

Downs View Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118523
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312974
Inspection date	27 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	258
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Fran Harris
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2003
School address	Ball Lane Kennington Ashford TN25 4PJ
Telephone number	01233 632339
Fax number	01233 620559

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

attainment on entry to Reception and the progress being made in Reception, especially by more capable children

standards and progress in Years 1 and 2 and the impact of teaching on raising achievement

the impact of leadership and management, particularly through school initiatives for improving standards.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with pupils and staff, review of the assessment data the school uses to track the progress the pupils make, and analysis of pupils' work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Downs View is larger than most infant schools. Nearly all children are from White British backgrounds. Children's attainment on entry is broadly at the level expected but there is a wide range. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The headteacher has been in post for nearly three years. This was after a period of significant turbulence in senior leadership when there were two acting headteachers. Soon after the headteacher's arrival the deputy headteacher was seconded to another school and Down's View was without a deputy. The new substantive deputy has been in post for six months. The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark and has won Healthy Schools, Active Mark and Gold Travel Plan awards during the past year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Children thrive both academically and personally in a very welcoming and caring atmosphere. The school is improving and standards are rising because the development of basic skills is given high priority. Children greatly enjoy school because they have good opportunities to develop their creative, practical and sporting talents as well as progressing academically. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by a dedicated and effective teaching team, is pivotal to the improvements being made. Parents are often delighted with the school and one parent echoed the views of the majority when saying 'I am extremely pleased with the standards of education and care my child has received since starting at Down's View. I feel my child is valued as an individual'.

Children make good progress in Reception and this continues in Key Stage 1. By the time they reach Year 2, their standards are significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards are rising throughout the school and are higher for the current Year 2 than for the last few years. New arrangements for checking children's progress and enhancing teaching have played a significant part in improving achievement. Evidence from school data indicates that older children did not always perform as well as they should have in the past and are now in the process of 'catching-up'. The school has very effective programmes directed to this end. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and by the time they leave, many have reached the nationally expected standards.

The very strong direction provided by the headteacher has made sure that that the priority is to speed up children's progress. She has earned the respect of parents, teachers and children by the way in which she is building on the school's strengths and taking the school forward. The new senior leadership team is developing well and senior leaders work closely together, adding a wealth of experience to the school. Honest, rigorous and accurate evaluation of the school's performance has resulted in the school knowing what is working and what is in need of improvement. The strong self-evaluation arrangements now involve middle managers. The headteacher is successfully giving them the opportunity to monitor and fully manage their areas of responsibility, although the school is aware that not all yet play a full part in analysing children's assessment data. The many new governors have received training to help them to fulfil their responsibilities and the governing body now has key roles in both challenging and supporting the school.

The quality of teaching is good overall. Improvements have been effected because previous performance has been rigorously reviewed and the best teaching practice has been shared. Teachers' general skills in planning and delivering lessons as well as their subject strengths are evaluated rigorously and areas for improvement are linked to clear performance targets. Teachers are given high quality training and support for improving their teaching. Their planning is now impressive and this has led to children making better progress. Teaching assistants also make a valuable contribution to children's learning. There are some outstanding lessons in every year group when teachers are very skilled in matching children's work to their learning needs. However, this is not yet consistent as work is hard for lower-attaining children or rather easy for the more capable in a minority of lessons.

Links with parents have been strengthened and are now excellent. Over the last two years, the school has grown very worthwhile links with pre-schools and the destination junior school. Support from the local church and strong links with the community also help to promote the

school's family atmosphere and children's good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children behave well and are very helpful. The thriving school council and the 'helpers' initiative are excellent vehicles for enabling children to contribute to school decision-making and to the success of their school. They have an extremely good understanding of healthy lifestyles and thoroughly enjoy all the exciting sports activities that are offered to them. Attendance is average but improving. The school has recently stepped up its procedures to promote better attendance and to make sure all children are punctual.

Children are extremely well cared for and kept very safe. The school works very effectively with outside specialists to support vulnerable children, including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Assessment systems are strong. Tracking systems are rigorous and help the school to know how well children are doing. The school is taking steps to make sure teachers consistently use the demanding targets to move children on in their learning.

The curriculum gives the children a broad and stimulating education. The school is currently improving its teaching of science investigative skills for more capable children and there are some rich opportunities in art and design, design and technology and sport. Links between subjects are made well and lead to an interesting and relevant curriculum. The children reveal their enjoyment of many subjects, including the wealth of opportunities for extra-curricular activities. The school's recent track record shows it has a good capacity to continue to progress.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Although children's overall attainment on entry is broadly as expected, a significant minority have limited speaking and personal skills. There are excellent induction procedures for helping children adjust when they join the school. Parents really appreciate the close links that are encouraged between the home and school. They are delighted with how quickly children settle and kept safe. Children love coming to school because there are plenty of interesting and worthwhile things to do. A good balance is struck between children learning for themselves and the direct teaching by adults. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is good. Over the past two years, the school has increased the time spent on direct teaching of basic skills and this is having a positive impact on raising achievement. Children make good progress and, by the time they begin Year 1, nearly all reach the expected levels and some exceed them in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessment data indicated some underachievement in the past in reading and writing but standards have substantially improved over the past two years. Teaching is good overall, with some that is outstanding. Assessment systems are good. However, there are still some inconsistencies in a few lessons when assessment is not used well enough to match work to the needs of the more capable. Strong support is given to the minority who begin school with limited communication and/or personal skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- make sure teachers consistently use assessment to match work to the learning needs of lower-attaining and more capable children.

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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?	2
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

27 February 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Downs View Infant School, Ashford TN25 4PJ

As you know, I visited your school recently to find out how well you are learning. Thank you for being so polite, friendly and helpful. I am now writing to let you know about some of the things that I found out about your school.

Firstly, you need to know you go to a good school. Your headteacher leads you all extremely well and all the staff are working hard to make the school even better.

- you make good progress and are doing well in your reading, writing and mathematics
- you really enjoy school and behave well
- you know how to stay healthy by eating the right food and by taking plenty of exercise
- you have good chances for doing art and design, design and technology and sport as well as having lots of chances to join after-school clubs
- staff take very good care of you and make sure you are kept safe.

Here are the things I am asking the school to change:

- make sure your work is never too easy or too hard.

You can help your teachers by making sure you continue to work hard at improving your reading, writing and mathematics.

Thank you again for being so helpful.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Chadwick Lead Inspector

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Yours sincerely

Eileen Chadwick
Lead Inspector