

# Down Hall Primary School

Brooklyn Drive, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 9LW

<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 April 2016
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Down Hall has improved since the previous inspection. In particular, significant improvements in the quality of teaching have led to good progress throughout the school.
- School leaders, including governors, know their school well and have led important changes. They remain determined to improve further.
- Teachers form an effective team, well assisted by learning support assistants.
- Year-group teams are effective. For example, staff plan well together to share their ideas to ensure consistency.
- Specialist teaching, such as in music and Spanish, enhances pupils' learning.
- Pupils make good progress in their academic and personal development. They are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.
- The interesting curriculum stimulates pupils' thirst for learning.
- The additional support for pupils during holidays is very beneficial to their learning and social development.
- Pupils behave well and the school is an orderly community. Pupils work and play together well.
- Behaviour for learning is much improved; pupils know how to improve their work.
- Pupils say they feel safe and happy at school, and that staff care for them well.
- Early years provision is a strength of the school. These children get off to a good start and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Parents support the changes. One parent, in a comment typical of many, stated 'The school has made huge efforts to improve since the last inspection.'

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The way that phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is taught confuses some pupils so they do not make good progress.
- In reading and writing, work is not pitched at the right level of difficulty for the most-able pupils.
- Pupils are not prepared sufficiently for life in modern multicultural Britain.

## Full report

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

- Raise standards in phonics by ensuring all adults teaching phonics groups:
  - have a clear and accurate understanding of how to teach sounds and blends
  - check pupils' understanding more closely during activities, and address misconceptions and modify their teaching if appropriate.
- Further raise the attainment of the most-able pupils in reading and writing by ensuring that the activities they are given are always suitably challenging
- Better prepare pupils for life in multicultural Britain by giving them more opportunities to learn about and understand the diverse nature of our country.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and share a determination to build further on the improvements since the previous inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements in mathematics.
- The re-organised leadership team is effective in driving through new initiatives, such as the improvement in handwriting. Roles are clear, and individuals' skills are used effectively.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher form an effective team with complementary skills. Phase leaders are an effective conduit between leaders and teachers. Each team plans together, so expertise is shared to the benefit of pupils' learning.
- Despite a relatively high proportion of teachers being new, they have formed an effective team, sharing ideas at their weekly staff meeting and clearly benefiting from colleagues' comments.
- The school's clear ethos is fixed in the mind-set of everyone; staff, governors, pupils and parents, making clear to pupils that, 'Everyone a learner. Believe and achieve.' This school motto permeates the life of the school, as seen, for example, when staff tell pupils when they go for training that 'I have to learn first to be able to teach you.'
- Senior leaders regularly and robustly monitor the work of the school, ensuring they identify precisely what needs improving, and how to improve it. Action planning is much clearer than when the school was previously inspected and, consequently, provides a coherent pathway to change.
- Leaders' clear arrangements for checking on the quality of teaching accurately identify how teachers can improve. Teachers and learning support assistants benefit from training matched closely to their needs, and rigorous performance management drives improvements in teaching and learning.
- Subject leaders' good knowledge and expertise are used effectively. They check on how pupils are progressing, and use the information to make changes as necessary.
- Much is done to ensure all pupils enjoy equal opportunities and benefit from all the school offers. The effective leadership of provision for special educational needs or disability ensures struggling pupils have the right extra help to enable them to achieve well. Extra lessons for the most able give good levels of challenge, too. In their general classwork these pupils achieve well in mathematics. However, in reading and writing they rarely achieve beyond the level expected for all pupils of their age.
- The curriculum links different subjects effectively, so new learning in one practises and consolidates what has already been learned in another. For example, pupils learning about graphs used rainfall and temperature data from their topic about rainforests. Visitors are used to help widen pupils' understanding of the topics they study. Pupils respond enthusiastically to after-school activities, such as fun and practical mathematics.
- Pupils' thorough understanding of democracy, for example through the process of nominating and electing pupils for the school council, is good. They appreciate that staff and governors listen to, and take note of, their views, for example their wish to wear ties as part of their school uniform. However, other aspects of preparing pupils for life in modern Britain are less well developed. For example, pupils have little understanding of the diverse nature of our multicultural society.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils' pride in their school is clear. They play and work together harmoniously. Some activities teach pupils to discuss and debate, and how to disagree respectfully.
- Following the previous inspection, leaders recognised that standards were not high enough, but were reluctant to take pupils out of class for 'catch-up' sessions. As a result, they introduced holiday clubs to give pupils extra opportunities to learn, in a fun, imaginative and practical way. Pupils enjoy this extra schooling. Parents are very positive, too. 'The additional holiday support is amazing, children are taught in a way that is stimulating and fun, it is a fantastic system to help children who are struggling so they improve.'
- Leaders target the use of additional pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively to support their academic and personal development. As a result, these pupils are making progress similar to, and sometimes better than, their peers.
- The primary school sports funding is used well. Value is given to physical exercise and pupils are taught how to lead healthy lives. The swimming season has been extended to make best use of the school's own

