

# Downe Primary School

**Address:** High Elms Road, Downe, High Elms Road, Orpington, Kent, BR6 7JN

**Unique reference number (URN):** 149534

## Inspection report: 30 June 2026

|                    |                                                                                   |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Exceptional        |                                                                                   |
| Strong standard    |  |
| Expected standard  |                                                                                   |
| Needs attention    |                                                                                   |
| Urgent improvement |                                                                                   |

### **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

### **How we evaluate safeguarding**

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

## **Strong standard** ●

### **Achievement**

**Strong standard** ●

Pupils achieve consistently highly in published national tests and across the wider curriculum. Disadvantaged pupils attain strongly, with outcomes that match or exceed those of their peers. Teachers help pupils to develop precise foundational knowledge that enables all pupils to access demanding content. Across subjects, pupils demonstrate secure and fluent understanding, applying key concepts confidently and producing work of high quality.

From their varied starting points, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make sustained and strong progress. Staff use assessment sharply to identify gaps and adapt teaching so every pupil keeps up. As a result, pupils build deep and detailed knowledge that prepares them well for increasingly complex learning. By the time they finish Year 6, pupils are very well prepared for their next steps in education. They develop resilience, confidence and an impressive grasp of knowledge and skills to equip them for secondary school.

### **Attendance and behaviour**

**Strong standard** ●

Attendance is a clear strategic priority. Leaders, trustees and staff have improved attendance through consistent, well-planned action across the school. Leaders understand attendance patterns for different groups and use this information to identify barriers and provide timely support. Staff share responsibility for promoting strong attendance, with teachers building positive relationships with families from the outset. Regular communication, meetings and personalised support help parents to understand expectations and secure improvement. Leaders celebrate high attendance while providing tailored support for pupils who face significant barriers, including those with complex needs or a history of absence. As a result, attendance has improved notably across the school and for different groups of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged.

Behaviour is exemplary. Leaders have established a highly inclusive culture where pupils understand and meet clear expectations. Staff apply behaviour approaches consistently, making appropriate adaptations to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to succeed alongside their peers. Pupils behave respectfully, demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning and remain focused and resilient in lessons. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm, purposeful and built on mutual respect. Bullying is rare. Leaders respond swiftly and effectively to any concerns. As a result, pupils feel safe, valued and confident that adults will act promptly to protect them.

### **Curriculum and teaching**

**Strong standard** ●

Leaders provide strategic leadership of curriculum and teaching, ensuring that all pupils develop strong foundations in mathematics, reading and writing. Leaders and trustees maintain a precise understanding of curriculum implementation. They use their insight to refine inclusive teaching and continually strengthen consistency from Reception to Year 6. Professional development is closely aligned to school priorities, with staff benefiting from practical training, coaching and whole-school programmes.

The school curriculum is broad, ambitious and coherently sequenced. Leaders ensure pupils build knowledge and skills progressively, with subject-specific vocabulary reinforced systematically, particularly in subjects such as science. Teaching is characterised by clarity, positive relationships and secure subject expertise. Teachers present information well, use questioning to deepen understanding and give feedback in the moment to address pupils' misconceptions swiftly. Staff use assessment precisely to adapt tasks to help pupils to achieve highly. Phonics teaching is consistently strong, beginning well in early years and helping pupils to blossom as confident and fluent readers by the time they finish key stage 2.

The school's inclusive curriculum enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged to thrive. Adaptive strategies, targeted support and specialist interventions ensure full access to learning. Leaders foster collaboration across the trust, strengthening planning, expertise and shared practice.

## Early years

Strong standard 

Children in early years are calm, settled and deeply engaged in a language-rich and purposeful learning environment. Leaders maintain a clear and ambitious vision for early years and ensure that curriculum, teaching and care practices align with strong foundations for future learning. The environment is engaging, inclusive and stimulating. Staff model high-quality vocabulary, prompting reflection and encouraging exploration. Children confidently describe textures, actions and ideas, supported by consistent use of resources and structured questioning.

Leaders prioritise early reading, communication, mathematics and fine-motor development. The curriculum is ambitious and coherently sequenced, with strong implementation of school teaching approaches that begin impressively in Reception. Phonics teaching is consistent and precisely matched to children's starting points. Mathematics activities develop children's understanding through practical exploration and purposeful language.

Inclusive practice is highly effective. Staff identify needs accurately and adapt provision so that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access learning successfully. The integration of pupils from the specially resourced provision reflects a strong culture of belonging for all. Leaders and trustees demonstrate forensic knowledge of early years. Children apply their learning across all areas and demonstrate strong progress from individual starting points. Children, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, achieve highly. Teachers ensure a caring culture and a determined focus on securing strong outcomes and readiness for Year 1.

