

Downfield Primary School

Downfield Road, Cheshunt, Waltham Cross, EN8 8SS

Inspection dates 4–5 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher is a good leader who has created a friendly, welcoming and inclusive school. Her commitment to the school – its pupils, staff and parents – is clear.
- The school's leaders, including its governors, have had a strong impact on raising the quality and effectiveness of teaching and the school is improving after a difficult period of expansion.
- The school's pastoral support systems are particularly strong. The school focuses very well on supporting and promoting pupils' social and emotional development, whatever their background.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and are provided with a wide range of opportunities to help them develop into well-rounded young people, who are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The quality of teaching is improving and is good. This is improving pupils' achievement, and is closing previous gaps in pupils' learning and achievement.
- Pupils behave very well and are a credit to their school. They are polite and friendly, and consistently show good manners to others.
- Pupils feel safe at school. They understand what bullying is and is not and have been taught to tell if they are ever concerned about someone else's behaviour.
- The early years provision gives children a good start to their educational careers. The provision is well led and teaching is good. Children make good progress during their time in early years.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' attainment dipped after the last inspection when the school was expanding. Achievement at the end of Key Stage 2 has been below the national average in two of the last three years.
- Work in pupils' exercise books shows that although pupils make good progress, there remain some gaps in their learning.
- Attendance is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning. They observed pupils' learning in parts of 20 lessons throughout the school, some jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' exercise books, listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work. Inspectors examined the school's documentation on pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- The views of parents were taken into account, including 35 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and informal conversations on the playground. A small number of parents attended a meeting with the lead inspector.
- Inspectors listened to the views of staff and evaluated the 32 staff questionnaires that were received.
- Meetings were held with pupils, parents, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors looked at a range of school documents, including information about safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation, and attendance and behaviour records.

