

Downs Barn School

69 Downs Barns Boulevard, Downs Barn, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK14 7NA

Inspection dates

10–11 July 2018

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has set high expectations of staff and pupils. She has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- Senior leaders have taken effective action to improve teaching and learning across the school. The work has had a noticeable impact on improving pupil outcomes.
- Governors know the school well and hold school leaders to account. They have not, however, monitored the impact of pupil premium funding on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils rigorously enough.
- Middle leaders lead their subjects with enthusiasm. They do not, however, monitor the impact of their actions rigorously enough.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers plan activities that are matched well to pupils' next steps in their learning. As a result, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The teaching of phonics is strong, and pupils are highly engaged in their learning. As a result, pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of letters and the sounds that they make.
- The teaching of spelling and handwriting is not effective enough. This is limiting pupils from making even greater progress in key stage 1.
- Pupils are friendly and welcoming. They play well together at playtimes and lunchtimes, and their conduct around the school is calm and orderly.
- While most pupils have positive attitudes to their learning, at times some pupils lose concentration in their learning. This slows their progress.
- Some pupils do not take enough pride in the presentation of their work and, at times, it can become untidy.
- While children make good progress in the early years, there are some variations in the quality of teaching. This is preventing some children from making the progress of which they are capable, particularly the most able children.
- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is strong. Positive, nurturing relationships, and additional advice and support, ensure that pupils' social and emotional well-being are very well supported.
- Leaders have established an effective culture of safeguarding. Pupils are well looked after and they know how to keep themselves safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to further raise outcomes for pupils by:
 - ensuring that there is a consistent approach to teaching spelling and handwriting
 - ensuring that pupils develop high levels of concentration and consistently present their work neatly.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - further developing the role of middle leaders in monitoring standards across the school
 - further strengthening the effectiveness of governors in monitoring the impact of pupil premium funding on the outcomes of pupils.
- Improve the effectiveness of early years by:
 - ensuring that all adults make use of effective questioning to support children's learning
 - ensuring that the most able children are sufficiently challenged in order for them to achieve the standards of which they are capable.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since her appointment in September 2017, the headteacher has established a culture of high expectations and a clear vision for school improvement.
- As a result of accurate evaluation, senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weakness. While their plans for improvement are detailed, at times the targets set are not focused enough to enable leaders to monitor how effective their actions have been.
- Leaders have taken robust action to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. For example, improved teaching in phonics this year has resulted in raised outcomes in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1.
- Middle leaders have taken action to support the headteacher in securing improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and outcomes, across the school. However, not all middle leaders are monitoring the impact of their actions on outcomes for pupils closely enough.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works very closely with staff to identify pupils' needs and to plan support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. However, they do not monitor the progress that these pupils make precisely enough.
- Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum that develops pupils' knowledge and understanding in a wide range of subjects. Pupils enjoy learning through topics. For example, 'the seaside' and 'the Great Fire of London', were popular and the pupils were confident in applying their reading and writing skills in these topics as well as in a range of subjects. The standard of writing and presentation in subjects other than English, however, is variable.
- Although leaders make effective use of the physical education and sports premium funding to encourage pupils' participation in a wide range of sports, they do not monitor the impact of this funding on pupils' attainment closely enough.
- The school's values and curriculum effectively support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their understanding of fundamental British values. For example, when learning about different religions and cultures, pupils have the opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are very complimentary about the school. They find staff very approachable and feel that any concerns are dealt with efficiently. They value the caring, nurturing ethos of the school and the support that pupils receive. For example, a parent said that the school 'has gone above and beyond' to provide the support that their child needs.

Governance of the school

- Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement because the headteacher provides them with detailed, accurate

information on the school's performance. Governors scrutinise this information and make visits to the school in order to monitor the school's effectiveness.

