

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Down Hall Primary School

Brooklyn Drive, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 9LW

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 February 2025

Outcome

Down Hall Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Down Hall Primary School is a happy and welcoming place. Pupils feel safe and valued. Pupils typically feel that 'everyone is really kind in school'. Pupils enjoy strong relationships with staff, who know them well and look after their well-being.

The school has high expectations for pupils' learning and development. Pupils rise successfully to meet these standards. They work hard and take pride in their achievements, showing resilience and a positive attitude to learning. The school recognises and celebrates pupils' efforts and achievements.

High expectations for behaviour are clear. Pupils stay engaged in lessons and follow school routines well. The behaviour of pupils is calm and purposeful.

Pupils describe the school as a 'family'. They feel supported by both staff and their peers. Pupils understand the importance of respect and responsibility. They show kindness to one another and are keen to help. Older pupils take pride in being inspiring role models for younger children. Pupils engage in the wide range of leadership responsibilities such as house captains, prefects, and ambassadors.

Pupils are proud ambassadors of Down Hall School. They value the school's inclusive and ambitious ethos: 'Empower each other to be the best we can be.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has more recently reviewed and designed an ambitious curriculum. The curriculum is thought out in a logical order so that pupils return to key ideas over time. This means that pupils' learning deepens as they progress through the school. This begins

in the early years where children build a strong foundation for future learning. For example, in science, children in the early years engage in hands-on investigations, while older pupils in Year 5 conduct experiments on chemical reactions and data analysis. Learning in computing progresses from simple coding activities in Reception to advanced programming projects in Year 6. Pupils enjoy learning and take pride in their work.

Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to present new knowledge clearly. Pupils then apply this to different tasks. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. This is because the school identifies their needs and uses strategies that help pupils effectively.

Recent developments to the curriculum have not been fully embedded throughout all year groups. While the majority of pupils are producing high-quality work across the curriculum and achieve well, some pupils in key stage 2 are not currently achieving the same success as seen in younger years, such as in Year 1 phonics.

Reading is at the heart of the school's curriculum. Pupils are supported to develop fluency and comprehension through a well-planned phonics programme. Those who are at the early stages of learning to read, and those who have fallen behind, quickly gain the knowledge and skills that they need to become confident, fluent readers. In the early years, children enjoy reading with expression. Pupils speak positively about reading. The school fosters a strong reading culture through library clubs, reading ambassadors, and themed events.

The school is tenacious in its work to ensure that pupils attend well. The school sets clear expectations and works closely with families and other agencies when attendance needs to improve. However, some groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, continue to have higher rates of absence than their peers. As a result, they do not consistently experience the same range of educational and personal development opportunities as their peers.

The well-planned character education programme builds resilience and perseverance. Pupils are prepared well for life beyond the school. They are taught about the importance of developing healthy lifestyles and relationships. Pupils participate in a variety of clubs, including football, netball, performing arts, and chess. School trips, such as visits to Colchester Castle and the Globe Theatre, enhance learning, while residential visits foster independence and resilience. Pupils are also encouraged to participate in charitable initiatives, helping them develop social responsibility and empathy.

The school seeks to engage parents and the community thoughtfully and positively in a way that supports pupils' education.

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, are ambitious for the school. They have a secure understanding of the school's priorities and are committed to sustaining and improving performance across all areas of the school. Leaders fulfil their statutory duties. Staff receive effective professional development. Their well-being and workload are thoughtfully managed, allowing teachers to focus on delivering high-quality education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Following recent changes to the curriculum, the school's ambitions for high achievement have not been fully met for older pupils in key stage 2. This means that they are not achieving the same success seen in younger years, such as in Year 1 phonics. To address this, the school should build on the effective strategies already in place to ensure that pupils benefit from the high expectations and achieve at consistently strong levels.
- Some groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, continue to have higher rates of absence than their peers. As a result, these pupils miss out on the full range of educational and personal development opportunities available to them. The school should continue with its successful attendance strategies and take further action to reduce absence among these pupils so that they can fully benefit from the school's provision.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in April 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	114936
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10378452
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	260
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Milchard
Headteacher	Lyndsey Wood
Website	www.downhallprimary.com
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection a new headteacher joined the school in January 2024.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The inspector met with governors.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority.

- The inspector considered survey responses from parents, pupils and staff.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Jason Carey, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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