pool, which is seen as a valuable facility. Pupils participate in a good range of activities and enjoy competing with others.

- The school works closely with other local schools. Staff benefit from training opportunities and sharing of expertise, particularly in new developments such as improved assessment processes.
- The headteacher has been pivotal in developing access to the extended services provision. Pupils and families benefit from quick access to professionals with specific expertise. Valuable advice in parenting skills has been provided in areas such as managing children's behaviour.
- The local authority has given the school good support since the previous inspection. For example, training for new staff, particularly phase and subject leaders, has helped them to quickly become effective.
- Partnership with parents is good. The vast majority of parents responding to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, would recommend the school to another parent. Even those with suggestions for improvement recognise that overall much has been achieved in the last two years.

### **The governance of the school**

- The governors responded very positively to their recent reviews of governance, and have implemented the suggested changes. Consequently, they are effective. They continue to benefit from the support and training offered by the local authority.
- Governors demonstrate the same ambition and determination as school leaders to maintain the impetus for improvement.
- Individual governors' skills and expertise are used effectively and whenever possible, and governors look at the skill set of potential new members in order to maintain and extend their effectiveness.
- Governors' strong focus is on pupils' progress. They analyse information to check that pupils are doing well, and to question and challenge leaders when they do not.
- Staff performance, including that of the headteacher and other teachers, is rigorously managed. Governors ensure decisions about pay increases are based closely on a good range of evidence from the robust challenge and support provided to staff.
- Careful oversight of the school's finances, including additional funding, helps achieve good value for money. Money is spent where it is most needed; for example, significant expenditure on mathematics equipment supported the improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders ensure all staff training is up to date. The school complies fully with the latest safeguarding guidance. Governors and all school staff are highly aware of their duty to keep pupils safe. Very good relationships with external agencies ensure leaders know who to refer to if they need guidance. The school explains its role in safeguarding pupils to parents when their children first join, and it works closely with parents to ensure their children are well supported and safe from harm. Parents are very appreciative of a recent information session about e-safety. Nearly every parent responding to Parent View expressed confidence that their children are safe in school.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good**

- As a result of good-quality training and regular monitoring and feedback, the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
- Although many class teachers are new since the previous inspection, they form an effective team because they share ideas and expertise to ensure all pupils enjoy a similarly high-quality curriculum.
- Relationships between pupils and the adults who teach them are very positive. Pupils trust staff and are confident, for example to try new things. They are taught that we learn from our mistakes.
- Classrooms are attractive and welcoming. Pupils' work is displayed, both to celebrate success and give other pupils ideas they might incorporate in their own learning.
- Teachers regularly assess their pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This improvement since the previous inspection means teachers know immediately who is doing well and who needs extra help, and they are able to modify their lessons accordingly. Leaders also use this information to check teaching is effective, and to make changes if it is not.
- Teachers, in line with the school policy, give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work, and give them the time to do so.
- Teachers also accurately assess pupils' learning at the end of each lesson and, if a pupil has not understood, arrange for some extra help so that pupils are not left behind.
- Speaking and listening skills are taught well. Discussion is included in many lessons, and pupils

encouraged to speak in well-constructed sentences. This is also having a positive impact on writing.