Inspection team

Wendy Varney, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Rachel Welch

Additional Inspector

Janet Tomkins

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The number of pupils enrolled at the school has increased significantly over the last few years. The school roll has increased by the equivalent of four additional classes over the last six years and is continuing to grow. The school is now larger than the average-sized primary school and there are two classes in every year group except Year 6.
- Many children join the school having attended the pre-school provision housed on the school site. This is managed by the school's governing body but is registered and inspected separately.
- Children are admitted to the school's Nursery class, on a part-time basis, after their third birthday. Children join the Reception class in the September after their fourth birthday and attend on a full-time basis.
- The school offers specially resourced provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This specialist provision is for up to 10 pupils with speech and language difficulties. Pupils are admitted to the speech and language base from Year 3 onwards.
- The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above the national average. The majority of pupils are White British, with around one pupil in seven coming from other White backgrounds. There are small numbers from other minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium provides additional government funding for those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children in the care of the local authority.
- A breakfast club and a number of after-school clubs operate on site. The clubs are led and managed by the school and run by members of the school's staff.
- The school meets current floor standards; these are the minimum expectations, set by the government, for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Plug gaps in pupils' learning so that attainment and progress exceed national expectations by the end of Key Stage 2 by ensuring that:
 - leaders and governors have an unrelenting focus on raising achievement for all pupils
 - teaching is consistently good or outstanding so weaknesses in pupils' prior learning and the legacy of slower progress in the past are addressed
 - the pupil premium grant is targeted more directly on raising the academic achievement of disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able
 - governors regularly monitor the progress pupils make and hold school leaders robustly to account for pupils' attainment and how it compares with that of all pupils nationally.
- Improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average by:
 - raising expectations so that all members of the school community are aware of the vital importance of attending school regularly and on time
 - finding ways to work more closely with parents who do not readily engage with the school
 - ensuring that attendance is monitored routinely by the governing body as well as the school's leaders.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has led the school skilfully and managed its expansion well as it has grown considerably in size. She has ensured that all pupils quickly become part of the school community, including those who are disadvantaged or face particular challenges in their lives. The headteacher has made sure that pupils' positive behaviour and attitudes have not been adversely affected as the school has grown larger.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work closely and effectively together. They are deeply committed to the school. They have managed the process of change well (including extensive and ongoing building works) and have ensured that pupils' good attitudes to learning, and a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching, have been maintained and built on.
- The pastoral care offered by the school – that is, how well pupils are cared for, encouraged and looked after – is particularly strong. However, leaders have not had sufficient focus on raising pupils' academic achievement alongside the successful emphasis on improving pupils' behaviour, confidence, attitudes and self-esteem.
- The school places great emphasis on its responsibility to safeguard pupils. The headteacher and other senior leaders work closely with a number of families, and with children's social care and other agencies, to safeguard particular pupils' safety and emotional health where concerns have been raised. Child protection procedures are robust and statutory safeguarding requirements are met.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is detailed, but reviews of teaching and achievement tend to be over-optimistic, which means that governors are not always in a position to challenge senior leaders.
- The school is very effective in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. Pupils show very strong anti-discriminatory attitudes and they discuss issues around equality with maturity. When discussing discrimination with the lead inspector, one pupil said, 'You can only tell what someone's like by their actions.' Pupils get on well together because the school expects them to judge people on what they do, not on how they look.
- The pupil premium grant is spent in a range of ways, including providing art therapy and music therapy sessions for particular pupils, as well as booster group sessions and individual tutoring. Although the school can provide clear evidence of the impact of interventions on pupils' confidence, behaviour and social skills, the impact on academic achievement is not always as obvious.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is used well. The grant is used in a number of ways, including providing a specialist to teach physical education lessons. Staff have taken the opportunity to observe the specialist teacher in order to improve their own skills and knowledge in teaching physical education. The grant has also enabled the school to offer a wider range of extra-curricular clubs and to take part in a wider range of competitions. The school has gained the Bronze Sports Mark and the Broxbourne Sports Award.
- The school's subject leaders are committed and effective. They know their subjects well and work in a focused way to ensure the school's continued development. Leaders do not yet place enough emphasis on published data and what this is telling them about the levels pupils reach and the progress they make.
- Staff have worked hard to adapt and extend their existing curriculum to reflect the requirements of the new National Curriculum. As a result, the curriculum offered to pupils is lively and engaging. It covers the full range of subjects. Pupils enjoy their lessons and behave well because they are interested in what they are doing. The school has made very good progress in developing their chosen method of assessment and their work has been used as an exemplar for other schools.
- The curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain because it teaches them to think responsibly

about a wide range of relevant topics such as 'what malaria is and how we can prevent it' and 'what is the same and what is different between the lives and home countries of the children in our class?'

