

# Dormer House School

High Street, Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire GL56 0AD

**Inspection dates** 19–21 April 2016

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The drive and passion of the headteacher is pivotal to the continuing success of this school. She is determined to provide pupils with high-quality teaching and raise their educational outcomes.
- Staff share the high aspirations of the headteacher and her commitment to providing pupils with a well-rounded education that develops excellent personal and social skills.
- The quality of teaching is good. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The curriculum is carefully designed to excite and motivate pupils. It is complemented by a wide range of activities which enrich pupils' learning.
- The behaviour of pupils is impeccable. They are courteous, respectful and extremely well-mannered. They have a thirst for learning.
- Children in the early years receive a good start to their education. This ensures they are well prepared for their next steps.
- The work to keep pupils safe is effective. The school provides a nurturing environment in which pupils feel secure and can flourish.
- The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- Parents speak highly of the school. They greatly appreciate the quality of learning opportunities the school provides for their children and are delighted with the education their children receive.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always provide enough challenge for the most-able pupils.
- Leaders do not precisely monitor the impact of the school's actions to improve the achievement of most-able pupils.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teachers adapt work to maintain a high level of challenge in every lesson, especially for the most able, so that more pupils make outstanding progress.
- Improve leadership and management so that:
  - trustees and leaders check more precisely that school improvement work secures the best outcomes for pupils, particularly the most able.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher is committed to providing high-quality education for all pupils who attend the school. She and all staff, leaders and managers share high aspirations for pupils and are committed to the continuous improvement of the school.
- Subject leaders are knowledgeable about the subjects they lead. They are highly motivated. Collectively, they are ambitious to provide pupils with the best learning opportunities. Through checking the quality of teaching in their subjects, they quickly identify areas of weakness. Subsequently, their action plans support staff in improving these areas and checks are made to see that actions taken are having the desired outcome. For example, following a dip in pupils' achievement in phonics, decisive action is being taken that has improved pupils' early reading skills.
- Pupils have access to a rich and varied curriculum; this is a strength of the school. Teachers work hard to provide a wealth of stimulating and exciting opportunities for pupils. As a result, their learning needs are effectively met. For example, Year 2 pupils are currently engrossed in the experiences of astronaut Tim Peake, making them eager to discover what life is like in space.
- Learning is enhanced by an extensive range of trips, visits and cultural activities, all carefully planned by teachers to meet the needs of pupils. These experiences bring pupils' learning vividly to life.
- Pupils have access to a range of enrichment activities which are well attended and add another dimension to the curriculum. Music, drama, Latin, art and sports clubs are among the many activities that are available. Pupils and parents describe how these clubs build the confidence and self-esteem of pupils allowing them to excel in other areas of learning, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils attend a wide range of sporting activities. Pupils describe how they thrive on these activities as they allow them to train and compete with pupils beyond their school. For example, pupils were taking part in a cross-country running competition at the time of the inspection and were extremely proud of the success they achieved.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded successfully through the curriculum. The school's motto, 'I am, I can, I ought, I will' is evident across the school. This underpins all the school does in inspiring pupils and providing them with a rich learning experience.
- The school is highly effective in developing pupils' understanding of what it is like to live in modern Britain. British values are taught explicitly through personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils talk knowledgeably about democracy, the rule of law and mutual respect. For example, they talk with maturity about recent world events and the impact these have on society. They understand the importance of tolerance and are respectful of different cultures and beliefs.
- Almost all parents who responded to the online questionnaire Parent View, who responded by text message or who spoke to inspectors consider that the school provides them with detailed and accurate information about how well their children are doing. All parents spoken with were delighted with the quality of education their children receive. They appreciate the opportunities the school provides in keeping them up to date with how their child is getting on. Parents describe the school as 'fantastic'. One typical comment was, 'Dormer is a fantastic school, it may be little but it has a huge heart'.
- Leaders do not always rigorously check the impact of their actions in order to determine what works well and why. The procedures to monitor the progress of most-able pupils have not been fully effective in ensuring these pupils reach the very highest standards.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Careful monitoring of all aspects of the school finances by trustees, combined with rising numbers, ensures the stability of the school. Consequently, pupils who attend the school are receiving a good quality of education.
  - Trustees hold the headteacher firmly to account for the quality of education pupils receive, resulting in good teaching in all year groups.
  - Trustees are ambitious for the school. They bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise from their professional roles and provide support for the headteacher in continuing the school's philosophy.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher keeps her colleagues well briefed about current safeguarding policies and procedures. These are regularly updated and fully adhered to by all staff. Staff show a clear understanding of the actions to take if any concerns arise, enabling them to act swiftly, minimising the risk to pupils. The leaflet 'It could happen here' is one example of the school's

approach to safeguarding set by the headteacher, staff and trustees. All undertake regular safeguarding training, including on the government's 'Prevent' duty, which highlights the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

