

# High Down Junior School

Down Road, Portishead, North Somerset BS20 6DY

**Inspection dates** 1–2 December 2015

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The executive headteacher and associate headteacher provide high-quality leadership across the newly formed federation. They have established reliable systems to check, secure and sustain improvements.
- Teachers regularly check the progress pupils make. They quickly identify pupils who are not making at least expected progress. As a result, no pupil is allowed to fall behind.
- Teaching is good because teachers have high expectations of behaviour, and teachers use their secure subject knowledge to plan activities to engage pupils. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic learners.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who are disabled or have special educational needs make good progress because they benefit from carefully focused support.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils understand and can explain how the school's values help them to become good citizens.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy trusting, respectful relationships with staff and each other. These strong relationships ensure pupils work hard and try their best.
- Parents speak positively about how they are involved in their child's learning. Termly meetings with their child's teacher ensure they are clear how they can support learning at home.
- Governors understand their role well and have been the driving force behind the formation of the new federation. They have successfully communicated their 'together we are better' vision to the whole community.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most-able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged to do the best they can or apply what they already know.
- Teachers' guidance in subjects other than English and mathematics does not always show pupils how to improve their work.

## Full report

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

- Provide more consistent challenge for the most-able pupils in order to achieve the highest levels in English and mathematics by:
  - ensuring that teachers set sufficiently challenging tasks and extend pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding further
  - providing opportunities for pupils to independently apply their learning.
- Ensure that teachers consistently give high-quality feedback to pupils in order to accelerate their progress in other subjects in addition to English and mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

is good

- Strong leadership and management has been the key to the improvement in teaching and learning since the last inspection. The executive headteacher and associate headteacher have swiftly established a leadership partnership across the federation. Together, by establishing a clear focus on teamwork and consistent systems, they have created a harmonious place of learning.
- Leaders have put rigorous systems in place to check pupils' progress. Teachers identify pupils who are at risk of falling behind and quickly provide extra support to ensure they make good progress.
- Middle leaders routinely check the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects across the school. They observe lessons and ensure learning is supported and celebrated in every classroom in a consistent manner. They check that expectations of presentation are high and adhere to school policy. This approach ensures that there is a whole-school willingness to learn from each other and take responsibility for continuous improvement.
- Disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress because pupil premium funding has been spent effectively. Weekly one-to-one learning support for every disadvantaged child is provided and the time is used constructively to deliver work planned by teachers. This focused work is making a difference and closing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in reading, writing and mathematics in every year group.
- The primary sports grant is used well to establish partnership support from the local secondary school. Leaders have ensured that sport and physical activity opportunities have been significantly increased. Pupil participation levels in sports clubs has more than doubled. This partnership arrangement has also been used productively to train and develop the skills of teachers.
- The school's engaging curriculum has been designed to create 'expeditionary learners'. Leaders and teachers have thought carefully about how to 'hook' pupils in order to engage and excite them in their learning. Leaders continually review the curriculum and listen to the views of pupils, parents and staff in order to improve their work further. As a consequence, leaders have started to focus on increasing the level of challenge for the most-able pupils and ensuring that feedback is consistently helpful in all subjects. However, this is not yet fully embedded in their work.
- The impact of the work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is impressive. Pupils learn about different world religions, raise money for charities and take on positions of responsibility. This results in pupils having a strong sense of justice, a keen appreciation about those less fortunate than themselves and a respect for other cultures. The school actively encourages the promotion of British values and is effectively helping pupils understand and prepare for life in modern Britain.
- Cultural development is enhanced through music and the performing arts. All pupils in lower Key Stage 2 are given the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument together as a class. All pupils learn to speak French, which gives them an appreciation of another culture.
- Leaders place significant emphasis on ensuring pupils are safe and that the school is a safe place to be. Policies, documentation and risk assessments are thorough, timely and accurate. Staff are vigilant and pupils feel very secure and well cared for.
- The school works effectively with its local authority link adviser. Teachers access training and share best practice in order to improve outcomes for pupils who need to catch up. This focus is resulting in significant improvement in progress, particularly in writing. The local authority has shared High Down Junior School's model of good practice for successfully improving spelling more widely.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors know the school well and share the determination of leaders to secure the best education for all pupils. They have a good understanding of standards and routinely compare the performance of pupils in the school with that of other pupils nationally. This clarity enables governors to both support and challenge leaders as they move forward and firmly establish the federation.
  - Governors know where teaching is strong and where it is helping pupils make good progress. They are fully included in the checks made to confirm high-quality teaching and so have a good insight into its impact on pupils' progress. They manage the performance of staff effectively by ensuring that pay increases are justified by substantial and sustainable improvement.
  - Governors have managed the transition to federation well and ensured that, through this time of change, finances have been wisely managed. This careful consideration includes ensuring that the pupil premium and sport funding is spent on making a sustainable difference to the achievement of pupils.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Governors understand their statutory duties with regard to safeguarding and routinely check that leaders implement the school's policies effectively.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