- While governors challenge leaders on the information that they are given, and ask questions that hold leaders to account, the minutes of their meetings do not record this level of challenge carefully enough.
- Governors have not monitored the impact of pupil premium funding on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils rigorously enough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding in the school that is underpinned by effective policies and procedures.
- Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are made on adults who work in the school. They ensure that all adults are given regular safeguarding training. As a result, staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe.
- Pupils are well supported when they have any worries or concerns and they feel safe and secure in school. There are very few incidents of bullying, and on the rare occasion that it occurs, pupils are confident that it is dealt with quickly and appropriately by adults.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers make effective use of assessment information and they know pupils well. They use assessments to plan tasks that are pitched at the right level for pupils and that enable them to practise and develop their skills well. There are times, however, when pupils complete work that does not move their learning on as quickly as it could.
- Teachers and learning support assistants engage in effective dialogue with pupils during lessons in order to explore pupils' understanding and to address any misconceptions that they have. Teachers give pupils clear guidance on how they might improve their work and support them to correct any mistakes.
- Although teachers make effective use of questioning to challenge pupils and to extend their thinking, there are times when teachers' questioning is too challenging for some pupils. When this happens, pupils begin to lose concentration and they become distracted from their learning, which slows the progress that they make.
- Phonics is taught well. Teachers plan a range of tasks and activities that give pupils the opportunity to practise, explore and use and apply their knowledge and understanding. These activities maintain pupils' interest and, as a result, pupils show high levels of engagement.
- While phonics is taught well, the teaching of spelling is less strong. Pupils do not develop a secure understanding of common spelling rules and patterns, and teachers do not routinely address the repeated spelling errors that pupils make in their writing.
- Teachers provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities to use and apply their writing skills across the curriculum. Consequently, pupils increase their confidence and

accuracy in applying a wide range of punctuation, vocabulary and sentence structures in their writing. The quality of pupils' work in subjects such as history and science, however, is too variable in some pupils' books.

- Teachers plan a wide range of opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills to solve problems, reason and explain their understanding. This ensures that all pupils are challenged, including the most able pupils.
- The teaching of handwriting is not effective enough. Too many pupils do not form letters accurately when writing. Very few pupils develop a neat, joined handwriting style by the end of Year 2.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Relationships at all levels are very positive and nurturing, and pupils are well looked after. As a result, pupils are happy and safe, and they enjoy coming to school. One parent commented that their child 'is always excited and happy to attend every day'. This reflected the views of many parents.
- Through the school's Learning and Achievement Base (LAB), pupils are given excellent support that effectively promotes their social and emotional well-being. Pupils appreciate the opportunities that they are given to discuss their concerns and worries, and the support that they are given to resolve them.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the school's values of respect, resilience, responsibility and reflection. These values are important to the pupils and they form a strong basis for the school's culture.
- The school's curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe, including visits from the local police and fire service. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, they know how to stay safe in the sun and when online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and welcoming, and their good behaviour contributes to a calm and orderly environment.
- Playtimes and lunchtimes are sociable, active and enjoyable, and pupils are well supervised. Outside they play well together and in the dining hall their good manners and conduct create a pleasant atmosphere. Pupils are kind and caring, and they value the friendships that they have made.
- When behavioural incidents occur, pupils are confident that adults deal with them well. While leaders keep detailed records of any behavioural incidents, and how they have been resolved, they do not analyse these records to enable them to identify patterns and trends.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve pupils' attendance. They swiftly identify

when a pupil's attendance dips, and act quickly to intervene and provide support for pupils and their families. As a result, pupils' attendance overall has improved.

