



# Downs Infant School

## Inspection Report

---

**Unique Reference Number** 114367  
**Local Authority** Brighton and Hove  
**Inspection number** 289887  
**Inspection date** 19 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Steffi Penny HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

---

|   |                    |                         |                |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Infant             | <b>School address</b>   | Ditchling Road |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community          |                         | Brighton       |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 4-7                |                         | BN1 6JA        |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed              | <b>Telephone number</b> | 01273 500146   |
| <b>Number on roll (school)</b>            | 355                | <b>Fax number</b>       | 01273 700504   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body | <b>Chair</b>            | Rachel Attwell |
|   |                    | <b>Headteacher</b>      | Regine Kruger  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 25 November 2002   |                         |                |

---

|                         |   |                                    |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| <b>Age group</b><br>4-7 | <b>Inspection date</b><br>19 October 2006 | <b>Inspection number</b><br>289887 |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------------------|

---

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Situated north of the centre of Brighton, the school is larger than average, and serves an area of both privately owned and rented housing. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is similar to the national figure, but the number who have learning difficulties is significantly above the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language.

## Key for inspection grades

|         |              |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  |
| Grade 2 | Good         |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   |

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Many parents choose to send their children to Downs Infant School because, 'It is a wonderful school, at the heart of our local community.' The vast majority believe it is outstanding; they are right!

The main reasons for the school's success are the outstanding leadership and management and the excellent quality of teaching. The school is highly self-critical and the governors hold it to account rigorously. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses very well and responds robustly when it identifies an issue needing attention. Because it is a school that is always seeking to be better, the senior management team is too modest in several of its judgements about the school's work.

Learning underpins all activities and all staff are constantly looking for ways to help all pupils learn better whilst taking into account that the learning journey should be interesting and exciting. Pupils become increasingly independent in their learning due to the carefully crafted and targeted interventions by staff in the Reception Year. This excellent start is built on exceptionally well as pupils move up through Years 1 and 2. The result of the school's excellent work is that pupils of all abilities make outstanding progress, culminating in well above average standards. Pupils' achievement is outstanding.

Pupils show that they enjoy their education tremendously through what they say, by their considerate behaviour, and by their outstanding attendance. The enjoyment of learning manifests itself in the superb and diverse displays around the school. The vast majority of parents agree. One such example is the comment of a parent that, 'My son thinks school is great, wants to wear school uniform because he is proud to belong and cannot wait to do his homework.' This is not surprising because the pupils are responding to circumstances where much is on offer to motivate them and meet their needs, and much is expected of them.

The school's strong emphasis on personal, social and health education, as well as pupils' increasing proficiency in basic skills, ensures that pupils are prepared extremely well for their future lives. Pupils vote through an election system to appoint the school council. They know this is a genuine opportunity, amongst others, to have their voices heard. This is part of a curriculum that gives great attention to spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, with the result that outstanding developments are achieved.

All members of the school community have a voice and help to shape the school improvement plan. For example, the teaching assistants drove the development of making this a 'signing school' where the use of Makaton signing along with signs and symbols helps all pupils learn and understand better. This also links with the multi-sensory approach to the very creative curriculum as witnessed during the inspection with the 'monster rumpus'.

The impacts of initiatives are monitored effectively but the school recognises the need to refine further the processes they use in evaluating their contribution to pupils' learning. Also, despite the very good evidence to demonstrate that the achievement

of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is outstanding, the school is aware that it could make this more accessible to visitors.

The school is set to improve even further because of its outstanding leadership, committed and hard-working staff, strong parental support and the positive attitudes shown by its pupils.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Sharpen the measuring of the impact of individual initiatives on pupils' learning.
- Be in a position to easily demonstrate the learning journey that pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

The school rightly judges this aspect of its work as outstanding.

Pupils start school with skills that are broadly average, but many children enter the Reception Year knowing very few letter sounds or words. They are largely unable to write their names, and are unable to count accurately. In all three year groups achievement for all pupil groups is outstanding and standards are well above average by the end of Year 2. The challenging targets that the school sets are met and the bar is raised annually. The vast majority of parents have witnessed this, for example the parent of a pupil new to the school wrote, 'Since joining the school there has been an immediate excitement in her work and a rapid improvement in writing, reading and maths.'

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

This area of the school's work is outstanding.

