

Downlands Community School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 113659 |
| Local Authority | Dorset |
| Inspection number | 338215 |
| Inspection dates | 3–4 March 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Ken Bryan |

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 of pupils on the school roll | 214 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Russell Lucas-Rowe |
| Headteacher | Alan Frame |
| Date of previous school inspection | 14 February 2007 |
| School address | Blandford Camp Blandford Forum Dorset DT11 8BG |
| Telephone number | 01258 453348 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. In total, 70% of the inspection focused on pupils' learning. The inspectors visited assemblies and 21 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. Ten teachers were observed. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school development planning, minutes of governors' meetings and school policies, including those associated with safeguarding procedures, assessment and tracking data, teachers' planning and samples of work. The views of parents in the 41 questionnaires returned were considered, together with those completed by 50 pupils and 28 members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of initiatives and strategies for improving pupils' attainment in writing in Years 3 to 6, in mathematics across the school and for higher attaining pupils
- the rates of progress made by individual pupils from entry to the school through an analysis of the school's pupil data and tracking systems
- the effectiveness of the school's monitoring of provision by the subject leaders and the impact upon pupils' achievement
- children's attainment on entry and the progress made, especially for those who join during the course of the school year, in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school, located within the Blandford Garrison, and serves a closed community of service families. Pupil numbers fluctuate throughout the year as families are transferred in and out of the Royal Corps of Signals training facility. Postings can be as short as a six-month period. Most pupils attending the school are from White British backgrounds although a range of minority ethnic groups are represented throughout the year, particularly from Nepal. A small number of children are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average with many receiving speech and language support. The number of pupils who arrive or leave school outside the normal joining and leaving times is extremely high and many pupils start school with gaps in their learning. The school shares its site with a privately managed pre-school which is subject to a separate inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Downlands Community School successfully provides a good education for all pupils within its unique learning community. Pupils are thoughtful, motivated and well behaved. Most pupils make good progress from their varied starting points to reach broadly average standards by the time they leave the school. There are significant strengths in the provision of high quality care and the personal development of the pupils. Coupled with effective teaching and a well-designed curriculum, these impressive features enable the pupils to settle quickly and adjust to the high expectations the school sets for them.

The headteacher and all his staff have the interests of every pupil at heart. Pupils feel safe and secure in the school's care. The pupils are a credit to the hard work and commitment of all the staff. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are very positive about the school; as one typical parent commented, 'This is an excellent school and I have the full confidence in them to educate my child.' Good partnerships have been developed with local community-based organisations and parents, which have a positive impact upon the personal and academic development of the children.

Since the last inspection, the headteacher and his leadership team have ensured that the quality of teaching is more consistently good and pupils' achievement is good. For example, resulting from the need to demonstrate pupils' progress, school leaders have devised an effective school-wide system to track each individual pupil. As a result, the analysis of this data has ensured that teachers set challenging targets and carefully plan the steps of learning that pupils need to follow to achieve well and these are communicated effectively to the parents and carers. School leaders are striving to raise attainment and accelerate progress for all pupils, and improvements in the monitoring of teaching and learning and a restructuring to enable shared leadership of the school ensure that the school has good capacity to sustain improvement. While the quality of teaching is good, there are missed opportunities to challenge and stimulate pupils capable of achieving the highest levels. For these more-able pupils, the pace in lessons is often too slow and tasks are not matched to their specific needs.

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes is good and the children make a very settled start to their education. However, the outdoor learning environment is not well developed and the school recognises the need to provide exciting learning opportunities outside the main classrooms.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the most-able pupils do as well as possible by:

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- accelerating the pace of learning in lessons
- ensuring that lessons challenge and encourage all pupils in their learning
- making better use of incisive questioning to help pupils to develop their thinking skills
- checking that pupils know exactly how to improve their skills
- making sure more lessons are outstanding.
- Improve the external provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage classes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils love their school and enjoy being given responsibility, such as providing care and support for their peers as they start their new school. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 enthusiastically act as play leaders as they support the younger children. The school council is particularly active, especially in the planning of the the new buildings and raising funds for good causes. Pupils are polite, well behaved and courteous and they sympathetically support one another as they arrive from different schools and communities from within the United Kingdom and abroad. Their attendance is satisfactory. Pupils complete work neatly and tidily, taking great pride in their presentation; this is particularly evident in their writing books and in the numerous well-produced classroom and corridor displays. In the lessons seen, pupils readily assess and review their work and they thrive during opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers. During the inspection, pupils demonstrated energetic participation in sports, such as netball, and music, and made healthy food and drink choices at lunchtime. Pupils know about different faiths and cultures within the United Kingdom and in the wider world. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good which results from close links with the local church and the Camp's community.

Boys and girls make good progress in their learning from their relative starting points in each year group and most leave school with broadly average standards. Most pupils achieve well and many are now making better progress in mathematics and writing as a result of recent interventions. For example, pupils observed in a Year 5/6 class demonstrated a good understanding of complex sentences and they used interesting vocabulary in their written and oral responses. Pupils in Year 3/4 were observed working collaboratively to effectively identify number sequences in mathematics. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 clearly enjoyed their story writing. However, in some lessons, the learning of the highest-attaining pupils loses momentum, because the pace of learning is too slow for them and because marking, although very positive, does not challenge them to do even better. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the very few who do not speak English at home make similarly good or better progress because they are very well supported.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 2 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹ | 3 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 2 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 2 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 3 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are often lively and interesting because teachers organise activities that engage pupils both mentally and creatively. Teaching makes very interesting links between some subjects, especially using literacy skills, so learning is never dry or dull. For example, projects on the Tudors, the Aztecs, the newly created school pond and the Jurassic coast enthuse pupils to research things for themselves. The school's provision for personal, social and emotional development is a significant strength.

