



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

DOWNSEND SCHOOL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Downsend School

Full Name of School	Downsend School
DfE Number	936/6065
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Email Address	admin@downsend.co.uk
Head	Mr Ian Thorpe
Proprietor's Representative	Mrs Jane Anderson
Age Range	6 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	467
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (268 boys; 199 girls;)
Numbers by Age	6-11: 354 11-13 113
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 467
Inspection Dates	14 to 17 Oct 2014

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2009.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with a representative of the proprietors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

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Mr Timothy Cannell

Miss Amanda Clark

Mr Adrian Downie

Mrs Virginia Jackson

Mr Simon Whittle

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Downsend School is a preparatory day school for girls and boys aged between six and thirteen years, situated on the outskirts of Leatherhead in Surrey. The school is proprietorial and has been owned by Cognita Schools Ltd since 2006. The proprietors employ an education executive to oversee the governance of the school, alongside one of the directors of the company. The school was founded in Leatherhead in 1891 as a boys' preparatory school and became fully co-educational in 2001. Three pre-preparatory schools (pre-preps) for children aged two to six feed into the preparatory school. They are located elsewhere and subject to separate inspections.
- 1.2 The school aims to offer pupils a wealth of opportunities to develop their individual skills, by providing a welcoming and stimulating environment; by finding areas where each child can succeed and gain confidence; by offering excellent all-round education for examination success and by developing potential both inside and outside the classroom.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, a new headmaster took up post in September 2013. Facilities have been improved with the provision of a new music suite and refurbished science and technology rooms.
- 1.4 Currently there are 467 pupils on roll, of whom 268 are boys and 199 are girls. Results of standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of the pupils is above the national average. Pupils come from mainly business or professional backgrounds and a small proportion is from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- 1.5 Twelve pupils have been identified as having English as an additional language (EAL), and three of these pupils receive support for this. One hundred and five pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and 53 of these receive specialist support from the school. No pupil currently has a statement of special educational need.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Downsend School is successful in meeting its aims of providing a welcoming and stimulating environment and finding areas where each child can succeed and gain confidence. Pupils show good achievement, making good progress and attaining high standards, with many gaining scholarships at prestigious local schools when they leave. The achievement of pupils with SEND is generally good, but sometimes varies depending on the appropriateness of the support they receive in class. Provision for pupils who have EAL, or who are able, is delivered more consistently, so that they achieve well. The curriculum is good, though opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) across the school are limited. The school has identified the need to expand provision for music and drama. The range of extra-curricular activities is excellent, so that every child has the chance to find new interests and develop their talents. Teaching is good overall, with particular strengths in the quality of relationships, the subject knowledge of staff, and classroom surroundings which support learning well.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. They are all very proud of their school and feel part of its community. Younger pupils are bright, lively and friendly children who mature into sensible, hardworking individuals. They relish taking on responsibility and representing their school. They have an empathy for and an interest in others. Their personal development is promoted by the excellent pastoral care provided by the school. Systems for pastoral care are very well structured and organised so that all pupils are well known to staff despite the size of the school. Pupils say that they feel happy and safe at school. Good attention is given to their health and safety.
- 2.3 The school's proprietors govern it well. They have the experience and expertise to provide the school with well-informed support and challenge. They fulfil their statutory obligations and ensure that the school complies with regulatory requirements. In the past, the safeguarding policy did not reflect all of the most recent changes, but it now complies with requirements. Leadership and management of the school at all levels are good. The new senior leadership team gives the school clear direction, energy and impetus to move forward, and has introduced good new systems for improvement. These have not yet had time to make a full impact in improving the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils. Links with parents are very strong. The school makes particularly effective use of modern technology to communicate with them and involve them in their children's learning. Parents appreciate what the school does for their children, and are satisfied that their children are well looked after and safe.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Develop the programme of monitoring of teaching to ensure that the school's good practice is shared formally to remove inconsistency in the quality of teaching.
2. Develop systems to ensure that provision in all lessons meets the identified needs of those pupils who have SEND.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 The school is successful in its aim of offering an all-round education leading to examination success and developing the pupils' potential both inside and outside the classroom.
- 3.3 As they move through the school, pupils develop good speaking and listening skills, expressing themselves clearly and listening carefully to others. They read fluently and are able to write for a range of purposes when given the opportunity to do so. They are able to reason and think ideas through for themselves. Pupils show their creative sides well, particularly in their design technology and textiles work. They have a good grounding in mathematical skills, which they apply well to other subjects, and a good working knowledge of ICT.
- 3.4 Outside the classroom, pupils' sporting achievements are especially noteworthy while still ensuring that pupils of all abilities achieve well at their own level. Pupils' performance in swimming is particularly strong, but they also have significant success in rugby, football, hockey and netball, both at local and national level.
- 3.5 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests, but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be high in relation to national expectations for their age. They have considerable success in Common Entrance examinations, with many winning scholarships to prestigious local schools. Most pupils each year gain places in their first choice of senior school.
- 3.6 Inspection evidence, including lesson observations, discussions, examination of work and scrutiny of the school's records, shows that pupils make good progress across the school from their various starting points, especially those who are more able, who are provided with demanding work. As a result, the progress of the oldest pupils, as they near Common Entrance and scholarship examinations, is sometimes excellent. Pupils with SEND make generally good progress so that they achieve well, but this is sometimes limited in a small number of lessons when the planned provision identified for them is not being delivered. Pupils with EAL receive effective support, allowing them to make good progress with English and achieve well.
- 3.7 Pupils' attitudes to learning are highly positive. As they move through the school they develop mature and focused work habits, and understand that they need to take their work seriously and apply themselves thoroughly. They are eager to learn, take pride in what they can achieve and persevere with their tasks. Pupils make every effort to present their work as well as they can, with a good measure of success. They are extremely well prepared to move on to their next school.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision

- 3.8 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular activities is good.
- 3.9 The curriculum supports the school's aims to provide an all-round education for examination success and find areas where each child can succeed and gain confidence. The curriculum is effective in covering the requisite areas of learning and includes either Spanish or Latin in Years 5 to 8.
- 3.10 The curriculum is suitable for the ages and, in almost all respects, the abilities within the school. The curriculum and planning documentation provide for a smooth progression in learning from Year 2 through to Common Entrance and scholarship work in Year 8. The setting of older pupils by prior attainment helps to ensure that the needs of each pupil are met, including the able. For example, reasoning practice in Years 5 and 6 help to prepare pupils for entrance to senior school. Those with scholarship potential are well served, evident from the number of academic scholarships won. The school is successful in identifying pupils who have particular needs, and in planning appropriate provision for them, including the use of classroom assistants. Pupils with EAL are well supported, but while most lessons meet the needs of those who have SEND, a small number do not.
- 3.11 There are many opportunities for pupils to excel at sport and the curriculum takes full advantage of the school's extensive sporting facilities available, with much success. Pupils also have suitable opportunities to take part in the variety of music and drama events that occur regularly in the school year.
- 3.12 The provision of personal, social and health education (PSHE) has improved since the previous inspection although weekly PSHE lessons are taught only to Year 2. In other years, PHSE is delivered as part of a rotation of subjects, which leads to some discontinuity in learning, as well as less time per term. This arrangement is being reviewed in order to provide more time not just for PSHE but also for music and drama. At present, not enough use is made of ICT to support learning across all subjects. The library is spacious and attractive and there are regular library lessons for every class, and it is well used by pupils at break times.
- 3.13 A wide range of special events complements the curriculum. These include a recent Egyptian day for Year 3, visits to places of historical interest and residential trips, such as to Normandy and the Isle of Wight. Learning is also enhanced by good links with the local community and a village in Ghana. Strong connections have been forged with local sporting organisations such as the county cricket club.
- 3.14 An excellent range of extra-curricular activities helps the school meet its aim of finding areas where children can gain confidence and success. These activities play a useful role in pupils' personal and social development. As well as many popular sports-based activities, pupils enjoy a host of activities from card tricks in magic club to tasting what they have grown. Pre-inspection questionnaires from pupils and parents indicate a high level of satisfaction with the provision. Additional targeted activities help to enhance the academic curriculum and enrich provision for able, gifted and talented pupils.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.15 The quality of teaching is good.