- Some pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently positive. Most pupils work with concentration and persevere with their learning. Some pupils, however, lose concentration and become distracted. While they do not disturb the learning of other pupils, when this happens their learning slows, and they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- At the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly in line with the national average.
- Despite improvements in the quality of teaching, and higher expectations of pupils than previously, some of the most able pupils still do not achieve the standard of which they are capable. Not enough pupils reach the highest available standards at the end of key stage 1.
- In reading, writing and mathematics, most pupils currently in the school are making good progress from their individual starting points, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- As a result of the improved teaching of phonics, pupils develop a secure understanding of letters and the sounds that they represent. Pupils apply this knowledge with confidence in their reading and writing and make good progress. In 2018, the proportion of pupils meeting the required standard in phonics at the end of Year 1 considerably improved on previous years.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics. They acquire a good understanding of number and develop a wide range of effective strategies for calculating numbers. Furthermore, pupils are developing an increasing confidence in explaining their mathematical reasoning and understanding.
- The progress that pupils make across the wider curriculum is variable. At times, pupils acquire a depth of knowledge and understanding in different subjects and apply their skills well. Sometimes, however, teachers' expectations are not high enough. When this is the case, the development of pupils' understanding is limited, and the presentation of their work is untidy.

Early years provision

Good

- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of early years is consistently above the national average.
- Leaders make effective use of assessment information to identify gaps in children's knowledge and understanding. They know the children well and use this knowledge to plan activities that are focused on the children's next steps in their learning. As a result, most children currently in early years are making strong progress from their low starting points in all aspects of their development.
- Sometimes expectations of the most able children are not high enough and tasks are

not sufficiently challenging. Consequently, these children do not achieve the standards of which they are capable.

- Teachers plan a wide range of interesting activities to promote children's learning in all aspects of the curriculum both indoors and outdoors. Sometimes children engage with these activities well, working with perseverance and determination. At other times, however, children do not focus on a task for a sustained period of time and, consequently, their learning slows.
- The quality of questioning, and the support that is provided by adults, is inconsistent in quality. Some adults make effective use of questioning to engage pupils in a task, igniting their interest and curiosity. They deepen children's understanding through effective dialogue and challenge them to extend their thinking. Sometimes, however, adult interactions with children do not support their engagement, or the development of their skills, effectively enough.
- Leaders have ensured that appropriate systems and procedures are in place to keep children safe. These, and the strong relationships that have been established between adults and children, ensure that children are safe and well looked after.
- Children are polite, friendly and welcoming and their behaviour is good. They play and work well together, display good manners and share equipment well.
- Parents value the information that they receive from school regarding their child's progress. They appreciate the care and support that the school provides to ensure that their child settles quickly into the setting.

School details

Unique reference number	110372
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10045502

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	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	121
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Janet Maclean
Headteacher	Mrs Kate Mathews
Telephone number	01908 604 430
Website	www.boulevardprimarypartnership.org.uk/
Email address	downsbarn@milton-keynes.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 December 2013

Information about this school

- Downs Barn School is an infant school that shares a governing body with a local junior school under the Boulevard Primary Partnership. The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school has undergone a change in leadership since the previous inspection, and a new headteacher was appointed in September 2017.
- The early years setting incorporates a Nursery for three- to four-year-old children, and a Reception class for four- and five-year-old children.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is significantly above the national average.
- The school provides a childcare breakfast club and after-school club on its site.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils learning in all classes across a range of subjects. All sessions were observed jointly with the headteacher. The inspector looked at the quality of pupils' work during lessons and through a focused analysis of work in books.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, middle leaders, the designated safeguarding leads, staff, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including information available on the school's website, policies, risk assessments and records relating to pupils' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour. Information on governance, including minutes of the governing body, was examined. The school's self-evaluation summary, school development plan and supporting evidence were also scrutinised.
- The inspector spoke with parents during the inspection and considered the 13 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent survey, including 10 free-text comments.
- The inspector took into account the views of the 19 staff who completed Ofsted's online survey.
- The inspector listened to pupils read, met formally with groups of pupils, and also spoke with pupils in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, around the school, during breakfast club and during playtimes and lunchtimes.
- The inspector reviewed safeguarding records and the central record of recruitment checks on staff.

Inspection team

Leah Goulding, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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