

Inspection of Dovery Down Lower School

Heath Road, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 3AG

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are receiving a poor quality of education. Pupils are struggling to learn to read. This limits their ability to learn in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils do not gain the knowledge they need to achieve well across a range of subjects. This hampers their preparation for the next stages of their education.

While pupils are happy at school, enjoy seeing their friends and playing, they do not look forward to some of their lessons. Pupils do not always follow the school rules and routines. Some pupils shout out and others do not listen to teachers' instructions. This interrupts the learning of others. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong. They know that if there is bullying, they are to tell a teacher. They trust adults to resolve their concerns.

There is a lot for leaders to do to make pupils' school experience better. As one parent commented, reflecting the views of many, 'This school could be amazing but there are many cracks, and the constant changing of staff does not help.' Over half the parents who responded to the Ofsted survey, Parent View, do not recommend the school.

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

Even when considering the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the pace of improvement is too slow. Leaders have known for a long time that curriculum plans are not 'fit for purpose'. They know that staff need training in how to teach reading and important subject knowledge. Yet, they have not addressed significant weaknesses.

Leaders are not clear about the planning and teaching of reading. They do not ensure that phonics is taught consistently. Teachers do not take account of what pupils know when they are teaching phonics and early reading. Teachers do not correct pupils to ensure they are accurate with their reading and so pupils repeat errors.

Leaders do not prioritise the teaching of reading when children start school in early years. Children do not become fluent readers quickly enough. Leaders are slow to introduce new sounds, which means that pupils lose momentum when learning to read. Weaknesses continue in Year 1 when staff give pupils books they cannot read. This leaves pupils frustrated. Pupils do not experience success with reading. By Year 3, pupils have fallen further behind. This means that pupils struggle to read in other subjects. They also find it difficult to spell simple words correctly.

The quality of pupils' experience in other subjects is no better. Pupils are not taught the important knowledge and vocabulary they need to help them make progress throughout the curriculum. Leaders have not considered the organisation and planning of some other subjects. This results in pupils' prior learning not being used to help pupils learn more.

The curriculum plans for early years lack ambition. The curriculum is not supporting children to learn what they need to know to be successful in later years. Too many children in Reception struggle with classroom routines, despite a settling-in period. Some children do not engage purposefully with activities. Leaders have not clearly specified in plans what they want children to know and be able to do. Therefore, adults in early years do not always know how best to support children to help develop children's knowledge and understanding in all areas of learning.

There are clear plans in place to support pupils' progression in mathematics. The mathematics leader provides support so that staff know what to do and how to use the mathematics resources. Where staffing has been consistent, pupils can explain the methods they use to solve mathematical problems. Younger pupils who have experienced many staff changes are struggling to learn and recall their mathematics.

While pupils' needs are being identified, leaders do not check how well pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are achieving. There are some pupils in the school who are missing out on learning the full curriculum when they are in the nurture room. Some pupils are spending too long in this facility out of lessons, missing important learning and, additionally, the social interaction with their peers. As a result, some of these pupils are falling further behind.

Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour vary. This is unsettling for some pupils. Routines are not well established in all classes. Pupils respond well when teachers' expectations are more consistent. Leaders are tackling this issue. They are focusing on the teaching of values through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum.

Leaders' communication with parents is not good enough. Some parents did not receive an annual report for their child and so do not know how well their child is doing. Contact with the school is limited and so some parents say they feel 'disconnected' from their child's education. Parents who are new to the school did not have an opportunity to see the school before their child started.

Governors have not held leaders to account for the quality of education pupils receive. They are not holding leaders to account for weaknesses in recording and reporting some aspects of safeguarding. Governors are not fulfilling some of their statutory duties. For example, they have not checked the effectiveness of the equalities policy and the delivery of the accessibility plan. Governors have not kept up to date with changes in statutory guidance such as the requirement to consult with parents regarding the relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum. This consultation has not happened.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

While leaders' record-keeping is not as detailed as it should be, leaders keep vulnerable pupils safe. Leaders liaise with external agencies to ensure vulnerable pupils have the support they need. Staff are alert to the signs of abuse. They also know how to report a concern should they need to. Staff are up to date in their knowledge of the latest government guidance.

During the inspection, leaders corrected an administration error on the single central record.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not have a clear plan in place to ensure pupils become good readers from the moment they start school. There is not a systematic synthetic phonics programme for all staff to follow. Some staff have not received suitable training to teach pupils to read. This means that not enough pupils become fluent, good readers. This limits pupils' access to learning in other subjects. Leaders urgently need to address this.
- The curriculum plans for the early years lack ambition. This means that children do not get off to a good start. Leaders need to ensure that curriculum plans take into account children's starting points and contain well-matched learning activities that enable children to settle in quickly and achieve well.
- Leaders have not put in place a curriculum that enables pupils to achieve well across all subjects. Pupils often do not receive the balanced education to which they are entitled. Pupils are not developing the knowledge and understanding they need in different subjects. Leaders must identify the key knowledge, skills, and vocabulary that pupils should learn so that pupils achieve well in all subjects.
- Leaders do not check well enough the impact of the support they give to pupils with SEND. Some pupils with SEND are falling further behind. Leaders need to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and support to ensure they meet the needs of this group of pupils and help them to progress.
- Leaders do not communicate well with parents. Leaders need to improve communication so that parents are well informed about the education their children are receiving and the progress they are making in school.
- Governors have not held leaders to account for the weaknesses in the school. They have not recognised failings in the quality of education for pupils. Governors need to ensure that they are performing their statutory responsibilities well.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	109516
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10199394
Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ian Haynes
Headteacher	Debra Brewster
Website	www.doverydown.beds.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 and 22 March 2007, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the leadership and the governing body of the school has changed. The current headteacher has been in post for seven years.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors spoke to members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, computing and art. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans for other subjects and samples of work in other subjects.
- Inspectors looked at provision for PSHE, RSE and spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education.
- Inspectors met with the leader in charge of pupils with SEND and looked at documentation for SEND. Inspectors observed support for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors spoke to parents when they dropped their children off to school.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's information on behaviour, bullying and attendance. Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records and spoke with governors, leaders, staff and pupils about safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors considered the 77 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 68 free-text comments. Inspectors took into account the 25 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 54 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Cindy Impey

Her Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021