

Downsway Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109896
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	310136
Inspection dates	13–14 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Olson Davis

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Thomas
Headteacher	Mrs S Cantwell
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2004
School address	Warbreck Drive Tilehurst Reading RG31 6FE
Telephone number	0118 942 1362
Fax number	0118 942 1377

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with moderate learning difficulties is below the national average. There was extensive building work taking place during the inspection, which meant that most classes were housed in temporary accommodation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Downsway Primary provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. It is improving because the headteacher and deputy headteacher provide good leadership and clear direction. They ensure a shared vision for the school, leading to good quality care, coupled with a clear focus on raising standards. The headteacher has forged good links with outside agencies, including local schools, to improve the school's provision for its pupils. The vast majority of parents are pleased with the school's work. As one wrote, 'It is a lovely school and I would recommend it to anyone.' Parents are also pleased with the school's success in minimising disruption to their children's learning during the current building work.

An important feature of the school is the good relationships between adults and pupils. This contributes to pupils' good personal development. They enjoy school, as shown by their excellent attendance. Pupils are keen to learn and behave well. They have a good understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. They understand the importance of eating a balanced diet and taking part in regular exercise. They participate enthusiastically in the after-schools clubs, which enables them to develop their fitness levels.

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make steady progress from their above average starting points on entering Year 1 to reach above average standards overall by the end of Year 6. Standards in science are consistently above average but fluctuate a little more in English and mathematics. Not enough pupils reached the expected levels in writing in the Year 2 national assessments in 2007. Although there are many positive aspects to the satisfactory curriculum, the school recognises that pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to practise different kinds of writing in other subjects. In the assessments at the end of Year 6 in 2007, more able pupils did better in science than in English and mathematics. The school has made considerable progress since then to raise pupils' achievement further. Nonetheless, some more able pupils could still do better and writing at the end of Year 2, and this remains an area of relative weakness.

Teaching overall is satisfactory and is often good. Teachers give clear explanations and encourage pupils to discuss their work. As a result, pupils are keen to participate in lessons. However, in some lessons, teachers do not make effective enough use of assessment information to stretch the more able pupils and their learning is not always moved on swiftly enough.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good self-evaluation and a sharply focused school improvement plan have led to many recent improvements. Senior leaders are not complacent and recognise that they need to do more to raise pupils' achievement from satisfactory to good. Governors have a good understanding of the strategic development of the school and provide strong challenge to the school to improve its performance and provision.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children arrive from a range of other early years providers and quickly settle under the good care and guidance of the staff. Parents are pleased with the way that they and their children feel welcomed. They make good progress in all areas of learning because of good teaching and well-planned activities. As a result, many children attain above the expected levels in their personal, social and emotional development and in their literacy and number skills when they enter Year 1. Adults have made effective use of the limited accommodation while major

refurbishment work takes place at the school. However, this has restricted the usually good opportunities for outdoor learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve writing at the end of Year 2 by providing better opportunities for pupils to practise different kinds of writing across the curriculum.
- Ensure consistency in teachers' use of assessment information to provide greater challenge for more able pupils.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are above average overall at the end of Year 6, although there is some variation in how well pupils do in different subjects. Pupils attain broadly average standards in English and in mathematics standards range from average to above average for different year groups. Although pupils achieve satisfactorily, some more able pupils have not always done as well as they should in English and in mathematics. This is because work is not always pitched at the right level for them. Standards in science have improved since the last inspection and are above average because of the school's increased focus on investigations. Too few pupils reached the expected levels in writing in the 2007 assessments at the end of Year 2. Pupils' writing skills are lagging behind their skills in reading and in mathematics because of inconsistencies in the challenge of the teaching and too few opportunities for them to carry out different kinds of writing outside of the literacy lesson. Pupils who find learning difficult and minority ethnic pupils make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because the school's leadership places a high priority on this area. Pupils are keen to learn about and celebrate other cultures and ways of life. Pupils develop good relationships with each other. As a result, they work and play together well. They know bullying is wrong and understand what to do if they see, or experience, unacceptable behaviour. The pupil 'red caps' take their responsibilities seriously and strive to ensure all pupils behave well. Pupils also contribute to the school community through the recently reconstituted school council where views are sought and changes made. In addition, they make a good contribution to the wider community by raising funds for charities and representing the school in sporting, art and musical events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Relationships are good and teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to work together, which help the children to tackle their work with confidence and enthusiasm. Teachers use questioning strategies effectively to check pupils' understanding and consolidate learning. In some lessons, pupils make only satisfactory progress

