

Inspection of The Downs Church of England Primary School

Owen Square, Walmer, Deal, Kent CT14 7TL

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 September 2023

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	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Natalie Luxford. This school is part of Deal Education Alliance for Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Joanne Hygate, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Roger Walton.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at this warm and welcoming school. They are taught to be kind and active citizens. Pupils embrace the school vision of 'nothing is impossible' and are keen to play an active role in the school community. They value the varied leadership positions such as charity champions and curriculum consultants. The school encourages them to be friendly and responsible. Pupils demonstrate these qualities through their positive attitudes and relationships with other pupils and staff.

Pupils are respectful. They happily play together at playtimes and calmly move around the school. Pupils benefit from nurturing relationships with staff. They trust that adults in school will listen and care for them. This creates an environment where pupils feel safe.

The school has high expectations of pupils' learning. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are keen to learn and so work hard. As a result, they achieve well across the curriculum.

Pupils appreciate the wide range of trips and experiences. Visits to the British Museum, climbing walls and engaging with amateur dramatics have supported pupils to discover new interests and talents. Pupils relish the opportunities in school and the variety of clubs during, before and after school.

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

The Reception Year provides a positive start to children's time at school, which supports them to thrive. The school has carefully identified what children will learn and in what order. Staff are skilled in supporting children to understand and remember small steps of learning to gradually build knowledge over time. They prioritise developing children's language and communication. This prepares children effectively for their future learning.

The teaching of reading is effective. Pupils get off to a strong start from the very first days of Reception. The school has introduced a well-sequenced phonics scheme. Staff consistently follow this, which helps pupils to develop into confident readers. Weaker readers are provided with effective support to enable them to keep up. Almost all pupils read books which closely match the sounds they have already learned, but this is not yet as consistent as it should be. The school recognises that this is key to enabling every pupil to develop accuracy and fluency. Pupils are enthused by staff reading books aloud to them. This exposes pupils to varied books that they might not read independently. As a result, pupils develop a genuine interest in reading different text types. The school works effectively with parents to support them with reading at home.

The school has introduced an ambitious curriculum that is coherently sequenced. This was in response to weaker key stage 2 outcomes in 2022. Teachers follow these plans closely and usually check pupils' understanding carefully. This enables

pupils to connect concepts and knowledge. For example, in design and technology, pupils develop their sewing skills by gradually learning more challenging types of stitches. As a result, pupils can recall the most important content over time. Pupils with SEND are supported effectively. Staff swiftly identify pupils' needs and skilfully adapt their teaching to enable them to learn the same curriculum as their peers. Consequently, pupils with SEND achieve well. In a few subjects, staff are at an earlier stage of implementing the new curriculum.

Pupils generally behave well and are keen to attend school. The school teaches pupils from the start of Reception how to behave. Pupils respond enthusiastically and swiftly learn the routines and rules. This means that pupils usually focus well in lessons. Occasionally, they lose concentration, but staff are typically swift to refocus pupils. The school works in close partnership with parents to encourage good attendance. However, some pupils who are disadvantaged do not attend school regularly enough.

The school strongly promotes pupils' personal development. Pupils are encouraged to be inclusive and thoughtful modern citizens. The school prioritises teaching pupils about their physical and mental health to help them grow in confidence. They learn about social justice through reflective assemblies and the world around them through carefully planned opportunities. As a result, pupils flourish in the respectful and inclusive environment. As one parent commented, 'My child is now flying!'

Leaders keep pupils firmly at the centre of decision-making. Trustees ensure that the new governing body provides helpful challenge for school leaders to provide an effective provision for pupils. Staff appreciate the school's focus on maintaining pupils at the centre of decision-making. As a result, they feel supported as everyone works together to continue to improve the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of pupils read books that are not sufficiently well matched to their reading ability. At times, this slows their reading progress. The trust should ensure that pupils read books that are accurately matched to the sounds they have previously learned.
- Attendance is too low for some pupils. This hinders their learning, as they miss out on learning essential content. The trust should redouble their efforts so that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils improves.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	147058
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10288085
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	317
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Roger Walton
CEO of the trust	Joanne Hygate
Headteacher	Natalie Luxford
Website	www.downs.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Downs Church of England Primary School converted to become an academy school in April 2019. When its predecessor school, The Downs Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of the Deal Education Alliance for Learning Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school's last section 48 inspection was in January 2017.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the

school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first
- The inspection team held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector met with the members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and also with members of the trust board and the chief executive officer. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the diocese.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education, design and technology and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to familiar adults.
- The team spoke with pupils about their experience of the school. It took into account the views of parents, carers and staff through conversations and responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Toby Martlew, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Louise Lythgoe	Ofsted Inspector
Kirstine Boon	Ofsted 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 2023