

Downham Feoffees Primary Academy

Address: Main Street, Little Downham, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB6 2ST

Unique reference number (URN): 144947

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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Leaders' actions have prioritised reading, writing and mathematics. This means that pupils, some of whom have significant barriers to learning, acquire strong foundations in their oracy, literacy and numeracy from the start. Pupils learn how to write accurately, solve mathematical problems and talk about their learning. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stages in their education. Typically pupils achieve in line with national averages in national tests and examinations. While attainment is more variable for disadvantaged pupils and those with other barriers to learning, pupils' work shows they progress well from their starting points.

Leaders know that, because of historic inconsistent expectations and in the quality of teaching, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Because teaching has improved, these are being addressed. Across the wider curriculum, pupils now typically gain the breadth, and often, depth of knowledge that they need. They can recall important knowledge and apply it in their written work.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to attend as often as possible. Staff promote the importance of regular attendance, and celebrate it. Pupils feel safe and happy in school. Staff work very closely with families and pupils to identify, and tackle any barriers to regular attendance. They take carefully considered steps, tailored to the needs of pupils, to remove obstacles to regular attendance. Consequently, most groups of pupils attend very well.

Leaders have established clear, and well understood expectations of how pupils should behave. Pupils understand, as they had a role in making these, the 'GREAT' qualities they aspire to. Pupils conduct themselves well. Interruptions to learning are rare. If pupils find it hard to meet these expectations, staff work with them to understand the impact of their actions. Staff work closely with pupils, teaching them strategies to manage their emotions and to solve any friendship issues they may have. This helps pupils focus on their work. Pupils are polite and respectful of others. They share and play with each other. Older pupils help younger children. Pupils know what bullying is. They know that if it were to happen, teachers would make it stop.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is ambitious and broad. Leaders have thought about how pupils learn, what they need to know, and the order in which they should learn important knowledge. There are frequent opportunities to revisit and connect prior learning to new learning. The curriculum helps pupils secure important content before they move on.

Leaders have taken effective action to address some areas of weaker practice. This work has improved teaching across the curriculum. Pupils are taught the essentials of accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. From the start, staff model blending letters and sounds. They create regular opportunities for pupils to practice and build their knowledge, so they

become accurate and fluent readers. If pupils read less at home, or need additional practice, they get extra opportunities in school to do so. Pupils particularly enjoy learning practically, including science experiments, field work and cooking.

Staff have secure subject knowledge. They check pupils' understanding. This typically closes gaps and addresses misconceptions. Staff know pupils' barriers to learning. Staff make effective adaptations so pupils can access the curriculum successfully. However, at times the feedback that pupils receive is not precise enough to help them improve the quality of their work.

Early years

Expected standard 

The early years foundation stage is effectively led. This includes care practices. Staff communicate regularly with parents and carers and with other settings. This enables staff to learn about children's interests and their starting points before they set foot in school. This insight enables staff to help children to settle into school.

The early years curriculum is carefully designed to give children a solid foundation for future learning. Leaders have prioritised the development of children's speech, language and communication. They learn phonics and practice letter formation from the start. Staff swiftly identify any additional needs that children may have. Staff use their training to help them address barriers effectively, including through additional support. This ensures that children consistently make progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The Reception area is a well-organised and engaging learning environment. Children confidently explore topics, completing a range of activities that stimulate their curiosity. Children have, for instance, recently been excited to watch eggs hatch. This helps them to learn about caring for animals and the natural world. Staff build pupils' vocabulary when they talk to the children about their learning. Children build a broad range of skills across all areas of learning. They typically achieve a good level of development in readiness for Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders identify pupils' barriers for learning effectively. This starts before children start in Reception. Staff use this information to plan for pupils, providing additional support, and adaptations to the curriculum. Leaders' assessment of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) involves staff, parents and carers, and pupils. Leaders set precise targets for pupils with SEND. Staff carefully check pupils' progress against their targets. They adjust provision as necessary, to help pupils meet these targets. Leaders use information effectively to apply for and provide additional support and funding. The school works closely with local services, including, in the past, the virtual school, to ensure vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils progress well.

In classrooms, teachers use their knowledge to carefully adapt the curriculum. This ensures that pupils can access it. Pupils who need additional support, for instance with reading, or managing their wellbeing, receive support from trained staff. This helps them keep up with their peers and enjoy learning.

The school uses pupil premium funding effectively to address disadvantaged pupils' barriers to learning. Strategies such as additional reading support, have improved outcomes for pupils. Although the pupil premium strategy is appropriate, the impact of aspects of provision, such as enrichment opportunities, is not as rigorously tracked and adjusted as it is for pupils with SEND.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Leaders and trustees check the school's progress against its priorities. They challenge and support leaders to improve standards and outcomes. Consequently, leaders' actions have improved the quality of the curriculum, and how it is taught, particularly in early reading and mathematics. The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is inclusive and now highly effective. Leaders know what they need to do to embed consistently excellent provision across the school, to further improve outcomes and to provide high-quality enrichment for all.

