

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Dundale Primary School and Nursery

Dundale Primary School, Silk Mill Way, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5DJ

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Inspection dates:

17 and 18 December 2024

## Outcome

Dundale Primary School and Nursery has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Becky Ellis. This school is part of Ridgeway Learning Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Phillip Wheatley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Julian Crane.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being part of this welcoming school. They appreciate and benefit from the many improvements the school has made. For example, pupils value the introduction of the 'Dundale Way', which outlines the school's expectations of pupils' behaviour. They understand the school's expectations and live up to them. Pupils build positive relationships with each other and staff. In the early years, children learn how to be kind, such as by sharing and taking turns. Pupils thrive during playtimes. On the playground, they have fun together exploring the enriching activities.

As a result of the improvements made across the school, pupils learn well. Starting in the early years, pupils come to know that learning is important. They delight in learning while playing alongside their peers. In lessons, pupils ask interesting questions and articulately discuss what they are learning. Owing to the redesigned curriculum and staff training, pupils achieve the curriculum goals well. Pupils are well prepared for secondary education.

Pupils learn about life beyond school. They are aware of current events and understand the issues that young people face in society. Pupils develop awareness of potential risks, including when they are in the community or online. They know what to do if they have concerns.

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

Over recent years, the school has redesigned the curriculum to address weaknesses in pupils' learning and achievement. As a result of the changes, pupils now study an ambitious and logically ordered curriculum. The school's guidance ensures that staff know exactly what pupils must learn. Staff are well trained and have strong subject knowledge. They typically provide pupils with learning activities that ensure that pupils learn what they should. Consequently, pupils' achievement in national tests has improved markedly.

Occasionally in lessons, staff do not exactly match learning activities to some pupils' needs, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). When this happens, pupils sometimes get stuck because activities are too difficult. Similarly, some pupils finish work quickly and do not get opportunities to deepen what they know.

The school typically provides effective support for pupils with SEND. The school identifies pupils' needs swiftly. Working with external agencies, the school ensures that staff have the guidance they need to provide effective help for pupils to learn the curriculum.

Staff routinely check what pupils know and understand. When pupils show signs of misunderstanding or forgetting key knowledge, staff provide effective support. However, sometimes staff do not realise when a pupil is struggling or needs to move on to deeper learning. This leads to some pupils occasionally not receiving the exact support they need to learn as well as they could.

Reading is high profile. Pupils enjoy reading. They appreciate the school's well-stocked library and recommend books to their friends. In early years, staff ensure that children develop their use of language and build their vocabulary. Children learn what they need to start reading effectively. Staff follow the school's new approach to the teaching of early reading with precision and provide effective support to pupils who find reading difficult. As a result, pupils learn to read fluently by the end of key stage 1.

The quality of pupils' behaviour has improved substantially over the last three years. Pupils appreciate the praise they receive in 'Time to Shine' assemblies. The school gives strong support for pupils who find it difficult to manage their emotions and behaviour. These pupils are well equipped to discuss their feelings and find positive solutions to frustrating situations. As a result, suspensions have sharply declined.

The school has placed great attention on ensuring that pupils attend school regularly. Working with external agencies, the school has supported families well to remove barriers that prevent some pupils from attending school. Most pupils maintain regular attendance. However, absence overall remains higher than in similar schools.

The school ensures that pupils are well prepared to live in a multicultural, democratic society. Pupils learn about different lifestyles and beliefs. They understand the importance of respecting others' differences. When studying controversial issues, pupils learn about opposing views. In discussion, pupils show sensitivity when they disagree with another person's opinion.

Recognising substantial weaknesses at the school in 2022, leaders and members of governance started putting measures in place to secure the necessary improvements. With the support of the trust, school leaders have improved the school a great deal. This is noted by parents, staff and representatives from external agencies. Trustees and governors monitor the quality of provision at the school closely and hold leaders to account robustly. Staff appreciate how the school is improving without leading to unreasonable workload, ensuring a positive work-life balance.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- At times, staff do not exactly match learning activities to some pupils' needs, including those with SEND. Consequently, pupils develop gaps in their knowledge. The school must ensure that staff arrange learning activities that support pupils to learn the curriculum as well as they could.
- Staff do not always realise when some pupils find something too hard or are ready to move on to deeper learning. This prevents pupils from deepening their understanding of the curriculum. The school must ensure that checks on learning identify when pupils need further support or are ready to move on to deeper learning.
- Although the school has improved pupils' attendance over time, absence remains high in comparison with similar schools. This means that some pupils continue to miss out on important learning time. The school needs to continue to develop its approaches to support pupils to attend school regularly.

## **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 predecessor school, Dundale Primary School and Nursery, to be good for overall effectiveness in June 2012.

## **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>	148710
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10345544
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	198
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Julian Crane
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Phillip Wheatley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Becky Ellis
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.dundale.herts.sch.uk">www.dundale.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The headteacher took up her post in September 2021. The deputy headteachers took up their posts in September 2022.
- The school is part of Ridgeway Learning Partnership.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.
- The school runs its own before- and after-school care.

## 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector held discussions with the chair of the trust, members of the trust board, the CEO, members of the local governing board, the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, teachers, members of support staff and pupils.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, when moving around the school and during lunch and playtimes. The inspector also considered a range of documents and other information about the behaviour, attitudes and the personal development of pupils.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Al Mistrano, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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