records are regularly updated so that those who are falling behind can be given the help they need to catch up. This system has made a strong contribution to increasing rates of progress.
- The behaviour and attendance of students are well monitored. The changed culture in the school, with a strong drive to improve all areas, has contributed to a rise in attendance and a reduction in the number of exclusions.
- Parents, carers and students welcome the improvements in teaching and behaviour. Students are proud of the school and parents and carers strongly endorse the work it does to educate and keep their children safe.
- Assessment of students' progress and attainment is regular in all subjects. Standards are checked and confirmed by other teachers, both within and outside the school. Overall, the grading of students' work is accurate. As a result, teachers know how to adjust their plans to ensure that work is pitched at the right level. However, leaders have not ensured that all teachers consistently set work at the right level, particularly for the more- and most-able students.
- Reporting to parents and carers happens three times a year. The reports give very clear information on attainment, progress, effort, behaviour and attendance. Parents and carers appreciate the level of detail provided. The process has further contributed to the quickening of students' progress.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and provides clear options to suit students' different abilities, interests and talents at Key Stage 4. There are ample opportunities for students to pursue more academic, practical or vocational courses. There is a programme of lessons which promotes the core values of democracy, law, respect and tolerance. These are enhanced by outside visits, for example to law courts and places of worship, and by visitors who share their perspectives on life in modern Britain.
- In the past, some students were entered at the end of Year 10 for GCSE examinations in mathematics. These were high-ability students who achieved good results. The majority of students were entered in the winter of Year 11 and achieved results broadly in line with national averages. Students are no longer entered early for these examinations so that all can achieve their highest performance by the end of Year 11.
- The programme of assemblies fosters students' development of social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness. For example, a house assembly set Picasso's painting, *Guernica*, against the contemporary context of war in the Middle East and prompted students to consider moral issues about struggle and identity.
- The grouping of students of similar ability in most subjects enables teachers better to cater to their needs. However, some teachers still do not take full account of the range of students' abilities within each group. Consequently, work is occasionally either too hard or too easy for some.
- Advice and guidance about careers and higher education are impartial and individually tailored to students' needs and interests. Guidance is particularly effective in the sixth form, where all students move on either to education, employment or training. The numbers of students who leave Year 11 without any clear destination are very low.
- Middle leaders share the same clear determination to improve standards. As a result of improved tracking and monitoring of students, behaviour, attendance and achievement have all improved. There is an effective programme to develop the skills of middle leaders.
- Arrangements for the safeguarding of students are good. All staff and governors have had the relevant training and staff are aware of and use the procedures to protect vulnerable students. Checks are carried out as part of the staff recruitment process and all visitors are carefully checked. The school has used the pupil premium well by providing a range of support measures which have contributed to the improvement in performance of this group.
- The performance management system is robust and effective. There are clear procedures for reviewing the work of teachers. Those who do not meet their targets have pay rises withheld.
- Students who receive part of their education off site are regularly monitored. They enjoy their placements, make good progress and obtain useful qualifications.
- The school has received support from the Castle School Education Trust and the local authority, which has

helped senior leaders and governors to be more effective.

- Improvements in behaviour, attendance and students' progress, including that of disadvantaged students, indicate that the school has a strong capacity to improve further.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors make a powerful contribution to the school. They have a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They systematically challenge school leaders over the quality of teaching and students' behaviour and achievement and have been instrumental in the recent improvements. They have received training in safeguarding and the use of data on students' performance, so that they understand how well the school is doing in the key areas of teaching, achievement, behaviour and attendance. They have a strong focus on the school's finances, including how effectively the pupil premium money is spent, and ensure that the budget is well managed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students have positive attitudes to learning. They know that they are in school to learn, bring the correct equipment to lessons and are keen to succeed. They show respect for teachers, other adults and one another, and collaborate well when asked to work with others. As a result, progress in lessons is good and low-level disruption is uncommon.
- Outside lessons, students behave with respect and courtesy towards one another and towards adults. They move around the school in an orderly fashion and almost all get to lessons on time.
- Students take good care of the school environment. There are many attractive displays, which are well looked after. There is little litter and no graffiti was seen during the inspection. Students look smart in their uniforms and take pride in their appearance. They take care over the presentation of their work.
- Students and staff value the system which rewards good work and behaviour. This has helped maintain engagement and bring about the improvement in behaviour. The 'Innovation Centre' has played a role in reducing incidents of poor behaviour by providing a resource base where students can enjoy supervised but less-structured activities at break and lunchtime.
- The voluntary work which sixth formers do, including reading with younger students and helping supervise them during break and lunchtime, provides good role models and helps build a sense of community.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Leaders make sure access to the school is secure and staff are carefully checked prior to appointment. Students say they feel safe at school and they know how to keep safe both inside and outside school. They know about potential dangers when they are online and how to avoid these.
- Bullying is uncommon and students and parents and carers report that it is very effectively dealt with. There are few racist incidents and homophobic bullying is very rare. Students know well what bullying is and how to find help and support if it occurs.
- The school has very good systems for managing poor behaviour. The number of incidents has fallen significantly recently. Last year, the number of days lost through exclusions halved.
- Attendance has improved steadily and is now very close to that of similar schools, but levels of persistent absence are still above average.
- Students who receive part of their education off site attend regularly, behave well and are well looked after and kept safe on other premises.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and has improved over time. This has led to improvements in students' achievement and progress.
- Students make good progress because teachers use good subject knowledge and usually make the most of information about their abilities to carefully plan learning that interests them. Learning is broken down into manageable stages so that all students maintain engagement. For example, in a low-ability Year 9 English lesson on poetry, the teacher first got students to recall what they already knew about the topic and what they still wanted to find out, before introducing them to a new poem. This enabled students to read the poem with a clear focus, so that they made better progress.
- Teachers use their knowledge about individual students' abilities to plan work that will extend their knowledge, understanding and skills. Students of all abilities are given challenging work. However, some teachers do not always make enough use of the information available on students' attainment and progress to provide sufficient challenge for all in their classes, especially the most able. In these

situations, teachers' questions in lessons do not always stimulate the most able to think more deeply about the subject.