- The local authority provides the school with good support through regular visits from an Improvement Partner and visits from subject advisers. Although his support and challenge has generally been effective, the Improvement Partner's reports have not always made concerns about pupils' achievement clear enough to governors.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are committed to the school and they know the school well. They are knowledgeable, well-informed and effective. Governors use information from other sources, such as from the school's Improvement Partner, to ensure that their view of the school is the right one.
- Governors' view of the school is, in parts, overly optimistic. Although they quite rightly believe that many aspects of the school are good, they have not taken sufficient account of the published data about pupils' achievement in their interrogation of senior leaders.
- Governors have good knowledge and understanding of performance management and the link between performance and pay. The school's performance management processes are well founded, although performance objectives are not specific enough because they are not clearly focused on raising pupils' achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave equally well in lessons and during less-structured parts of the day. Nothing less than good behaviour was seen during the inspection and all available evidence indicates that this is usual at Downfield. Pupils behave well because staff expectations are high, behaviour is managed consistently and routines are well established.
- Pupils are notably polite and well mannered. Pupils routinely hold doors open, say 'excuse me' when they want to pass by and would not dream of not saying 'thank you' when handed something. This is a notable strength of the school.
- Pupils develop good social skills because the school has made this a priority. Pupils work equally well independently, with a partner or as part of a group. They support each other well and accept each other's different needs and abilities.
- Attendance is below the national average. The school has robust systems in place to tackle absence from school and works closely with other agencies. The school's morning club is having a positive impact on improving the attendance of a number of pupils.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe at school and their parents agree with them. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. Pupils are taught well about e-safety and safe use of the internet. They have been taught about sun safety and one pupil told the lead inspector that 'You have to stay in the shade if you haven't got a hat.'
- Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is and what it is not. They know about different types of bullying. Pupils know what they would do if they were being bullied and they trust that staff would sort things out for them.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good and improving. Until recently, teaching was too inconsistent, but this variability has been addressed so that teaching overall is good.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and have a strong impact on the very positive atmosphere in classes throughout the school. Teachers and teaching assistants routinely model tolerance and respect to pupils, and pupils respond accordingly.
- The use of self-assessment is developing well and is becoming a strength. Pupils use their 'purple polishing pens' to adapt and improve their work and this is starting to help them to make better progress. Pupils are often given immediate verbal feedback on their work and this is effective in helping them to improve it.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together. Teaching assistants are well-informed and this enables them to work very effectively with the children they support. Teaching assistants attend the regular pupil progress meetings for the class they work with and are fully involved in the discussions about each child's particular learning needs.
- Teachers frequently use very clear objectives in their teaching. As a result, pupils understand what it is that they are trying to learn and what is expected of them. Teachers often build on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding, and this is improving the progress pupils make.
- The specialist speech and language provision is good. Pupils show good attitudes and are ready to learn. The multi-sensory approach used supports pupils' learning well. Staff have high expectations of pupils and this encourages them to try harder.
- Although teaching is good overall, some inconsistencies remain. Teaching is less effective when tasks are not matched well enough to pupils' particular needs and abilities. The marking of pupils' work, and the impact this has on their development, is a strength in many classes but is not yet consistent throughout the school.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics declined after the last inspection, falling below the national figures at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. However, inspection evidence from school data, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work confirms the school's view that most pupils are making good progress and are securely on course to achieve well.
- Achievement in phonics (the sounds that letters represent) is improving rapidly. The proportion of pupils who reached the level of the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2014 was below the national average but was a considerable improvement on 2013. This improvement has continued this year, and pupils' achievement in phonics is now good.
- Pupils read widely and often. They show a keen interest in the books they read and are able to discuss favourite books and authors. Achievement in spelling and grammar is good. Since the Key Stage 2 national test for spelling and grammar was introduced two years ago, results have been in line with the national average.
- Improvements in the quality of teaching are accelerating the progress pupils make and raising their levels of attainment, including for the most-able pupils. Nonetheless, the variable quality of teaching in the past has left some gaps in pupils' learning.
- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils is not significantly different to that of other pupils in the school, but has been well below that of other pupils nationally. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils were approximately a year behind other pupils nationally and a term behind other pupils in the school. Too few disadvantaged

pupils reach the higher levels.

- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has not been consistently good but, like other groups, their progress is accelerating in response to better teaching. On the whole, pupils with a statement of special educational need, including those who attend the speech and language base, achieve well and make good progress as a result of the good teaching and support they receive.

The early years provision is good

- Children start in the early years with skills and abilities, in many cases, that are well below those typical of their age, particularly in communication and language. Children make good progress in early years and, by the time they leave the Reception class, the proportion who have reached a good level of development is broadly average.
- Leadership and management of early years are good. The quality of teaching is good and this is monitored closely by the early years leader. Children are prepared well for the start of Year 1.
- The strong focus on developing writing and phonics skills is effective and is raising children's attainment. Staff routinely support children's language development; for example, by extending their vocabulary.
- Children know the school's rules and routines, and they behave well. Children show good attitudes to learning and persevere with tasks over extended periods of time. Children move around the classroom and outdoor areas sensibly and feel safe in their setting.
- The early years environment is bright and attractive, providing a wealth of opportunities across the seven areas of learning. The outdoor areas are notably well resourced, and provide appealing and challenging opportunities for the children.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117255
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	461656

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	359
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Spratt
Headteacher	Sarah Goldsmith
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2012
Telephone number	01992 629598
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