

Inspection of Downs Barn School

69 Downs Barn Boulevard, Downs Barn, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK14 7NA

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 February 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very proud of their school. They are safe, happy and incredibly kind towards each other. Pupils know that the school's values of respect, responsibility, resilience and reflection are at the heart of this thriving community. Events throughout the year, such as the school's 'Day of Culture and Diversity', help to give pupils a sense of belonging. During these events, pupils and their families share cultural dress, foods, artefacts and customs with a sense of joy and celebration. Pupils' behaviour is consistently positive. The school's commitment to inclusion and partnership work with parents helps pupils to sustain good behaviour inside the classroom. Pupils love the care and support that they receive. One pupil represented the views of many, saying: 'Everyone is welcome to our school, and we accept everyone for who they are.'

Disadvantaged pupils consistently benefit from the extra-curricular activities that the school provides. Pupils value school trips, such as visits to London, the theatre, the local park, the library and the city centre. These are memorable experiences that help pupils to build confidence and develop their understanding of the world. The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement and ensures that pupils learn effectively and are prepared for their next stage of education well.

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

Staff teach phonics highly effectively, including in the early years. A significant number of pupils arrive at the school with English as an additional language. Pupils get thoughtful support that is adapted to their individual needs and catch up with their peers quickly. Pupils develop a love of reading. They are excited by the school library and the chance to read to adults regularly. Pupils enjoy traditional tales and rhymes as well as carefully chosen texts that represent a range of languages and authors linked to pupils' backgrounds. Books that help pupils with learning phonics are matched closely to the sounds they have learned. Most pupils achieve well in reading by the end of key stage 1.

The school is ambitious for all pupils. In the early years, staff create thoughtful tasks that build children's knowledge and vocabulary. The early years environment is rich in language and independent activities that help children to learn consistently well. Where necessary, staff work closely with agencies such as speech and language therapists to remove barriers to learning that might exist for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Transitions into school and then from the early years into Year 1 are successful and help children to settle into routines quickly.

The school's curriculum is carefully designed and sequenced. Staff have secure subject knowledge. Disadvantaged pupils' needs are considered thoughtfully. Staff make adaptations to learning that are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are having a positive impact on disadvantaged pupils' learning. Highly effective work with parents and carers helps to secure strong partnerships. Parents are very supportive of the school. Staff are committed to creating engaging lessons that

match the curriculum intent closely. All staff are proud to work at the school and feel supported with their workload and well-being. However, in some subjects, such as history and art and design, there is some variability in the way staff check and revisit pupils' essential knowledge and vocabulary. This means that lessons do not always build on pupils' prior knowledge effectively. As a result, some pupils have gaps and misconceptions that are not addressed, therefore not all pupils achieve as highly as they could.

Pupils behave well. They take turns when participating in activities during lessons and when playing together on the playground. When pupils move around the school they hold doors open for each other and are very respectful. The behaviour policy is implemented fairly and consistently. If any pupils do need extra support to behave well, this is managed sensitively. Pupils have an exceptional range of activities and support for their personal development that build on the school's values systematically and deliberately. There are a wide range of clubs, such as football, basketball, gymnastics, arts and crafts, singing and gardening. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their education.

Governors have a precise understanding of the strengths and areas to develop for the school. They understand their statutory responsibilities. Governors support and challenge the school well. They ensure that improving pupils' attendance rightly remains a priority. Pupils' attendance is improving. If pupils have any barriers to attending regularly, staff work with parents and families effectively. The school analyses and understands the individual reasons for pupils' absence, intervening quickly. However, there are still a small number of pupils who do not attend school as often as they should, and this has a negative impact on their achievement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some wider curriculum subjects, the school does not yet provide enough opportunities to check and revisit essential knowledge and vocabulary. This means that a small number of pupils do not build and connect their learning as effectively as they could. The school should support staff to implement the curriculum consistently well, including precise curriculum components that will help pupils achieve the highest possible outcomes.
- A small number of pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. As a result, they miss out on the full range of opportunities that are available to them in school, as well as essential learning. The school should continue to do all that it can to support pupils with improving their attendance.

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	110372
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10296164
Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Argent
Headteacher	Kate Mathews
Website	www.boulevardprimarypartnership.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 July 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Boulevard Primary Partnership, which is a federation of three schools and includes Southwood School, Germander Park School and Downs Barn School.
- The headteacher of Downs Barn School has responsibility for all three schools across the federation.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of the leadership team. The inspectors met with the chair of governors and other members of the governing body.
- The inspectors also met with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design, and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils in lessons and during lunchtimes.
- The inspectors considered a range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school, their school improvement plan and minutes from governors' meetings.
- The inspectors spoke to parents and also took into account their responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector took account of the views of staff through conversations and the responses to the online staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.

Inspection team

Carl McCarthy, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Shazia Akram

His Majesty's Inspector

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