because the lessons lack a clear focus. Teachers do not always make it sufficiently clear what pupils are to learn and achieve by the end of the lesson. As a result, pupils cannot assess how well they are doing in the lessons. Some teachers do not consistently use their knowledge of pupils' performance to provide extra challenge for more able pupils and this can slow their progress. The skills of teaching assistants are used effectively so that their good support enhances pupils' involvement in their learning and encourages better progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There is a clear emphasis on basic skills which means that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Teachers are beginning to make links between subjects to make learning more relevant and enjoyable for pupils. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills, which are becoming increasingly effective in literacy lessons, are not yet planned well enough in other subjects. The curriculum supports pupils' personal development well. Pupils learn about healthy living and how to be safe through the effective personal, social, and health education programme. Provision for pupils who find learning difficult is satisfactory and helps them to make the same progress as their classmates. The curriculum is enhanced well by visits, visitors, and special events such as Arts Week. These effectively support pupils' learning and contribute to their academic and personal development. Pupils also participate enthusiastically in a wide range of clubs and other activities. These add greatly to their enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Procedures for child protection, risk assessment and health and safety are rigorous. Special attention has been paid to ensuring the safety of pupils during the current building programme. Pupils feel safe in this secure and supportive environment. There are good strategies for dealing with any instances of inappropriate behaviour. This has led to significant improvements in behaviour. The steps taken by the school to promote good attendance are very effective. Teachers are making increasingly effective use of assessment information to track the progress of pupils and to set challenging targets for them. However, these procedures are not yet sharp enough to guide some more able pupils to achieve as well as they can or to inform younger pupils how to improve their writing skills. The quality of marking varies and does not always show pupils how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

School leaders have identified the key priorities for improvement and have linked their actions to measurable outcomes for pupils. Consequently, the headteacher and governors have a clear idea of the effectiveness of initiatives. As a result, senior leaders have secured good improvement in the teaching of reading and number skills in the Reception class and at Key Stage 1. Science standards are now above average. Behaviour has improved. Issues from the previous inspection have been tackled successfully. Attendance has been maintained at a high level. The monitoring of teaching has not yet succeeded in removing inconsistencies in teaching. More remains to be done to ensure that teachers are making the best use of assessment information to accelerate the progress made by more able pupils. Strategies to raise standards in writing at the end of

Year 2 are not yet effective enough. Governors are effective. They keep themselves well-informed through the good quality information provided by the headteacher and their own effective monitoring. School self-evaluation is now good. Consequently, the school has a good grasp and understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Given its track record for improvement this means that it has a good capacity to improve further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

03 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Downsway Primary School, Reading, RG31 6FE

Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed us when we inspected your school. We enjoyed talking to you and took careful note of what you and your parents had to say about the school. We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory education. We also found some good things about your school.

- Your attendance is excellent because you enjoy learning and the other activities in school.
- You help out well around the school and in the community.
- The children in the Foundation Stage get a good start in school, especially in developing their personal and social skills and their skills in literacy and number.
- You are making satisfactory progress in your learning and this is getting better.
- The headteacher and governors have clear plans on how to improve the school.

There are two things that we think your school needs to keep working at to make the school better for you.

- Help you to do better in your writing by the end of Year 2, by giving you more opportunities to practise different kinds of writing.
- To use the assessment information teachers have about you to plan some lessons better so that some of you make faster progress in your learning. This will help those of you who can cope with harder work do even better in English and mathematics.

We hope that you will continue to enjoy your school. We also hope that you will help your teachers as they work hard to make your school better for you.

Yours sincerely

Olson Davis

Lead Inspector