

Downs View Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118523
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358368
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Wendy Forbes

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 of pupils on the school roll	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Sims
Headteacher	Fran Rusbridge
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2008
School address	Ball Lane Ashford Kent TN25 4PJ
Telephone number	01233 632339
Fax number	01233 620559
Email address	office@downs-view.kent.sch.uk

Age group	4–7
Inspection date(s)	9–10 June 2011
Inspection number	358368

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Sixteen lessons or parts of lessons were seen and 10 teachers were observed. Inspectors visited all classrooms on a learning walk to sample displays, behaviour and resources. They held meetings with governors, staff and a group of pupils. Inspectors examined pupils' work and school documents, including minutes of the governing body, improvement and development plans, safety records and assessment and tracking information. They analysed 132 questionnaires returned by parents and carers together with those completed by 22 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress all pupils make in mathematics.
- The achievement of pupils, particularly that of boys and more-able pupils, to ascertain whether teaching and the curriculum are challenging enough.
- The impact of assessment and pupil tracking systems on improving and sustaining achievement.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers in driving school improvement since the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Downs View is larger than the average sized infant school. All classes are organised in single-age groups including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average and includes pupils with speech and language as well as communication difficulties. The proportion known to be eligible for free schools meals is below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average. A daily breakfast club is operated by the school. Privately run after-school child care is also provided on-site but this was not part of the school's inspection. The school has achieved a number of awards, many achieved more than once, including Healthy Schools, Active mark, Artsmark Gold, Gold and Platinum Travel Plans and Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Parents, carers and pupils at Downs View Infant School were keen to tell inspectors just how much they valued this outstanding school, where pupils are very happy, feel very safe and healthy, and achieve exceptionally well to attain high standards. Parents appreciate the outstanding care, guidance and exceptional support pupils receive, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. 'The school is a special place', 'The teachers really care about our children', and, 'My children have thrived here and we have been delighted with their progress.' These are typical examples of the many positive comments received. It is not just academic standards that are high. Pupils' personal development is as outstanding as their academic progress. Their good and sometimes outstanding behaviour as well as above-average attendance reflect pupils' desire to be at school.

Good provision for the very youngest children means that they have a happy start to school life. Across the school, teaching is consistently good and sometimes it is outstanding. The difference between good and outstanding teaching is in the pace of lessons and the extent to which teachers maintain exciting and challenging experiences and the regularity with which they check how well pupils are doing.

Since the last inspection the school has not stood still. Its outstanding capacity for improvement has manifested itself in further improvements in the curriculum and in the use of assessment data, now both outstanding, which have helped to accelerate progress at Key Stage 1 and led to a rise in attainment particularly in mathematics. The gap between boys' and girls' attainment has narrowed significantly and the continued focus on provision for the more-able pupils has ensured that attainment is consistently high. Adults at all levels are very successful at promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination through raising pupils' expectations of what they can achieve. Extremely well-constructed self- and peer-assessment opportunities encourage pupils to evaluate how they could improve.

The dedicated headteacher, extremely well supported by the deputy headteacher and the school's leadership team, has driven the school forward since the last inspection. She enthuses others to have the highest possible aspirations of themselves and the pupils, developing a very strong staff team who are totally committed to school improvement and who strive constantly for excellence. The impact of leaders' and managers' excellent leadership skills is reflected in the many improvements in the school over time. Parents are highly supportive of the school and all that it does for their children. As one parent said, 'The problem with the school is that my child never wants to go home.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning so that they are consistently outstanding by:
 - building on the excellent practice that exists
 - ensuring that all lessons are pitched at an appropriate pace to ensure engagement at all times
 - regularly checking on the progress that pupils are making in their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are broadly in line with national expectations and sometimes lower in speech and language. By the time they leave Year 2 their attainment is exceptionally high in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. Their good and sometimes outstanding behaviour and very positive attitudes contribute extremely well to their learning and progress. A strength in many lessons is the way in which pupils provide support for each other, for example as talk partners and assessing each other’s work at the end of a lesson, as seen in an outstanding Year 2 literacy lesson where pupils worked together to help each understand what could be done to improve writing. Such very effective day to day systems help pupils to become confident, independent learners, fulfilling teachers’ high expectations of them. Outstanding academic progress, very positive attitudes and pupils’ personal qualities prepare them very well for their transfer to their junior school.