The curriculum is carefully planned to ensure that there is little repetition and that any gaps in the pupils' learning are quickly addressed. In most lessons, activities are carefully planned to meet the varied needs of the pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Good partnerships with the local community enhance the provision in sport and music. The joy of music and the participation in assemblies and charity events is pervasive throughout the school both in lessons and after school. The sound of brass instruments was to be heard during the inspection. Pupils are introduced to German and French as well as business and enterprise initiatives. Fundraising for charities is an important part of school life. A varied range of extra-curricular clubs plays a very important part in extending pupils' experiences and developing their personal skills. The use of information and communication technology is a strength of the school; the school's website is constantly up-dated for all members of the school community.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils are very well cared for. Pupils who are new to the school settle in very quickly because of the detailed arrangements made by staff before transfer and the warm welcome they receive from the whole school community. In addition, the school ensures that there is a smooth transition to the next stage in the pupil's education. Vulnerable children progress well due to careful attention to their needs and good use of outside agencies. The school has established effective links with the adjacent pre-school to share extended services, which enhance the all-round care of pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 2 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 2 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 2 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders of the school work very well as a team to determine what is going well and what needs to be improved. They have a clear strategic plan to move the school forward, based on well-researched and manageable development priorities. School leaders have an excellent understanding of pupil data that stems from rigorous systems to track individual pupils' progress. The views of pupils, staff, parents and carers feed into development planning well. Safeguarding procedures are good because staff are well trained and are vigilant in their attention to health and safety, risk assessment and child protection procedures.

Community cohesion is promoted effectively. The school is held in high esteem within the locality and promotes the importance of community involvement among its pupils by participating enthusiastically in sports, drama and musical events. Parents are actively encouraged to participate in workshops, such as family SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning). Links with other countries, such as Nepal, are well established and the pupils are thoroughly knowledgeable and at ease with people from different religions, ethnic origins and socio-economic backgrounds.

Despite the relative need to strengthen the achievement of the most able, the promotion of equal opportunities is good. Leaders tackle any form of discrimination and they go out of their way to ensure no pupil misses a chance to make the most of their academic, creative and sporting talents from their relative starting points.

The committed governing body maintains a tight oversight of the finances and fabric of the building. They are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses, especially through a good understanding of school-wide data and the curriculum.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 2 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 2 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills below the levels expected of four-year-olds, with relative weaknesses in communication, language and literacy and personal and social development. They make good progress and the majority leave the Early Years Foundation Stage with average standards in all areas of learning. Behaviour is good and most children develop positive attitudes to work which are reflected in their enjoyment of what they do.

A rigorous induction process enables children to settle quickly into early routines. Staff work closely together, and parents and carers say how they appreciate the strong home/school partnership that fully involves them. There is a high level of concern for children's welfare. Systematic observations and assessments of children's learning are carried out effectively and the use of 'smart spoons' clearly helps the children to reflect on their own accomplishments. There is a smooth flow between indoor and outdoor learning although there are limited opportunities for the children to use a broad range of play equipment or to write and use number. In the classrooms, all children benefit from a well-resourced and managed learning environment. Children were observed enjoying the Billy Goats Gruff story as they 'trip-trapped' over a bridge or they played creatively in the veterinary surgery role-play area. The curriculum provides a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaires agreed that their children enjoyed school and that the school kept them safe and free from harm. One typical comment was, 'The pastoral care provided in this school goes above and beyond.' In addition, parents and carers commented favourably about the teaching staff, the high quality education the children receive and the way the children are welcomed into the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Downlands Community School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 214 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 29 | 71 | 12 | 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 22 | 54 | 19 | 46 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 22 | 54 | 17 | 41 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 22 | 54 | 17 | 41 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 22 | 54 | 18 | 44 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 20 | 49 | 21 | 51 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 15 | 37 | 25 | 61 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 17 | 41 | 18 | 44 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 18 | 44 | 23 | 56 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 14 | 34 | 24 | 59 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 19 | 46 | 20 | 49 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 18 | 44 | 21 | 51 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 25 | 61 | 16 | 39 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 39 | 58 | 3 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 13 | 50 | 33 | 4 |
| Secondary schools | 17 | 40 | 34 | 9 |
| Sixth forms | 18 | 43 | 37 | 2 |
| Special schools | 26 | 54 | 18 | 2 |
| Pupil referral units | 7 | 55 | 30 | 7 |
| All schools | 15 | 49 | 32 | 5 |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school. |
| Learning: | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners. |
| Overall effectiveness: | <p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| Progress: | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started. |

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



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18 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Downlands Community School, Blandford Forum, DT11 8BG

Thank you for such a warm and caring welcome to your school yesterday and for helping us during the inspection. We found that you are getting a good education. You are clearly very happy and you are well supported by your teachers and other adults in the school. Here are some of the strong features we found.

- The teachers plan and provide interesting lessons that enable most of you to enjoy learning and make good progress.
- Your behaviour and attitudes are good and you quickly learn new routines.
- You clearly enjoy the wide range of clubs, school visits and other activities provided by the school.
- All adults in the school take good care of you and make sure that you settle very quickly in your new surroundings.
- It is clear that you know how to be safe and to eat healthily and lead healthy lifestyles.

The school runs smoothly. We much enjoyed the very colourful displays demonstrating your high levels of skill. The headteacher, his staff and the governors clearly know what the school needs to do to improve and how well it is doing. We have asked them to do the following to make the school even better:

- make sure that those of you who find learning easy always have plenty of challenging things to do
- improve the outside learning area in the Reception classes to the same standard as the classrooms.

You can help make these things happen by continuing to care and work hard.

Yours sincerely

Ken Bryan

Lead inspector

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