## Inclusion

Strong standard 

Leaders provide highly effective and inclusive support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They use early identification systems that combine assessment and close monitoring to recognise pupils' needs swiftly and accurately. Leaders review provision frequently, using evidence to refine in-class strategies and targeted interventions. Staff benefit from ongoing professional development that builds expertise in adaptive teaching. This enables teachers to vary tasks, scaffold learning and remove barriers so pupils can access the full curriculum. Trust oversight strengthens this strategic approach and ensures consistency and equity for all.

Pupils across the whole school benefit from adaptive strategies such as wobble cushions, visual supports and fine-motor programmes, enabling full participation and growing independence. Staff know pupils well and deploy support purposefully. Pastoral relationships are strong, helping pupils to feel safe, confident and ready to learn. Leaders work closely with families and respond proactively to need, ensuring that inclusion remains a whole-school strength.

Pupils thrive in the specially resourced provision. Staff design and adapt activities with thoughtful precision to help pupils to make strong progress with their emotional development and communication skills. Pupils in this provision access learning and social opportunities across the school with excellent help from caring leaders and staff.

## **Leadership and governance**

**Strong standard** ●

Leaders and trustees maintain a strong and proactive focus on inclusion, addressing barriers to learning, attendance and participation with determination. Their actions reflect a sustained commitment to securing positive outcomes for all pupils. Shared values and a clear vision drive practice across the school. Staff articulate strong confidence in leaders and describe workload and wellbeing as managed with care and integrity. Leaders ensure excellent behaviour across the school with high expectations and consistent policies and systems. Parents and carers speak highly of leadership, teaching, communication, inclusion and the school's ethos, celebrating the positive impact on their children's experiences.

Trustees and governors provide highly effective challenge and support, enabling this small school to think ambitiously and invest in substantial teacher development. Trustees and governors demonstrate forensic understanding of the school's performance and priorities. They meet statutory duties with diligence and expertise. Safeguarding, equality and inclusion sit at the heart of their work, with decision-making consistently focused on the best interests of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.

The commitment to staff development is impressive. Leaders and staff access trust-wide training and opportunities for professional study. This culture of continual learning strengthens classroom practice and leadership capacity. Leaders evaluate the school accurately and identify clear priorities, including improving attendance, leading to strong standards across all aspects of the school. One parent represented the views of many when sharing, 'The teachers are dedicated, approachable, and genuinely care about every child's academic progress and personal wellbeing. They create a nurturing environment where children are encouraged to be curious, confident and resilient'.

## **Personal development and wellbeing**

**Strong standard** ●

Personal development and wellbeing are excellent and deeply embedded across the school's work. Pupils take on meaningful leadership roles that promote responsibility, environmental awareness and democratic participation. They understand how voting operates in school and articulate mature views about fairness, equality and inclusion. These experiences ensure that pupils live out fundamental British values daily across school life. Playtime discussions show that pupils apply these values confidently, including through inclusive attitudes towards participation regardless of gender.

The curriculum teaches pupils how to stay safe with clarity and precision. Pupils learn about online safety and develop a secure understanding about the risks associated with social media. Pupils also learn how to keep safe near water and on the roads. Leaders provide highly inclusive after-school provision, enabling pupils to access clubs that enhance social development, wellbeing and character. Roles such as lunch hall monitors further develop responsibility and positive citizenship.

Pastoral provision is highly effective. Staff know pupils well and respond quickly to emerging needs. Leaders work proactively with families and external agencies to remove barriers to attendance, wellbeing and engagement. Parents speak extremely positively about the care their children receive, noting the excellent impact on confidence, happiness and readiness to learn. Pupils consistently report that they feel safe, supported and able to seek help from trusted adults.

Character development is a significant strength, with pupils showing resilience, kindness and a willingness to contribute to the school community. Their secure understanding of equality and respectful relationships reflects an excellent personal development programme reinforced consistently through assemblies, leadership opportunities and everyday experiences. This strong culture ensures that pupils develop the values, confidence and social skills needed to thrive beyond primary school. Pupils' lives blossom further through 'The Pioneer Passport', a programme of life experiences to ensure that pupils encounter a rich set of experiences from theatre trips to residential activities.

## **What it's like to be a pupil at this school**

Pupils achieve highly in this joyful, inclusive and ambitious school. They enjoy learning and engage positively with the school's well-sequenced curriculum. They are confident, friendly and joyful learners who respond enthusiastically to high-quality teaching. Across subjects, pupils make strong progress from their starting points, including those who face barriers to learning or wellbeing. Leaders ensure that sharply focused support reduces barriers effectively, enabling pupils to flourish academically and personally. Outcomes in national tests are high, reflecting pupils' conscientious attitudes and secure knowledge. Writing is a notable strength, complemented by high-quality art and design. The school prepares pupils very well for their next steps. Pupils develop resilience and independence to help them to be ready for secondary school and modern Britain.

