

Inspection of a good school: Down Hall Primary School

Brooklyn Drive, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 9LW

Inspection dates:

11–12 February 2020

Outcome

Down Hall Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Down Hall is an inclusive school where pupils are welcomed and well cared for. Pupils learn about their rights and responsibilities and those of others. As a result, they respect one another and accept their differences. Pupils get on well together and support one another. There is a strong feeling of community within the school.

Pupils are enthusiastic learners who are keen to do well. Staff support them to be independent, self-confident and resilient learners. Pupils told me, 'When we make mistakes, we are learning.' As a result, they persist with their learning.

Leaders have reviewed the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Phonics teaching is now consistently strong. Pupils learn about their local community and the world through the topics they study. Pupils choose to raise money for many local, national and international charities.

Most parents are appreciative of the school's work. Several commented that their child felt safe and happy. One parent described the school as 'a family'. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that behaviour is good. They say that bullying is rare because they know it is not tolerated. Pupils take part in a range of after-school activities.

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

Leaders have created a culture of teamwork. Staff and pupils feel supported. Teachers appreciate the training they receive. They say that they have time to do their job. Staff enjoy working at the school and share the school's ethos and values.

Teachers plan lessons that allow pupils to make connections between their learning. Teachers carefully check that pupils understand what they are learning. Pupils who have not grasped knowledge in the lesson quickly get help so that they can keep up with their classmates.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use it well to select resources that meet the needs of the pupils. Teachers make sure that pupils are able to practise new learning to build up their knowledge securely. As a result, pupils achieve well in a range of subjects. For example, pupils from key stage 1 are able to explain the results of science investigations using the correct vocabulary.

In mathematics, staff teach new concepts in a logical order. Pupils are given the time to practice what they have learned in order to secure their knowledge. Pupils in key stage 2 are learning the most efficient methods to solve problems. This has led to improvements. Pupils enjoy mathematics and find the work interesting. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their reasoning skills to deepen their understanding.

Good phonics teaching enables pupils to get off to a good start in reading and writing. Pupils read daily. Most pupils enjoy reading and read regularly at home. The school makes sure pupils have access to quality novels and non-fiction books.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective classroom support. Staff provide pupils with resources that enable them to access the learning. Inclusion support assistants know the pupils well and are skilled at supporting them.

Children in the early years achieve well. They learn in a vibrant and stimulating environment. The curriculum meets the children's interests. They have lots of opportunities to explore their learning. For example, I saw a small group investigating what happens when plastic dinosaurs are frozen in ice. Children work well together and help one another. They listen attentively and understand and follow the rules of the classroom. Children develop independence and take responsibility for their learning well.

Provision for pupils' personal development is a strength. They have plenty of opportunities to contribute to school life through the various pupil councils. Pupils enjoy the after-school activities on offer. These are well attended. Pupils are proud of their fundraising activities. The topics covered in personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons help pupils to develop the skills they will need to be global citizens of the future. Pupils are given the skills to take care of their mental well-being, for example learning to meditate.

Most parents are positive about the work of the school. However, there were a number of parents who expressed concerns regarding the communication between the school and home. They do not find always it easy to access the electronic forms of communication.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a positive culture for safeguarding. Safeguarding is given high priority. Leaders ensure that the appropriate checks are carried out so that all adults working with pupils are suitable.

All adults receive regular training. Staff quickly identify and report signs that may suggest a pupil is at risk. The school works closely with the appropriate agencies to ensure that the needs of vulnerable pupils are met.

Pupils are taught how to keep safe, including online. Pupils say the school is safe. They are confident that staff will deal with any issues they report.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have worked hard to improve standards across all subjects. This has had a positive impact upon pupils' achievement, especially in reading and writing. Teachers do not fully understand how to deepen pupils' learning in their mathematics. Leaders need to ensure that the recent changes to teaching are firmly embedded so that pupils get the opportunity to deepen their understanding in this subject.
- Some parents commented that communication between home and school is not as effective as it could be. They do not find the website or Facebook page user-friendly or that it meets their requirements. Leaders need to make sure that communication with parents is more effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Down Hall Primary School to be good on 19–20 April 2016.

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	114936
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10121433
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	275
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Milchard
Headteacher	Lou Nelson
Website	www.downhallprimary.com
Date of previous inspection	19–20 April 2016

Information about this school

- Down Hall is an average-sized primary school.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are taught in mixed-age classes.

Information about this inspection

- I had discussions with the headteacher, the key stage 1 leader, the English and early years coordinator, the PSHE champion, the inclusion manager and members of the governing body.
- I observed pupils at break and lunchtime and spoke to them about school.
- I spoke to the designated safeguarding leader to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. I also checked staff members' understanding of how to keep pupils safe from harm.
- I visited lessons across a variety of subjects. I did deep dives in reading, mathematics, science, and personal, social and health education. I spoke with pupils about their work and about other aspects of life in school. I looked at pupils' work and checked how well they are learning the curriculum.
- I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.

- I talked to staff, including the recently qualified teachers, about their workload. I also talked to them about the quality of training and support they receive from leaders.
- I reviewed eight responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- I took into consideration the 70 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 31 free-text comments.

Inspection team

Caroline Pardy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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