Pupils say they feel extremely safe and that they can always talk to an adult if they feel worried about anything. They have an exceptionally clear understanding of the need for regular exercise and a healthy, balanced diet to keep fit, which is reflected in their many awards. Representing one’s classmates as a school councillor, being an Eco leader, ‘Active Ant’ or contributing to the school’s Gold Travel Plan are just some of the excellent responsibilities which pupils enjoy. Multicultural activities are encouraged and celebrated. The school recognises that pupils’ knowledge of other children’s lives abroad is an area for further development and is already beginning to address this. Pupils appreciate opportunities provided by the school to be involved in a wide range of community events, for example the Kennington Fair. Raising funds for charity and music festivals enhance both the school’s curriculum and pupils’ personal development.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1

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

The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Most teaching is good. Sometimes it is outstanding. In lessons, pupils have a clear understanding of the learning intentions and what they have to do to be successful. Well-constructed self- and peer-assessment opportunities help pupils to evaluate how to improve. This provides teachers with vital information about how well pupils are doing and ensures that tasks are closely matched to their needs, providing high levels of challenge and contributing very effectively to pupils' outstanding progress. As one pupil said, 'My teacher always makes sure I do my very best.' This level of challenge was clearly seen in an outstanding Year 1 mathematics lesson, where pupils' mathematical thinking was extended through high quality investigations to estimate, measure and compare standard measurements. However, in a very few lessons, teachers talk for too long and keep pupils sitting without being sufficiently engaged or checking their learning. As a result pupils' progress in these lessons slows. Teaching assistants play an invaluable role, often recording pupils' comments in class discussions and effectively supporting pupils. They are particularly good at rephrasing questions and at developing pupils' numeracy and literacy skills. As a result of this excellent support, pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make equally outstanding progress in their learning.

Improvements in the now outstanding curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 1, provide very well balanced opportunities for activities led by staff and those chosen by the children themselves. These help to develop pupils' independence and confidence even more. Use of topics and resources that appeal particularly to boys have helped to engage them in their learning. As a result boys' overall attainment is now as high as that of girls. The curriculum is tailored extremely well, providing a very good range of activities and exceptional support to those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities while also extending the learning of the most able and ensuring they make outstanding progress in their learning. Curricular strengths, particularly in the music and arts curriculum, are reflected in the school's high quality work displayed around the school and in the delightful singing heard in assembly. The curriculum is enriched by an excellent range of clubs, specialist partnerships in dance, football and French and effective links made to other subjects. These make learning exciting as well as interesting. Pupils speak enthusiastically about opportunities to take part in special events such as Book Week, choral speaking, Kindness Week and the recent Year 2 Native American arts day. Visits and visitors motivate pupils to learn and contribute to pupils' outstanding personal

development.

Pupils receive excellent care throughout the school day, including the well organised breakfast club, because each pupil is known and valued. Parents and carers are very positive about the efforts the school takes to make school life as trouble free as possible for both pupils and their families. Induction and transition arrangements are excellent and enable reception children to settle quickly and Year 2 children to become part of their new junior school very quickly. The school makes excellent use of outside agencies and specific learning programmes to provide support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most notable is the very effective use of visual timetables and classroom aids provided to help pupils, particularly those with significant communication problems, to have equal access to learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's clear ambition for success has been shared extremely well. The deputy headteacher and all the staff team offer excellent support in the drive to continually raise attainment and improve pupils' progress. This has been achieved most notably in the last year through the rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and the relentless focus on pupils' achievement. Equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination are high on the school's agenda. They are exemplified by the excellent tracking of the progress of all groups as well as the outstanding care and exceptional partnerships, which ensure that any barriers to learning affecting some pupils are broken down extremely well. The school is supported well by governors who are constantly developing their capacity to hold the school to account and are united in their commitment to help the school improve. They share the headteacher's overwhelming determination to maintain the school's exceptional qualities and monitor its performance well by working with the school to ensure that self-evaluation is effective. They recognise that they have further work to do on community cohesion to make pupils fully aware of different cultures globally, but overall, they fulfil their roles well. The school has comprehensive policies, strategies and procedures to ensure the welfare of all pupils. Procedures for safeguarding are good and ensure pupils feel very safe and that their emotional and social needs are met. The site is secure, entry is restricted and visitors monitored. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are thorough and child protection arrangements are secure and updated regularly. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly and records are kept meticulously.