Staff are highly positive about working here. They receive effective training and opportunities to work with other schools across the trust. Consequently, despite the small size of Downham Feoffees, staff benefit from and contribute to shared resources, plans and expertise. New teachers receive an excellent induction. Leaders are mindful of and support staff with their wellbeing. As a result of these actions and approaches, staff turnover has considerably reduced.

The school has become an important part of the local community. Parents and carers are highly positive about the school. They appreciate how leaders have taken very effective steps to listen to and work with them. Leaders and staff have 'an open door' for parents. They work together to identify and address any issues pupils may have.

Trustees ensure that statutory obligations, including the use of pupil premium funding, are met. They, and the academy council, check the effectiveness of safeguarding and child protection arrangements.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is comprehensive and well taught. It equips pupils to participate positively in modern Britain. Pupils build their knowledge over time of a range of topics, including personal safety, relationships and puberty. Pupils enjoy discussing and learning these topics. Pupils know the importance of equality and tolerance. The school brings in visitors, such as a farmer and the fire service, to speak about their work and how to keep safe. Pupils learn, across the curriculum, about diversity. For instance, in history, pupils learn about migration. They learn about different cultures and faiths, although pupils' knowledge of some religions is mixed.

Staff know their pupils well. They adjust the PSHE curriculum so that all can access it. Pupils get a range of additional support to support them with any personal issues or worries they may have. They learn the importance of self-care, and strategies to manage their emotions.

Leaders include pupils in decision-making. Members of the school council develop their leadership skills and contribute to the development of the school. For example, they worked with leaders to develop rewards that reflect the 'Feoffees Five' attributes. Pupils gain resilience and learn the importance of teamwork through opportunities to perform at events, or on the annual residential trip to Norfolk. Many pupils attend after-school and lunchtime clubs. Leaders have plans to develop the enrichment offer further, and to ensure that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make the fullest use of these opportunities.

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

Pupils enjoy attending this happy school. They like learning an engaging, well thought-out curriculum. This is taught well. Staff know pupils, and treat them as individuals. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported to access the curriculum. As a result, from Reception onwards, pupils build knowledge across the curriculum, including in reading, writing and mathematics. Typically, pupils achieve in line with national averages. They are well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils behave well. Pupils know what is expected of them and most strive to be the best they can be. Pupils on the school council helped to develop rules around behaviour, school values, and the rewards system. This input means that pupils feel valued. This helps to motivate them. If pupils have any worries, they know that staff will listen to and support them. If pupils need support to manage their feelings or to focus on their work, staff teach them the strategies to do so. At social times, pupils of all ages play and interact positively with each other. They treat others with courtesy, tolerance and respect.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They learn about how people are different but equal. Pupils enjoy learning about growing up. They learn how to navigate through the challenges this brings. They know the features of healthy and unhealthy relationships, and the importance of consent. They know how to manage their physical and mental health. They know how to keep safe. Many pupils attend clubs such as chess, arts and sports clubs. They enjoy school trips and other opportunities, including a cultural showcase with other trust schools, a residential, and visits to wildlife parks. This programme stimulates pupils' interests. Leaders have plans to widen the range of opportunities available to pupils.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that their work ensures consistently strong outcomes for all groups of pupils by the end of key stage 2.
- Leaders should further improve the consistency of feedback across the curriculum so that pupils are precisely supported to understand and act upon feedback to improve their work.
- Leaders should build on their work to provide a broad, rich enrichment offer that develops pupils' confidence and raises their aspirations, and ensure, through rigorous monitoring, high levels of participation of all groups in these opportunities.

- Leaders should refine and develop their work so that groups of pupils across the school have consistently high rates of attendance.
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About this inspection

Downham Feoffees Academy is a member of the Meridian Trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Shirley Jamieson. The chief executive officer of the trust is Mark Woods.

Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed an executive headteacher to oversee the work of the school.

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 (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

The inspection team spoke with school and trust leaders, including the SENDCo. They also held discussions with representatives of the trust board and the local governing body. Inspectors spoke to staff, parents and carers, and pupils.

The school currently does not use any alternative provision for pupils.

Head of School: Benita Sherrington

Lead inspector:

Steve Woodley, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne, 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

149

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

210

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)

13.42%

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

1.34%

Below 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

19.46%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

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)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (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	55%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	61%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	57%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	47%	60%	Below

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	65%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	61%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	68%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	63%	73%	Below

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	75%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	78%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	75%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	74%	71%	Close to average

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	74%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	83%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	64%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	79%	73%	Close to average

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	33%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	38%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	17%	44%	Below

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	44%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	50%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	33%	60%	Below

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	67%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	75%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	50%	58%	Close to average

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	61%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	67%	59%	Close to average

‘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	33%	68%	-34 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	38%	67%	-30 pp
2022/23 (final)	17%	66%	-50 pp

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	44%	80%	-35 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	50%	80%	-30 pp
2022/23 (final)	33%	78%	-45 pp

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	67%	78%	-11 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	75%	78%	-3 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	50%	77%	-27 pp

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	61%	80%	-19 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp
2022/23 (final)	67%	79%	-13 pp

‘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)	3.9%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.6%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.6%	5.9%	Below

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)	6.3%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	11.3%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	12.3%	16.2%	Close to average

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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