

# Inspection of Downs Junior School

Rugby Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 6ED

---

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 November 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Good**

---

The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Parents, pupils and staff are all extremely enthusiastic in their praise for the school's inclusive culture and community spirit. Pupils proudly talk about the opportunities and experiences they gain through their school. These include competitions, assemblies and a vast array of clubs, such as 'Downs Play', chess club, 'Mega Choir' and writing club, among many others.

Pupils come to school eager and ready to learn. They explore an interesting curriculum that enables them to achieve well and inspires them to do their best. Pupils foster a love of learning through the memorable experiences that staff plan and offer. This includes a visit to an 'astrodome' in school, where pupils learn different information about space. Pupils state they 'feel lucky' to have their own underground air raid shelter where they gain a realistic experience of learning about life during World War II.

The school is ambitious for all pupils to achieve well. Mostly, pupils behave well and work hard to meet the high expectations across the school. They demonstrate excellent social skills, quickly opening doors and greeting visitors with enthusiasm. There are strong links with the community and parents appreciate the school's nurturing approach in providing support for pupils. Pupils feel safe at school. Bullying is rare and never tolerated.

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

The school has designed a curriculum which is broad and reflects their high expectations for all. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school ensures that any additional needs of pupils are identified as early as possible. This enables staff to carefully plan how learning is adapted to ensure it meets pupil's individual needs. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well alongside their peers.

In some subjects, for example, mathematics, the curriculum is well established. Regular training and support ensure teachers have a clear understanding of what pupils need to ensure their knowledge and skills build over time. For example, in mathematics, pupils are given regular opportunities to recall their knowledge to solve mathematical problems in different contexts. Pupils achieve well as they can make connections between different topics and remember their learning.

However, in a few subjects, the curriculum is at an earlier stage of development. The precise knowledge that pupils need to know is not always clear. This means some activities teachers choose are not always closely matched to what pupils need to learn. This also makes it difficult for teachers to identify what pupils already know and address any gaps in knowledge quickly. Pupils in these subjects are less confident in remembering what they had been taught before and how it links to what they are learning now.

Staff have developed a love of reading across the school. Pupils regularly share books and read independently. More fluent readers talk positively about being part of the 'reading crew', who help less confident readers by practising their reading together. While reading is generally taught well, some phonics teaching is not as sharply focused as it could be. There is also some variability in the quality of extra support that some pupils receive. However, the school knows this and is already acting to address these inconsistencies in helping all pupils learn to read.

During lessons, pupils mostly settle into routines that support learning. Usually learning is not disrupted. If this does happen, staff usually manage this well. There are some occasions when the behaviour policy is not followed consistently by some staff. Pupils play together with care and respect during breaks and lunchtime, where there is a buzz of happy energy. Staff work hard to support pupils' high levels of attendance across the school and effective support is in place, when needed, to help pupils attend regularly.

Pupils' personal development is carefully planned and woven throughout the whole school. Pupils are encouraged and develop strong, respectful, positive relationships and celebrate each other's differences. Staff ensure that pupils' talents and interests thrive. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with SEND benefit from their participation in the varied extra-curricular activities.

Staff are happy and effusive in their praise for leaders. They feel extremely valued at this school. Leaders and governors manage staff's workload well and support them effectively.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- There are some inconsistencies in how well a small number of pupils are taught to read. This means that these pupils do not always learn to read quickly enough. The school should continue to take action to ensure all pupils learn to read confidently and fluently as quickly as possible.
- Staff do not always use appropriate checks to see if pupils are secure in their knowledge and skills before moving on to new learning. As a result, activities are not always planned carefully enough to help pupils achieve well across the curriculum. The school should ensure pupils' understanding is checked, so that any gaps or misconceptions can be identified to secure the intended learning.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114366
<b>Local authority</b>	Brighton and Hove
<b>Inspection number</b>	10287854
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	508
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Rebecca Elton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Giovanni Franceschi
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.downsjunior.brighton-hove.dbprimary.com">www.downsjunior.brighton-hove.dbprimary.com</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	15 and 16 March 2011, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Downs Junior School is a larger-than-average sized school.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provision.

## 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.
- During this inspection, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair and vice chair of governors. She also spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, physical education and art and design. In each subject, inspectors met with subject leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to adults they knew. Inspectors also reviewed curriculum plans in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and governor minutes.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the free-text comments that were submitted. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

## Inspection team

Numera Anwar, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Mark Cole	Ofsted Inspector
James Everett	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](mailto: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/](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2023