- Trustees hold the headteacher firmly to account for the quality of education pupils receive, resulting in good teaching in all year groups. During board meetings they specifically check the progress pupils are making. However, their procedures to monitor the progress of the most-able pupils have not been fully effective.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Inspection evidence, including joint observations with leaders and discussions with pupils, combined with an analysis of the monitoring records completed by leaders, confirms that teaching is good. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning and are making good progress across all subjects.
- Teachers' assessment of what pupils can and cannot do is accurate and effective. As a result, pupils across the school are making good progress. Pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do in order to improve their work. The school's marking and feedback policy is making an effective contribution to pupils' progress.
- Pupils are able to check their own learning and improvements in their own work and that of their peers. This approach was evident in many of the books viewed during the inspection. For example, in Year 5, pupils are able to check, edit and refine their science-fiction stories. They do this with aplomb, producing pieces of well-developed story writing, deepening their knowledge of narrative features.
- Teachers know each individual pupil extremely well. This enables them to plan lessons that interest pupils and build on their previous learning. Teachers give careful consideration to the activities they set for pupils and ensure they meet the needs of pupils with differing abilities. This includes those pupils identified as requiring some additional support.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Specialist teachers are used effectively in a range of subjects. These include science, the arts and foreign languages. Pupils benefit widely from this expertise, which results in them achieving well. For example, pupils in Year 6 were able to demonstrate their skills and confidence in a performance of 'Romeo and Juliet'.
- Teachers and teaching assistants ask probing questions to check pupils' understanding and deepen their thinking. For example, in Year 4 mathematics, the teacher's questioning extends the range and quality of pupils' verbal and written responses.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong and a strength of the school. This results in pupils being confident learners who are not afraid to seek clarification to increase their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers do not consistently provide additional challenge for the most-able pupils in their day-to-day learning. As a result, some pupils do not consistently make the rapid progress of which they are capable, especially in reading and mathematics. Leaders have identified that some of the most-able pupils throughout the school could be challenged more effectively. They have plans in place to tackle this but, as yet, these are in an early stage of application.
- The school does, however, provide a range of activities for those pupils they identify as being 'gifted and talented', including lessons in Ancient Greek and a study club for pupils in Year 5 and Year 6.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- Pupils of all ages feel very secure in school. The very strong relationships which are established between staff, pupils and parents are pivotal to pupils' daily communication and interactions that help promote their personal development and sense of well-being. Parents comment that 'all teachers know their children so well, even if they have not yet taught them'.
- Pupils learn to keep safe through a range of carefully planned experiences that are appropriate to their age and stage of development. For example, older pupils had their understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet enhanced by a visit from the police. Consequently, pupils understand how to keep themselves and others safe in different situations.

- Pupils love coming to school. This is reflected in their good attendance, which is above the national average. Pupils develop into extremely confident and articulate young people who work and play harmoniously together.
- Pupils of all ages trust staff. They describe how they are confident that staff in school will take rapid and decisive action to resolve any concerns they may have.
- Pupils can talk with knowledge and understanding about a broad range of issues and show a good understanding of other faiths and cultures. Older pupils can talk and debate with maturity on a range of topics, for example the rule of law and democracy. Consequently, they have a clear understanding of life in modern Britain. The school encourages discussions with pupils on issues such as radicalisation and extremism. This increases pupils' understanding of the wider world in which they live.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe online. Pupils welcome the additional opportunities the school provides in arranging visits from the police and ChildLine to ensure they are knowledgeable about and understand the dangers of mobile technology. They are confident in the actions to take if they have any concerns.
- The school actively encourages pupils to stay fit and healthy. They are able to make informed choices about healthy eating and keeping themselves fit. Additional sporting activities provide pupils with further opportunities to keep healthy.
- The school considers the emotional and mental well-being of pupils to be crucial. Staff work well together, using published guidance effectively, to ensure that pupils can successfully access a full range of support whenever it is required.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils of all ages and stages of development have an exceptionally clear understanding of what acceptable behaviour is. The impeccable behaviour observed during the inspection concurs with the views of staff, pupils and parents, along with the school's own documentation on behaviour, bullying and racist incidents. This reflects the core ethos of the school.
- Staff consistently model the excellent behaviour they expect from pupils, which results in the exemplary behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils are considerate, sensitive and extremely thoughtful towards each other. Incidents of poor behaviour are extremely rare. Pupils describe how these are swiftly dealt with when they occur.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**are good**