is good

- Teaching is good because the leaders have put in place a very clear set of learning expectations and pupils are motivated to work hard. Pupils are able to talk about their learning and can describe appropriate learning behaviours such as listening attentively and doing your best. However, when teachers' expectations are not sufficiently demanding or pupils are not as interested in the learning, they make less progress.
- Teachers apply the school's marking and feedback policy consistently well in English and mathematics. Feedback is often detailed in these subjects and encourages the development of a learning conversation. This approach is further developed through the verbal responses of teachers during lessons. Teachers are quick to realise what pupils do and do not understand. They adapt tasks and questions to continually move learning forward. This carefully considered approach is well established in English and mathematics but less evident in other subject areas and so progress is not as strong.
- Teachers plan tasks to suit pupils' abilities and needs. Pupils develop independence depending on their understanding of what they know, can do and need to do next. This has secured a strong learning ethos in most classes. Pupils explain that they are challenging themselves or that they are selecting a target to check that they have fully understood an aspect of learning before moving on. They know clearly how to improve. However, the learning tasks set are not always of sufficient challenge to move learning forward or deepen understanding for the most-able pupils.
- The quality of mathematics teaching is consistently good across the school. Teachers ask probing questions and expect pupils to explain their thinking. For example, in one lesson the teacher kept responding, 'Prove it to me, and convince me.' This responsive challenge is skilfully developing pupils' ability to talk about mathematics.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is good and pupils are able to use their phonics to read unfamiliar words when reading aloud. Leaders have developed a spelling programme using pupils' good understanding of phonics and this has significantly improved spelling and writing outcomes across the school.
- Pupils are fully involved in moving their own learning and the learning of others forward. Leaders and teachers, together with the pupils, have established a culture of sharing learning aloud in order to unpick misconceptions. For example, in one class pupils were encouraged to use their firm understanding of hundreds, tens and units to develop their learning about metre to centimetre conversion. In addition, self-assessment and peer assessment of work completed is an established and highly effective feedback process, particularly in English and mathematics. This collaborative approach to learning results in a real sense of 'learning for all'.
- Learning support workers provide good support and guidance for pupils and ensure they communicate closely with teachers. Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are carefully nurtured and activities are matched closely to their needs by teachers.
- Parents are actively involved in the learning of their children. Through focused discussions with teachers, parents have a clear understanding of how to give further support to learning at home. Home learning is celebrated through the production of high-quality outcomes such as models, artwork or presentations.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils know that they are safe and looked after in school. Disadvantaged pupils and the most vulnerable pupils have opportunities to establish trusting relationships with learning support assistants. They know that they are able to share their anxieties or concerns. Staff listen to pupils carefully in order to build and secure their self-esteem and confidence. The school's work in this aspect of pupil welfare is a strength.
- Pupils know about different kinds of bullying, including cyber bullying. Pupils say bullying and name-calling is something that does not happen often in their school but that when it does it is firmly dealt with. The older pupils maturely elaborated and went on to say that 'not everyone can behave well all the time' but that their school gave everyone a chance to change their behaviour and be in the 'golden book'.
- An extensive range of extra-curricular clubs at lunchtime and after school provide opportunities to