Links with parents and carers are very strong. They are very appreciative of the way the school reaches out to them by regular invitations to visit their child's class and celebration events to share in their child's successes. Regular workshops for parents and the school's website provide parents and carers with a myriad of information to help them support their children's learning. Overall, this is a school that is being driven forward by exceptional leadership and one that provides outstanding value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good provision and support ensure children settle happily into the daily routines of school life. Good leadership and management and an extremely positive partnership with parents and carers ensure children's needs are quickly identified and appropriately addressed. This helps to ensure that most children reach expected and some exceed expected levels for their age on entry to Year 1. Parents and carers appreciate the 'extra mile' teachers go to make sure their children are happy at school. As one parent commented, 'Reception staff are so very thoughtful and caring... they understand exactly what our children need.'

Teachers design exciting activities aimed at developing independence, speech and language and number skills. They also provide interesting opportunities to investigate and explore the world around them. Children could be seen having fun playing a pirate game in the outdoor learning area, extending their knowledge and understanding of their class topic on mini-beasts and enjoying the challenge of ordering numbers in a game. A pet guinea pig generated much excitement as well as language as children discussed how to look after a pet and keep it fit and healthy. However there are occasionally missed opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of what they are learning while they play.

Day-to-day assessment of children's achievements is effective, with planning adapted

to meet their needs as a result of very effective tracking and monitoring of progress. This ensures an appropriate balance of activities which promote independent learning well. Teaching is good, especially with regard to letters, sounds and numbers. Children make a good contribution to the smooth running of the day by sharing resources amicably and tidying away after their activities. It is no wonder that children make such good progress across all areas of their learning and development.

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

Around 49% of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. Their responses reflect an overwhelming support of the school. Comments such as: 'Downs View is a wonderful school providing excellent experiences for all the children.' and, 'The children always come first at this school', typify the responses. Parents and carers appreciate opportunities to attend class assemblies to celebrate their child's achievements as well as workshop sessions to find out what pupils are learning at school. A few felt that the school did not always deal effectively with behaviour. Inspectors found that pupils' behaviour was generally good and sometimes outstanding and that teachers had high expectations of behaviour both in and out of the classroom. A very small number of parents and carers expressed individual concerns about aspects of the school, but there was no pattern or trend to these concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Downs View Infant 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 135 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 268 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	103	76	31	23	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	105	78	31	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	82	61	52	39	1	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	88	65	46	34	1	1	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	101	75	34	25	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	92	68	40	30	2	1	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	89	66	42	31	4	3	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)	76	56	55	41	2	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	86	64	47	35	2	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	67	50	59	44	7	5	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	74	55	54	40	4	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	96	71	38	28	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	104	77	30	22	2	1	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



13 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Downs View Infant School, Ashford TN25 4PJ

I want to say thank you very much for the very warm welcome you gave all of us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed visiting your school and it was a real delight to talk to you and find out about all the lovely things you do and how well you learn. Yours is an outstanding school.

All the adults in your school look after you really well and want to do their best for you. Your behaviour is good and sometimes excellent and you care a lot about each other. You make outstanding progress in your learning because, as many children said, your teachers let you do 'some really fun things'. You do very well in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 and you are very well prepared for your work in the junior school. Everybody in your school is always trying to find ways to make it even better. You have made a really good start in understanding how you can improve your own learning, however your headteacher and other staff know that there is still work to be done to make the school even better. We have asked the school to do one thing.

- Make sure that all your lessons help you to do the very the best you can by:
 - making sure you do not spend too long sitting on the carpet at the start of each lesson
 - asking teachers to regularly check how well you are doing in your learning.

Thank you very much once again. Keep up the good work and we are sure that if you do this, you will continue to enjoy learning for a long time to come.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Forbes
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**