Pupils develop an exceptionally good understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise. Pupils who take advantage of the school lunch are overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the quality provided for them, a typical comment being, 'They are great and really tasty; you know they are low in fat too!' Accommodation restricts some of the physical activities that the school would like to enhance, but it creatively uses innovative ideas such as 'brain gym' to get pupils moving about in class as much as possible.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

The school rightly judges the quality of teaching and learning to be outstanding. Adults play to their strengths but work as a coordinated team with a shared vision. Teachers have high expectations and sharply match teaching to the needs of different pupils. Pupils questioned about the school consistently mentioned their 'great' teachers and teaching assistants. Parents also speak highly of the teaching; one parent wrote, 'Downs Infants is a very nurturing school where my child has received excellent care and teaching.'

Very good use is made of teaching assistants to offer support to pupils who need it. Parents of children with learning difficulties shared that they were very appreciative of the sensitive and respectful way that their children have been enabled to succeed.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It has strong coherence because it is underpinned by the school's values. It enlightens and prepares pupils from a monocultural school extremely well for life in the wider, diverse community. It covers the requirements of the National Curriculum thoroughly but it has been tailored so that creativity permeates all areas and cross-curricular links are exploited. Examples of this are the breathtaking 3D owl sculptures created in art supporting literacy, the beautiful singing (acapella and in the round) and the Mexicolore.

The school offers a satisfactory range of extra activities such as ballet through its partnership with different groups. It would like to offer more activities of its own or allow for greater numbers such as for the samba band but the growth is restricted by accommodation issues.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support given by the school are exemplary. Pupils say they feel safe and the arrangements for safeguarding them are highly effective.

Personal, social and health education has been shrewdly developed and underpins the caring and inclusive ethos of the school. Because the curriculum is thought through in terms of skills to be developed as well as knowledge to be gained, both within and outside of school, the personal development of students of all abilities is taken forward exceptionally well.

The school tracks pupils' achievement very closely and analyses the data on pupils' performance both by the individual and by groups, such as ethnicity and gender. Pupils are told clearly what they need to do to improve their work. They know that they will

get help when they need it, but they are also helped to develop a real sense of responsibility for their own learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management, at all levels, including governance, are outstanding. There is a shared ethos that permeates the life of the school, setting high standards and expectations. The impact of this leadership at all levels can be seen both in the exceptional test results and in the confident, happy children that the school develops. The impacts of initiatives are monitored effectively but the school recognises the need to refine further the processes they use in evaluating their contribution to pupils' learning. The school provides outstanding value for money.

There was a very high response to the parental questionnaire sent out prior to the inspection. The vast majority of parents support the work of the school and tell stories of the very positive impact that the school has on their children's personal development and achievement. However, they and the school are concerned about the planned building works for a waste transfer facility near to the school and feel that this and the demolition of the existing site could potentially jeopardise the children's learning and safety. Parents are confident that the school will minimise this, but feel that the local authority could have been more supportive in asking the council to reconsider its decision.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Inspection judgements

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | <b>School Overall</b> |
|---|-----------------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 1   |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 1   |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage  | 1   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 1   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 1   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 1 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 1 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 1 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 1 |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 1 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 1 |
| The attendance of learners  | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 1 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community                                    | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 |

### The quality of provision

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 1 |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 1 |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 1 |

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 1   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1   |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets   | 1   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 1   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 1   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 1   |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?  | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures?   | No  |
| Does this school require a notice to improve?  | No  |

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for your warm welcome when I came to inspect your school. I very much enjoyed seeing you in lessons, looking at your work and talking with you. A big thank you to those of you who met me and told me what makes your school outstanding.

What I liked about your school most of all:

- You enjoy learning, work hard and make excellent progress.
- The staff do everything they possibly can to help you to do your best.
- Adults in the school make your lessons interesting and fun every day.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you are respectful to each other and the staff.
- Your headteacher and all the staff work brilliantly as a team.
- The displays of your work are superb.
- The whole school is committed to thinking hard and trying all the time to do better.
- You are getting really good at seeing how you can improve your work.

I agree with your school that you all need to keep talking to each other about what works well and what does not work so well all the time. I have asked the school to look at the way that they share some of your learning journeys with visitors; perhaps you can suggest some ways to do this.

Thank you for being so polite and helpful during the visit. I hope that you continue to enjoy your learning and do your best. Please thank your parents for the many very helpful comments they made on the questionnaires.