

Inspection of Downfield Primary School

Downfield Road, Cheshunt, Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire EN8 8SS

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 November 2024

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be a part of their diverse school community. They trust each other to respect the differences they have. Young interpreters excel in their roles helping new arrivals who speak English as an additional language to communicate. This helps pupils to quickly feel happy, safe and settled at school.

Pupils follow the school rules of 'ready, respect, safe'. They behave appropriately in class and when walking around the school. During lessons, pupils focus on their work. They strive hard to reach the high expectations staff have of them. This helps pupils to achieve well across a range of subjects.

Pupils behave equally well in lessons and during breaktimes and lunchtimes. Here, pupils look after each other. They play games harmoniously and socialise well together. This further instils the strong sense of a shared community where, as pupils reflected, 'there is room for everyone'.

Pupils benefit from numerous opportunities to take up leadership roles. Older pupils eagerly help younger children during lunchtime as lunchtime helpers. Well-being champions openly give their own time to help those who need extra support or guidance. This helps to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

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

The school has designed a curriculum that sets out the important knowledge pupils need to learn and understand. Teachers present information clearly. They check for gaps in pupils' knowledge to identify when to revisit important content. For example, staff go over specific mathematical terms for pupils who need more time to understand what these words mean. This helps pupils to understand the vocabulary they then read and use in future lessons. It particularly benefits pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language.

The school has improved the writing curriculum. Children in the early years develop important fine motor skills. This helps them to form letters accurately when they begin to write. Pupils learn how to structure their writing. They do this well. Across subjects, pupils apply their knowledge of important grammar, punctuation and spelling accurately when writing independently.

Children develop a love of reading from the moment they start school. They secure important early language skills by eagerly listening to stories staff read to them. Well-trained staff carefully narrate children's play. This further helps children to expand their vocabulary. Staff help pupils to read new words by identifying the sounds letters make. Pupils quickly learn to blend these sounds together in order to read new words. The school provides extra reading help for pupils who need it. This helps most pupils to become fluent and confident readers by the end of key stage 1. Should pupils in key stage 2 need extra reading help, they get the support they need to read fluently. This helps pupils when reading across subjects. However, sometimes, pupils do not have

sufficient opportunity to re-read new and unfamiliar words once they have sounded them out. Consequently, some pupils overly rely on sounding out words they have already read. This means some pupils do not read fluently as quickly as they could.

Staff are typically knowledgeable in how to support the high number of pupils with SEND. This includes in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND and the main school. Staff in the early years work closely with the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator (SENCo) to identify the needs of children with SEND early in their school life. This helps the school to quickly put in place the effective support that they need to thrive. Across the school, staff mostly use precise strategies to help pupils with SEND to learn. For example, visual prompts enable pupils to secure their understanding of important mathematical concepts. Sometimes, the support plans staff write for pupils with SEND lack precision. This means there are occasions where staff do not provide the specific support that some pupils with SEND need, to achieve as well as they could.

Pupils understand how to look after their physical and mental health. They also know how to build healthy relationships. Religious education lessons teach pupils about different people, cultures and faiths. Pupils value the chance to learn about those who have different beliefs to their own.

Leaders identify accurately where they need to make improvements to the school. Governors check how well leaders work towards achieving this. They also check how effectively leaders support staff to manage their own workload. New initiatives such as the well-being hub and morning nurture group have had a positive impact. They have helped the school to remove some of the barriers pupils face in attending school regularly. As a result, both absence and persistent absence have reduced.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, staff do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to re-read words once they have decoded them. This means some pupils overly rely on sounding out words and do not read as fluently as they could. The school should ensure staff support pupils to read for fluency once they can decode, blend and read unfamiliar words.
- Some support plans for pupils with SEND lack precision. This can make it hard for staff to put in place the precise strategies pupils with SEND need. The school should ensure that all staff understand how to plan for, and meet the needs of, all pupils with SEND effectively.

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 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	117255
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345181
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	466
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Spratt
Headteacher	Sarah Goldsmith
Website	www.downfield.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school previously ran a specially resourced provision for pupils with speech, language and communication needs. In September 2024, this changed to include pupils with autism and/or other difficulties/disabilities. There are up to 12 places in the provision. The local authority commissions all these places.
- The school runs early years provision for children from the age of two.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth-form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and English, mathematics, art and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to pupils read with a familiar member of staff.
- Inspectors met with subject leaders, reviewed evidence of pupils' work and held discussions with pupils about other foundation subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the SENCo, staff, governors, a representative from the local authority and pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including behaviour logs, bullying records, attendance records, pupil records, minutes of governor body meetings, school development plans, records of monitoring from the local authority and school policies.
- Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also spoke with parents as they arrived at school. They also took into consideration the online staff survey.

Inspection team

Michael Williams, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Emma Breckenridge	Ofsted Inspector
Laura Hewer	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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