

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Downland School

Downlands Road, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 5EF

---

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 October 2024

## **Outcome**

Downland School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

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

The welfare of pupils and their families is at the heart of Downland. The school provides a calm and nurturing environment where pupils attend regularly. Many pupils have arrived from disrupted placements elsewhere. They describe how the school has a 'fresh start culture.' Pupils appreciate how staff see beyond their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which allows them to flourish.

Pupils experience success because staff understand the individual needs of pupils well and have high expectations of them. They place high importance on the curriculum, which includes an individualised therapeutic approach. The school weaves the core skills of reading, writing and mathematics throughout the curriculum. However, the school is aware that pupils are not yet able to demonstrate their knowledge in their written work across other subjects.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils and staff follow the school's approach to behaviour known as the 'Downland Way.' As a result, pupils behave well in lessons and in social situations. When pupils struggle with their emotions, staff take effective and supportive action, enabling pupils to re-engage with their learning quickly.

Pupils know they have a voice. Excellent pastoral support and positive relationships with adults mean pupils feel valued.

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

The school's aim for pupils to 'aspire, achieve and thrive' shines through. Everything the school does is about supporting pupils to realise their potential. It has high expectations of pupils. Pupils do their best and achieve well from often low starting points. They show

positive attitudes towards their learning and strive to overcome the challenges they face. The school focuses on ensuring that pupils gain the necessary knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics in preparation for their next steps in college or work. For example, pupils were able to use their mathematical knowledge of decimals to calculate temperatures in their science work. Pupils work towards a range of qualifications, including GCSEs in English and mathematics, and achieve success. However, the school recognises that although pupils are fluent readers and are able to write, they are reluctant writers beyond the English curriculum. This means that pupils do not always demonstrate the knowledge they have gained in their written work.

Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is planned carefully. Pupils gain the knowledge they need to lead healthy and successful lives. For example, pupils talk with confidence about the importance of budgeting and personal hygiene. The school welcomes visitors such as the police to discuss, with pupils, a range of dangers that they may face within their lives. This provides pupils with important information on how to keep themselves safe.

The school's work to develop pupils' personal development is a priority. It provides pupils with rich developmental experiences, such as the residential trip to museums in London and open water swimming. Pupils speak positively regarding the wealth of enrichment opportunities such as sailing, dungeon and dragons and sports. Pupils who participate in the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme talk with enthusiasm about planning their expeditions. Such opportunities develop pupils' perseverance, resilience and leadership skills. Pupils relish the roles and responsibilities afforded to them. These include being school councillors and active participants in the recruitment process on staff appointments.

The school provides helpful careers guidance to prepare pupils in their next steps. It does not put a ceiling on pupils' aspirations. Pupils successfully go on to college, apprenticeships or into the world of work.

The school is proactive in finding out what pupils and families need and how best to provide it. The school promotes positive mental health across the community and offers effective support and guidance to those who need it.

Leaders, including governors, have a detailed knowledge of the impact of the school's work. Governors hold the school firmly to account for the quality of education and care pupils receive. Staff are extremely proud to work at 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)

- Writing is not well developed across the curriculum as pupils are not always given sufficient opportunities to write at length. As a result, pupils do not fully demonstrate what they have learned in their written work. The school should take action to ensure that pupils develop their writing across all areas of the curriculum.

## Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in October 2014.

## 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>	126550
<b>Local authority</b>	Wiltshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10344571
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	10 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	88
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Richard Green
<b>Headteacher</b>	Georgina Keily-Theobald
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.downland.org.uk">www.downland.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Downland is a school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Additionally, pupils have a range of SEND needs such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and speech, language and communication needs.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses 14 unregistered alternative provisions.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 the inspection, the lead inspector met with the headteacher and the deputy headteachers. She also met with governors, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors focused inspection activity on the following groups of subjects: English, mathematics and science, and PSHE. For each group of subjects inspectors visited a sample of lessons, heard pupils read, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector sampled pupils' work in history, geography, art and physical education.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector held telephone conversations with education advisers from Wiltshire local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. The inspectors met with school leaders to discuss and scrutinise how they respond to behaviour incidents and pupils' attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys as well as the online parents' survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text replies. An inspector also spoke to parents at the start of the day.

### **Inspection team**

Jen Southall, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Buckton

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 2024