

Inspection of Downton CofE VA Primary School

Gravel Close, Downton, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP5 3LZ

Inspection dates: 8–9 January 2020

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The previous 'outstanding' judgement reflected the school's overall effectiveness in March 2013 under the relevant inspection framework at that time.

The new judgement of 'good' reflects the current inspection framework as well as any changes at the school since the last inspection.

The school has not been inspected for seven years, which is longer than the five-year maximum interval between inspections. Changes in school effectiveness may have happened at any point in that period. The long time between inspections is because the law changed in 2011; it made outstanding schools exempt from routine inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Downton is a school where the child is at the heart of every decision. Parents spoken to were overwhelmingly positive. 'Our children leave trusting the world but excited to learn' and 'There is a real sense of family at this school' were typical comments made.

Downton offers a calm but purposeful learning environment. The school's mantra, 'Dream, believe and achieve', shines through. Staff are united in their determination to ensure that pupils get the best possible start in life. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy sharing their learning.

We spoke with many pupils. They told us they enjoy school and what they learn in lessons. Pupils commented how the trips and visits they go on inspire them, bringing learning to life.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is of a high standard. Staff have high expectations of pupils. As a result, pupils are encouraged to work hard in lessons and strive to do so.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. They are adamant that if they have any worries or concerns the 'Downton family' of staff take care of them. Pupils are confident that bullying does not happen. Nevertheless, they know the action to take if bullying was to occur.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The new headteacher has wasted no time in identifying what needs to be done to further improve the quality of education for pupils. There is an urgency of improvement which permeates the school. She is outward looking and welcomes the challenge and guidance she receives from beyond the school, for example from the Diocese of Salisbury education team. Parents and carers say how much they appreciate the headteacher's approach.

Leaders articulate clearly what needs to improve. However, at times, their written improvement plans lack precision. For example, they do not show well enough how planned actions will further improve the achievement of pupils. This makes it more challenging for senior leaders and governors to check what is, or is not, working well.

Children in Reception get off to a cracking start. Transition arrangements from nursery are effective and children soon settle. The curriculum is well designed and exciting. Children quickly gain a love of learning and the confidence and the knowledge they need to thrive. There is a strong focus on early reading skills and a love of books. Children in Reception are well prepared for Year 1.

The school's curriculum covers the national curriculum well. Pupils' emotional and mental well-being is well considered through an effective personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. The school organises its curriculum plans well so that teaching builds on what pupils can already do. Typically, pupils understand what they are learning and why. This means they are able to remember what they have learned and can apply their knowledge across subjects including science, history and art. Pupils enjoy their learning, stating, 'Teachers make learning fun. Our teachers give us challenges.' They behave well in lessons and ask questions. Most pupils stick at their work. However, when it is too difficult or too easy their focus wanders. Leaders know there is more work to do, particularly in mathematics and reading, to ensure that planned work precisely meets pupils' needs.

The curriculum for mathematics is securely in place and well sequenced. However, leaders are aware that there remain a number of pupils who have gaps in their mathematical knowledge. This stops pupils from accessing more complex mathematics. In some cases, assessment does not check carefully enough the knowledge that pupils will need in order to learn new mathematical concepts.

The teaching of reading is effective and brings about high standards. The vast majority of pupils learn to read accurately by the end of Year 2. However, the small number of pupils who need that extra help do not always get the precise support they need. For example, books are too hard and so pupils struggle to read them. This is because teachers do not ensure that books are well matched to pupils' phonic knowledge. Therefore, pupils who struggle to read take too long to catch up.

Leaders carefully check the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The leader for SEND has the knowledge and expertise to support the few pupils who need additional help. The curriculum is suitably modified to help these pupils to achieve well.

Pupils have access to a wide range of enrichment experiences beyond the academic. These include art, music and sport. Pupils relish opportunities such as archery, fencing and attending musical events. Residential trips, for example to Osmington Bay, are a highlight.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders complete all the required checks on staff employed to work in the school. Safeguarding training is effective. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns or worries to ensure that pupils are kept safe. The headteacher has created a culture that ensures that staff are not complacent. The work of the staff to help pupils with their emotional well-being is a strength. Pupils feel safe and have a secure understanding of how to keep safe. Parents who spoke with inspectors were confident that their children are safe and free from bullying.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, the school improvement plan is underdeveloped. It does not show well enough how actions taken are going to further improve the achievement of pupils. Leaders need to be more precise in their strategic planning.
- The mathematics curriculum is well sequenced and coherent. However, there remain a number of pupils who have gaps in their mathematical knowledge that stop them from accessing more complex mathematics. In some cases, assessment does not check carefully enough the component knowledge that pupils will need in order to learn new mathematical concepts. Leaders should continue to improve assessment so that it supports learning in this subject effectively.
- Reading remains a school priority. This is because leaders and staff are determined that more pupils can read with increased accuracy and fluency by the time they leave the school. Leaders need to ensure that weaker readers have a secure phonic knowledge and breadth of vocabulary by providing reading books that consistently match pupils' needs.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	126475
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10133446
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	261
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jonathan Freer
Headteacher	Paula Carlton
Website	www.downton-pri.wilts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 March 2013

Information about this school

- There have been two headteachers in post since the last inspection. The current headteacher started in January 2018.
- There are currently interim arrangements in place while the substantive deputy headteacher post is filled. These arrangements started in January 2020.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND, including pupils with an education, health and care plan, is well below the national average.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

The previous 'outstanding' judgement reflected the school's overall effectiveness in March 2013 under the relevant inspection framework at that time.

The new judgement of 'good' reflects the current inspection framework as well as any changes at the school since the last inspection.

The school has not been inspected for seven years, which is longer than the five-year maximum interval between inspections under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. Changes in school effectiveness may have happened at any point in that period. The long time between inspections is because the law changed in 2011; it made most outstanding schools exempt from routine inspection.

- We held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, the leader with responsibility for pupils with SEND and teaching staff.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with four governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- We examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including the school's self-evaluation document, the school's improvement plan, and documentation relating to behaviour and attendance.
- The school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals to the local authority were evaluated. We spoke with teachers and support staff about how they keep pupils safe. We also spoke to pupils about how they keep themselves safe and what they do when they have any worries.
- We reviewed the school's provision in reading, writing, mathematics, science and art. This included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, meeting with senior leaders and discussions with staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with an education adviser from Wiltshire children's services and the school improvement consultant from the Diocese of Salisbury.
- We observed pupils' behaviour at various times during the day including lesson times and playtimes.
- We spoke with parents and carers at the start of each school day to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Faye Bertham	Ofsted Inspector
Spence Allen	Ofsted Inspector

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