- Children start nursery with a range of skills, knowledge and understanding. As a result of the strong relationships with adults and well-planned activities, children quickly learn to build their skills across all areas of learning. Consequently, children in the nursery make good progress. For example, children quickly become confident and inquisitive learners, questioning and exploring what is going on around them. Strong questioning by adults is effective in developing children's skills in communication, language and number. For example, children were exploring what happens to water when poured on to sand. They answered questions clearly, illustrating their developing vocabulary. This strong start enables children to move seamlessly into the Reception class.
- Children in the Reception class make good progress as a result of good teaching. By the time they leave the early years, children have skills that are typically above what is expected for their age, especially in communication and language, their understanding of the world and their personal and social development. As a result, they transfer successfully into Year 1.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieve standards which are above those expected and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders keep a careful track on the progress of each individual pupil. As a result, they have a good understanding of what pupils can and cannot do and plan learning which effectively meets their needs.
- The majority of pupils are confident in using their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) to read unfamiliar words. In 2015, there was a dip in pupils' achievement in phonics in some year groups. The school is taking swift and effective action to tackle this. Current progress information shows that pupils are able to use their strong phonics knowledge to good effect when reading.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Pupils' reading ages are typically well above those expected for their age. Pupils were able to read confidently to inspectors from a wide range of texts, such as 'Jane Eyre', 'Carrie's War' and 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone'.

- Pupils make good progress in their writing. Work in pupils' books, across a range of subjects and in all years, confirms that pupils are given activities to develop and apply skills learned in English in other subjects. For example, pupils wrote about World War Two and the life of Anne Frank.
- Progress across the school in mathematics is good. Teachers plan activities for pupils which excite and challenge them. As one pupil described, 'We sometimes forget we are learning'. These skills are successfully transferred across other subject areas. For example, in geography lessons in Year 5, pupils are able to use their knowledge and understanding of graphs to interpret information and evaluate the impact of different climates on the availability of water.
- Pupils identified as requiring extra support with their learning typically make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is due to the personalised activities which teachers plan effectively to meet their needs.
- The most-able pupils are typically making good progress. However, work is not always sufficiently well-adapted to maintain a high level of challenge in every lesson so that these pupils make consistently outstanding progress.

## Early years provision

is good

- Leadership and management in the early years are good. They are effective in meeting the independent school standards in early years provision.
- The two early years leaders are passionate about the quality of education the children receive. They work closely with staff, showing drive and determination for constant improvement of early years provision. For example, leaders have correctly identified that the outside environment needs further improvement so that children have access to high-quality learning opportunities across all areas of learning.
- Relationships between the children and staff are a strength. This enables children to thrive and develop in an environment where they feel safe and secure. Consequently, children are happy and confident in their learning, quickly acquiring the necessary skills to do things for themselves. This makes them well prepared as they start in Year 1.
- Children have access to a wide range of activities, which allows them to show the features of effective learning. For example, children are able to concentrate for extended periods of time on a chosen activity such as construction and model-making. Staff use questioning effectively to make children think carefully about what they are doing and why. For example, when the children are pouring water onto sand, adults probe their knowledge and understanding of absorption by asking them a series of questions.
- Areas of learning are well organised, providing children with a range of activities to make links in their learning and stimulate creativity. Consequently, children develop into inquisitive learners.
- Behaviour is good, with much that is outstanding. Routines are well established and consistently applied by all staff in and outside the classroom. The safety of children is good. Adults are appropriately trained in all aspects of keeping children safe. They watch children carefully and know how to report any concerns they may have.
- Parents are delighted with how quickly their children settle in the early years and with the education their children are receiving. They welcome the opportunities they have to talk with staff effectively linking learning at home and school.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	115803
<b>Inspection number</b>	10008569
<b>DfE registration number</b>	916/6047

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	118
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	50
<b>Proprietor</b>	Dormer House (Moreton-in-Marsh) School Trust Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Nicholas Fulcher
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alison Thomas
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£7,500
<b>Telephone number</b>	01608 650758
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.dormerhouseschool.co.uk">www.dormerhouseschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@dormerhouseschool.co.uk">office@dormerhouseschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16–17 March 2010

## Information about this school

- Dormer House is a small independent school in the Cotswolds. It is non profit-making and has charitable status.
- The school was founded in 1875 by the Victorian educationalist Charlotte Mason and moved to its current site in the early 1960s.
- The trustees have responsibility for the governance of the school.
- When the school was last inspected in March 2010, it was judged to be good. At that time, the school met all independent school standards.
- The nursery offers places to children from the age of two. They are taught on a part-time basis in two classes, Fledglings and Skylarks.
- Children in reception are taught in one class on a full-time basis.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- There are no pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- There are very few pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding. This is additional government funding for those eligible for free school meals and looked after children.
- The school is not in receipt of the sports funding provided by the government.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited every class to observe teaching and learning. Some visits were joint observations with leaders. During this time the quality of work in pupils' books was scrutinised.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff and members of the board of trustees. Phone calls were held with the school's cluster manager and an officer from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into consideration the responses of 17 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils to seek their views about the school. The views of other pupils were gathered during lessons, playtimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school development plan, and information relating to pupils' achievement and progress.
- The 47 responses to the online survey Parent View were taken into account. Inspectors considered comments provided by text message and correspondence submitted to the team during the inspection. They also spoke to parents informally at the start of the day.
- Inspectors checked how effectively the school meets the independent school standards.

## Inspection team

Jen Southall, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Martin Roberts

Ofsted Inspector



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