- High-quality texts are regularly used to generate discussion points in reading, so pupils can develop and hone their abilities, for example to predict, draw inferences and summarise. However, the teaching of phonics sometimes lacks clarity and accuracy, so pupils are confused. Occasionally, too, adults fail to spot that pupils do not understand, and accordingly they are left unsure and make little progress.
- Writing is taught well; an improvement since the previous inspection. Much is done to give pupils interesting and stimulating experiences to draw on in their writing.
- In mathematics, good teaching means pupils grasp concepts quickly and are able to use a good range of strategies to solve problems. Good use of mathematical resources gives pupils improved understanding. For example, when working out the value of a number, pupils are able to decide for themselves when and how to use 'place value'.
- Very effective use is made of subject expertise. In music, for example, the specialists develop pupils' skills and knowledge well so they achieve well. Pupils can, for example, access online backing tracks of songs they are learning, so they can continue their learning out of school if they wish.
- Learning support assistants support pupils' learning effectively. They work closely with teachers to ensure all pupils, including those who struggle and those who may need harder work, have the guidance they need.
- Pupils show pride in their work and present it neatly. They recognise how the school's work on pencil- or pen-grip, and posture, has improved their handwriting and with it the quality of presentation.
- Homework closely matches work in school, so pupils practise and hone at home skills learned in school. Increasingly effective use is made of the website and online resources to further strengthen the link between school and home learning. Sometimes pupils undertake imaginative projects that give them opportunities to decide for themselves how to respond.
- Almost all parents responding to Parent View agree that their children are well taught at Down Hall Primary School.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** is good

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to Parent View feel their children are happy at school. In their discussions with inspectors, pupils said they enjoy school.
- A wide range of activities result in pupils' good understanding that individuals have rights but also responsibilities in society and communities.
- Pupils' clear understanding of their role in their own learning is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. The school's approach to feedback fully involves them. As a result, they know their own strengths and areas to improve. Pupils have a clear sense of how they are progressing.
- Assemblies are integral to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They learn about the importance of truth, and learn from the example of people such as Einstein and Messi, who 'believed and achieved' because they persevered to succeed even when other people told them they would fail.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunities to play a meaningful role in their school. Trained play leaders, for example, volunteer to help those younger than themselves. Pupils' understanding of personal safety is good because many lessons and assemblies include reminders. E-safety is strong; pupils understand the potential dangers, and know what to do if worried.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. The vast majority of parents responding to Parent View agree, and also feel that their children are well looked after. Pupils' confidence that staff will listen and respond to any worries they have is strong. They say there is little bullying and any that does occur is dealt with quickly.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have a strong moral code and understand the difference between right and wrong. They respond very positively to the school rules and there have been no exclusions since the previous inspection.
- The school is very inclusive. From an early age, pupils learn to work and play together. During lessons, they often work in groups and learn to be respectful of one another, and to 'give and take'.
- The school has a calm, purposeful and orderly atmosphere, both in classrooms and around the school and

its grounds. Pupils are polite, courteous and welcoming.

- Attendance is above average. The school monitors absence carefully and encourages regular attendance and punctuality. Pupils generally look forward to school. One parent stated, 'My children go to school with smiles on their faces.'

## Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching is better, particularly in Years 1 and 2, so pupils' progress is stronger. The vast majority of parents responding to Parent View agree their children are making good progress.
- The school's checks on progress, and the quality of work in pupils' books, show that pupils currently in the school, in all year groups, are making good progress overall in reading, writing and mathematics.
- These improvements are the result of leaders and governors taking effective action. Throughout the school, they are leading to faster progress and higher standards. This has a cumulative effect.
- Progress this year in Year 6 reading and mathematics is good. Pupils have made nearly a year's progress in two terms. In writing, they have made more than a year's progress in the same time. This is a significant improvement on last year in writing.
- The school's checks, and the quality of work in pupils' books, indicate that attainment this year in Year 6 is likely to be better in reading and mathematics than writing. This is because, while the quality of teaching of writing is now good, it has not been so over time. These pupils consequently have a legacy of lower standards in writing. Although they are catching up, it will take time to close the gap.
- The proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding the expected standard in the Year 1 screening check was low in 2014 and 2015. Improvements made since then are leading to a better rate of progress, but while pupils this year are expected to do much better, they are likely to remain a little below the national picture. This is because of inconsistencies in the teaching of some of these groups.
- Achievement in mathematics is much improved since the previous inspection. This is because the subject is very well led, and a significant investment has been made in staff training and new resources. Parents have been involved too, attending information sessions to ensure that pupils are taught at home using identical methods to school.
- The school is sensibly taking a similar approach to improving achievement in writing; high-quality staff training, and imaginative and relevant tasks that interest pupils, rouse their curiosity and encourage them to write. As a result, standards are rising rapidly.
- The small proportion of disadvantaged pupils make similarly good progress to their peers, and sometimes better than this. Additional funding is used effectively to give each pupil extra help.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability make good progress overall from their differing starting points. They often receive extra help through learning programmes chosen carefully to meet the gaps in their knowledge and are taught by well-trained learning support assistants.
- All pupils, but particularly those needing extra help, benefit when they attend the additional holiday support clubs because learning is more relaxed and informal.
- The most-able pupils do well in mathematics. Some classes have been re-organised so that they learn together. These pupils thrive particularly on the challenge to solve problems using their mathematical knowledge, and feeding off one another's ideas. The most able also do well when they are given extra lessons tailored to their needs. These lessons, often mini-topics, are aimed at developing their abstract thinking. In general class teaching of reading and writing, however, these pupils do less well because tasks are not suitably challenging so their needs are not sufficiently met.