- Teachers make good use of material resources and imaginative approaches to engage students and consolidate and extend their learning. For example, in a Year 7 French lesson, students sang a song which helped them remember the different parts of the verb 'to be'. Their enjoyment of singing clearly helped them take pride in the fact that they had made gains in their learning.
- Teachers usually use questioning well to check students' understanding and adapt learning in lessons to maintain engagement. Questions that are targeted at specific students frequently help teachers to assess their understanding and make sure that none are falling behind.
- Students make good progress because teachers have good relationships with them and are enthusiastic about the process of teaching and learning.
- Teachers regularly set homework which helps students consolidate and extend their learning. Marking is frequent, consistently good and clearly tells students how they can improve their work.
- Teachers use information about students who receive the pupil premium and those who are disabled or have special educational needs to ensure that they are making the progress of which they are capable. Additional staff are deployed well to support these students' progress.
- Teachers are very reflective about their practice and keen to improve. They participate regularly in a wide range of staff groups aiming to improve the teaching of, for example, literacy and science, and raising boys' achievement.
- When students enter the school in Year 7, information from the primary schools is used effectively to provide support for those with below expected levels, especially in English and mathematics. As a result, almost all have caught up by the end of the year.
- White British students and those of minority ethnic heritage benefit equally well from the good teaching they receive. Those who speak English as an additional language receive valuable extra help in learning English, especially recent arrivals to the country.
- Students are well prepared for the next stages in their life, as almost all who leave in Year 11 either stay in education or go on to employment or training. All those who leave the sixth form stay in education or take up jobs or apprenticeships. Sixth form students do well from the good teaching they receive.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment that are often below average. They make good progress and attain GCSE examination results at the end of Year 11 which are usually at least close to national averages. In 2014, 57% of students achieved five A* to C grades including English and mathematics at GCSE. Students' progress in English and mathematics improved in 2014 compared with the previous year.
- Students currently in the school continue to make good progress in English. Progress in mathematics has improved. Reliable school data predict that a greater proportion of students in the current Year 11 should achieve five A* to C grades including English and mathematics than did so in the 2014 examinations. Inspectors' findings endorsed this positive analysis.
- The most-able students achieve as well as similar students nationally. In 2013, 95% of this group achieved five A* to C grades including English and mathematics in their GCSE examinations. The percentage of A* to B grades at GCSE increased in 2014.
- Those who are disabled or who have special educational needs make progress in line with that of other students. In 2014, the gap in expected progress in English between these students and others in the school closed sharply.
- Students who receive the pupil premium do not achieve as well as their classmates. In 2014, fewer of them gained five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics than their peers in school. In English, on average, they were a grade behind other students in the school. In mathematics, the gap was just under a grade. Compared with all students nationally, disadvantaged students are a little further behind. However, for students in the current Year 11, the school's reliable data indicate that the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and others are predicted to reduce to about half a grade in both subjects because they are progressing well from the support provided. Observations during the inspection corroborated the school's data.
- Most students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve in line with others in the school. In 2013, Pakistani students did not do as well as others in their GCSE examinations. The school's data show that in 2014, Pakistani students attained at least as well as other students. Those who speak English as an additional language make good progress, but attain less well than other students at GCSE because they often have less time in the school to develop their competence in using English.

- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to ensure that most students who join the school below Level 4 in mathematics or English reach at least that level by the end of the year.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good.

The sixth form provision**is good**

- The leadership is good. Strategic planning and implementation of those plans are effective.
- A more demanding admissions policy and good advice and guidance ensure very few students drop out at the end of Year 12 because work is too difficult. Those who prefer to follow strictly vocational courses or training are impartially directed to more suitable providers.
- Students' progress through the sixth form is carefully monitored with support provided quickly if they fall behind. The advice and guidance programme promotes high aspirations and students are encouraged to apply for university, training and employment, as appropriate.
- Although students sometimes enter Year 12 with lower-than-average prior attainment in the Year 11 results, overall, they achieve an above-average A-level pass rate. They make good progress at A and AS level, with a big increase in A* and A grades in 2014. Students who take vocational and applied courses achieve as well as students nationally. There is little difference in the progress made by disadvantaged students and that of others. The most-able students achieve well.
- In the past, those who entered the sixth form without at least grade C in GCSE English or mathematics struggled in those subjects. A dedicated tutorial system for those who need extra help is overcoming the difficulty.
- Teaching is good and ensures students' good progress. Teachers' expert subject knowledge is used well to plan interesting and stimulating courses of study. Teachers demand much of students. Work is well marked and students receive clear guidance on how to improve.
- Students have mature attitudes to study, behave well and work hard. They work well with others and relish the opportunities to develop their presentational skills.
- All students take part in voluntary work, such as supporting younger students. They run sports events for primary schools. They say they enjoy responsibility and feel proud to give something back to the school and the community.
- Students feel safe and secure. They appreciate the advice they receive which helps them prepare for life beyond school.

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	139345
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	477877

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,015
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Hedge
Headteacher	William Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01454 862300
Fax number	01454 862301
Email address	admin@downend.com

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