develop life skills and confidence. As a consequence, pupils are self-assured. During the inspection pupils were spontaneously able to talk about their Advent experience at a local church.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour of pupils in and around the school is of a high standard and was exemplary in the assembly observed by the inspector. Pupils move to and from their lessons with the minimum of disruption or delay. They take care to walk sensibly and safely on the stairs. They are very proud of their school and look after it well.
- Behaviour in lessons and attitudes to learning are typically good. Pupils are generally positive about all that they do, they work hard and are proud of their achievements. Occasionally, in some of the lower Key Stage 2 classes, pupils do not persevere as they should without adult guidance or direction.
- Behaviour logs indicate that there is a very low incidence of poor behaviour. When it does occur it is dealt with swiftly, it is meticulously recorded and actions agreed between staff, pupils and parents. As a result, the school is calm and purposeful and pupils clearly understand behaviour expectations.
- The school's values are at the heart of all relationships and are constantly referred to by staff and pupils. As a consequence, pupils are able to talk eloquently about how to live by the values in order to become good citizens. During an assembly they carefully considered how their school values link to British values and help to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Attendance is in line with the national average. In the past some pupils were persistently absent and this has been successfully addressed. Leaders communicate clearly and firmly the importance of coming to school in order to achieve.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**are good**

- Typically, pupils enter with attainment that is above average and leave at the end of Year 6 with attainment also above and often exceeding national expectations. In 2015 standards were above those of Year 6 pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics and well above in reading and mathematics. These positive outcomes prepare pupils well to make a successful transition to the next phase of their education.
- Attainment and progress for pupils currently in the school across a range of subjects and year groups are good. Writing standards are high and pupils are writing for different purposes and applying skills in different contexts.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs are well supported. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress and their progress rates are in line with their peers in the majority of year groups from their own starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress in class and in additional group work which allows them to narrow any gaps in achievement that previously existed. In some instances, disadvantaged pupils are making stronger progress than their classmates. The majority of disadvantaged pupils presently in Year 6 are making more than expected progress and rapidly narrowing the gap in attainment, particularly in reading and writing.
- Progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school is good and is improving. The school has set an expectation of better than expected progress for all pupils and close tracking of individual progress very quickly identifies slowed progress and addresses this through support.
- Progress for those pupils who need to catch up, particularly in writing, is good because of the emphasis placed by teachers on ensuring that pupils have the right writing skills in place. Pupils with low attainment in writing on entry to the school receive precise support for spelling, punctuation and grammar. As a result, they make better than expected progress and achieve the expected level by the end of Year 6.
- The most-able pupils are making good progress and achieving high standards. In some classes a higher level of challenge is required in order for the most able to maximise their progress and go on to achieve the highest levels of attainment in the Year 6 tests.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109084
<b>Local authority</b>	North Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	10002430

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	352
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sonia Goddard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Andreya Cowan
<b>Telephone number</b>	01275 848501
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.highdownjunior.co.uk">www.highdownjunior.co.uk</a>
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6–7 November 2013

## Information about this school

- High Down Junior School and High Down Infant School became a federation on 1 January 2015.
- High Down Junior is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is well below the national average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding to support looked after children and pupils known to be eligible to receive free school meals.)
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is lower than the national average.
- There is a breakfast and after-school care club on the school site. Both are run by the school and have been part of the inspection.
- The school has worked in close partnership with the local authority's link adviser.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 16 lessons, most of which was observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, groups of pupils receiving support for learning and an assembly were observed.
- The quality of work in pupils' books was scrutinised and the inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a group of other governors. A telephone conversation was conducted with the local authority's link adviser.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents through discussions at the beginning and end of the day and through 79 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire).
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised by the inspectors including the school's information on pupils' attainment and progress in all year groups, self-evaluation records, safeguarding policies, curriculum policies, the school's provision for special educational needs, minutes of meetings of the governing body, external moderation reports and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- The inspectors spoke informally with pupils around the school and during breaktimes. Behaviour was observed in the hall and on the playground during lunchtimes. The inspector met with and obtained the views of pupil representatives from each year group.
- The inspector considered the responses to a questionnaire from staff.

## Inspection team

Lyn McNamara, lead inspector

Neil Swait

Hazel Callaghan

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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