## Early years provision

is good

- Generally, children enter Reception with skills and knowledge typical for their age. They settle quickly and make good progress. Over the last two years the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has been above the national average and has increased year-on-year at a faster rate than the national picture.
- This year, about half of Reception children were born in the summer months and were therefore very young when starting their education. These children, too, are making good progress because they thrive

in the nurturing climate. The school's checks and inspection evidence suggest that a similar proportion as last year will reach a good level of development.

- Children's attitudes to learning are good. They love learning. Each day they arrive full of curiosity to see what interesting and varied activities staff have ready for them.
- Children behave well. They have a real sense of community with their classmates, relate well to one another and have a sense of their own safety and how their actions can impact on their friends.
- Children's personal development is good. They persevere with difficult tasks, and learn and play together cooperatively and imaginatively. Many of the school's learning approaches are introduced to children at this stage, so they are well prepared for Year 1. For example, formal handwriting lessons start when children are ready. They often have a very good understanding of how they are progressing. For example, one child was observed to say, 'This "e" is better than that one, because I did better strokes.'
- Children achieve well because a detailed and accurate assessment of each child's needs is used when planning activities. All children benefit, including the disadvantaged, those with special educational needs or disability, and the most able.
- Teaching is good. Staff form a very effective team; for example all staff plan activities together in year teams so everyone knows what each day looks like, and understands the aims behind the tasks. Staff are vigilant, and the Reception children are safe and well cared for. Staff fully understand how these young children learn and develop. Basic skills, including phonics, are taught well because staff are clear in their own knowledge and understanding.
- Children experience a very wide range of stimulating activities, both indoors and outside. They easily become engrossed in exploring their interests, or following up on a task initiated by an adult.
- Parents are fully involved. Parents are invited regularly into class to see how their children are progressing and to talk over their learning with them. Staff run information sessions too, which parents find helpful.
- Children benefit from the excellent space, outdoors particularly, in which they can explore their interests and curiosity. They have access to an excellent play area and enjoy the help they receive from older pupils.
- Staff work closely with pre-school settings to see children settle quickly when they join Reception. Children, and their parents, are equally well prepared for moving on into Year 1, and the transition is seamless.
- Leadership is very effective. The leader uses her strong knowledge and understanding of early years to ensure that the provision is good.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114936
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10001925

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	292
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Milchard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lou Nelson
<b>Telephone number</b>	01268 780 018
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.downhallprimary.com">www.downhallprimary.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@downhall.essex.sch.uk">admin@downhall.essex.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27–28 November 2013

## Information about this school

- This school is a little larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Reception children are taught in two classes. Elsewhere, each pair of year groups is taught in three mixed-age classes: Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is below average.
- In 2015, the school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection, approximately half the class teachers are new to the school.
- Before- and after-school childcare provision operates daily at the school. These are independently run and subject to a separate inspection.



## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classrooms, some visited jointly with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors observed small groups of pupils being taught.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors attended assemblies and observed pupils as they moved around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders, teachers and governors. The inspectors also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors met with pupils to discuss their experiences at school.
- The views of 61 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspectors also held informal discussions with parents. The inspectors took account of the questionnaire responses from 17 members of staff and 64 pupils.
- The inspectors looked at a range of school documents and information, including the school development plan, checks on the quality of teaching, curriculum plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body, and pupils' behaviour and attendance records. The inspectors also looked at arrangements and records for safeguarding procedures.

## Inspection team

Robert Greatrex, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jennifer Carpenter	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Bartlett	Ofsted Inspector

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