Pupils feel a rich sense of belonging. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are included in all aspects of day-to-day school life, learning and playing together with warmth and respect. Relationships between pupils, staff and leaders are consistently positive and supportive. Playtimes are joyous and exemplify the school's strong community spirit. Pupils participate widely in broader experiences that extend learning beyond the academic curriculum, including leadership roles that promote environmental awareness and democracy. The curriculum reflects diversity and multiculturalism, helping pupils to develop rich moral and cultural understanding and a strong sense of global citizenship.

Pupils thrive because behaviour is excellent and attitudes to learning are consistently strong. Pupils feel safe and valued, supported by a highly nurturing ethos that ensures everyone feels special. Pupils are not worried about bullying, as they know leaders address any worries immediately. They learn how to stay safe online, on water and on the roads through well-designed curriculum and assembly activities. Attendance has improved rapidly due to strategic work by leaders, trustees and staff, with particularly impressive gains for disadvantaged pupils.

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## Next steps

- Leaders should continue their work to embed excellence across all areas of the school's work over time.
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## About this inspection

This school is part of The Pioneer Academy, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Lee Mason-Ellis (OBE), and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Joanne Bouwens. The chair of the local governing body is Kathryn Paterson.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, leaders from the trust, teachers, support staff, governors, trustees and the CEO during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school includes a specially resourced provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. This provision currently caters for 9 pupils. All of the pupils have education, health and care plans.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school has undergone some significant changes. Since the last inspection, the school appointed the current headteacher and the number of pupils on roll has increased from 66 to 91.

Headteacher: Matthew Ferguson

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**Lead inspector:**

Scott Reece, His Majesty's Inspector

**Team inspector:**

Lenny Williams, Ofsted Inspector

## Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 30 June 2026

## School and pupil context

**Total pupils**

**66**

Well below average

**What does this mean?**

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

**School capacity**

**100**

Well below average

**What does this mean?**

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

**Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)**

**13.64%**

Below average

### **What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

### **Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan**

**12.12%**

Well above average

### **What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

### **Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support**

**22.73%**

Well above average

### **What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

### **Location deprivation**

**Well below average**

### **What does this mean?**

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

### **Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)**

**SEN unit**

### **What does this mean?**

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

| Year                  | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average |             | 61%              |                                |
| 2024/25 (final)       | S           | 62%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 92%         | 61%              | Above                          |
| 2022/23               |             | 60%              |                                |

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

| Year                  | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average |             | 74%              |                                |
| 2024/25 (final)       | S           | 75%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 92%         | 74%              | Above                          |
| 2022/23               |             | 73%              |                                |

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

| Year                  | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average |             | 72%              |                                |
| 2024/25 (final)       | S           | 72%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 92%         | 72%              | Above                          |
| 2022/23               |             | 71%              |                                |

**Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics**

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

| Year                  | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average |             | 73%              |                                |
| 2024/25 (final)       | S           | 74%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 92%         | 73%              | Above                          |
| 2022/23               |             | 73%              |                                |

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

**Disadvantaged pupils' performance**

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

**Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics**

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

| Year                  | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average |             | 46%              |                                |
| 2024/25               |             | 47%              |                                |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 46%              | S                              |
| 2022/23               |             | 44%              |                                |

### Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

| Year                  | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average |             | 62%              |                                |
| 2024/25               |             | 63%              |                                |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 62%              | S                              |
| 2022/23               |             | 60%              |                                |

### Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

| Year                  | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average |             | 59%              |                                |
| 2024/25               |             | 59%              |                                |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 58%              | S                              |
| 2022/23               |             | 58%              |                                |

## Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

| Year                  | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average |             | 60%              |                                |
| 2024/25               |             | 61%              |                                |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 59%              | S                              |
| 2022/23               |             | 59%              |                                |

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

## Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

## Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

| Year                  | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average |             | 68%                              |                         |
| 2024/25               |             | 69%                              |                         |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 67%                              | S                       |
| 2022/23               |             | 66%                              |                         |

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

| Year                  | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average |             | 80%                              |                         |
| 2024/25               |             | 81%                              |                         |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 80%                              | S                       |
| 2022/23               |             | 78%                              |                         |

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

| Year                  | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average |             | 78%                              |                         |
| 2024/25               |             | 78%                              |                         |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 78%                              | S                       |
| 2022/23               |             | 77%                              |                         |

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

| Year                  | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average |             | 80%                              |                         |
| 2024/25               |             | 81%                              |                         |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 79%                              | S                       |
| 2022/23               |             | 79%                              |                         |

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

## Absence

### Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

| Year             | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (3 term) | 6.3%        | 5.2%             | Above                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 4.7%        | 5.5%             | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 5.2%        | 5.9%             | Close to average               |

### Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

| Year             | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (3 term) | 23.0%       | 13.0%            | Above                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 8.5%        | 14.6%            | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 8.1%        | 16.2%            | Below                          |

# Our grades explained

## Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

## Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

## Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

## Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

## Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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