- 3.16 The school aims to develop potential both inside and outside the classroom and overall teaching enables pupils to develop a secure understanding of all subjects and allows them to make good progress according to their abilities. Teaching enables pupils to increase their knowledge and promotes a wide range of skills, especially in the core subjects and sports.
- 3.17 The teachers' planning is detailed and useful identifying the different needs of the pupils in each class. Pupils who have EAL are well catered for in class and there is good use of teaching assistants, particularly for younger pupils, so that they make rapid progress in using English. More able pupils are well challenged, and this is reflected in their high level of success in scholarship examinations. In the great majority of lessons, plans also identify how the needs of those with SEND are to be met, for example by giving them targeted work or providing additional support. In a small number of cases, appropriate provision is not being planned or delivered as intended. As a result, individuals may not make as much progress as they should.
- 3.18 Teachers know their pupils well and the strong relationships enable good progress to be made. Praise is widely used in lessons; pupils appreciate this and recognise its positive impact upon their learning. The teachers' enthusiasm inspires lively and interesting responses and application to tasks. Behaviour in lessons is almost always exemplary. Teachers' insistence on a high level of presentation from their pupils is clear. Homework is used well to reinforce and extend learning, along with opportunities for pupils to receive extra help and guidance outside class-time, including learning Greek.
- 3.19 The subject knowledge of teachers is very secure, and they give clear explanations to pupils, as seen, for example, in a football session. Lessons have a good pace and teachers employ a generally suitable range of strategies and methods to stimulate pupils' interest and foster their application, often actively involving them. Not all teaching provides suitable opportunities for pupils to undertake independent learning.
- 3.20 Assessment is used well to support learning. A wide range of data on pupils is available to teachers, and this is usually used well to plan work and monitor progress. The school has a suitable marking policy, and most teachers follow it. Their comments on pupils' work are invariably positive and encouraging. While most comments also contain written guidance to pupils on how to improve their work, not all do so. In the best examples of marking seen, clear, personalised targets were set and then progress against them checked up on by teachers.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. They display a mature sense of identity and self-awareness within a supportive community which gives them ample opportunity to explore values and beliefs. Pupils were open in discussion with inspectors, offering their views positively and articulately. They are considerate and show a genuine regard for the welfare and feelings of others. They make good use of a range of opportunities, including assemblies, to consider non-material aspects of their lives. By leading some of these assemblies themselves, and through other experiences such as making thoughtful presentations in PSHE lessons, pupils take personal responsibility for developing their sense of spiritual awareness and feel that their views are valued and appreciated. Staff are determined to ensure that pupils' personal development enjoys equal status with academic priorities.
- 4.3 Moral development is excellent. Pupils are polite and respectful, show a well-developed sense of right and wrong, and behave responsibly and considerately in all areas of school life. The pre-inspection pupils' questionnaire suggested that a small minority of pupils felt that the staff's use of sanctions was inconsistent; however, on investigation of school records, inspectors found that this was not the case. A small minority of pupils also stated on the questionnaire that they had limited opportunity to express their views on school life. Inspectors do not agree, as they noted many positive examples where pupils could make their views known. There is an active pupil council which allows pupils to make a positive difference to their school; school food has been the focus of recent discussion. Pupils also raise concerns during form periods and through a popular public speaking activity. Pupils understand the moral implications of bullying and voice their confidence in the systems which the school uses to discourage the harassment of others. They are kind and co-operative and communicate positively with each other. Pupils become caring and responsible global citizens, aided by the school's overseas links.
- 4.4 The social development of the pupils is excellent. Pupils appreciate the many opportunities they have to assume roles of responsibility, for example as prefects, house captains, sports captains and monitors. A buddying system plays a key role in encouraging a supportive relationship between pupils of different ages, and helps younger pupils to feel secure within the school community. They demonstrate a strong sense of teamwork and fair play on the games field. Pupils throughout the school are able to nominate their chosen charities, with the aim of supporting others within the wider community; in the past, they have also supported charities overseas.
- 4.5 Pupils' cultural development is excellent. Older pupils particularly enjoy current affairs sessions within their form periods, which encourage them to empathise with and understand events in the wider world. Pupils have a good understanding of and respect for other faiths and enjoy learning about different religions in their religious studies lessons. Non-academic areas of the curriculum, such as music, art and drama, along with a wide range of extra-curricular experiences, play a significant part in enhancing their awareness of cultural diversity. Many school trips, along with special events and opportunities for curricular enrichment, help pupils to embrace Western cultural traditions and to empathise with other cultures. Pupils relate well to peers from different cultural backgrounds, celebrating what makes them different

and showing a genuine interest in learning from their experiences and from the knowledge of their parents. They also have a suitable understanding of the public services and institutions in England.

- 4.6 By the time they leave the school, pupils have an excellent standard of personal development which prepares them well for the next stage of their education.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The arrangements for pastoral care support the school's aim to find areas where each child can succeed and gain confidence and to develop potential both inside and outside the classroom. Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils themselves are excellent, and are highly valued by the pupils, who speak of Downsend with pride. Staff know their pupils extremely well and pastoral matters are discussed regularly. Information about pupils is shared widely through effective communication channels. Sanctions and rewards are clearly understood and are applied consistently throughout the school. Code of conduct notices are clearly displayed across the school.
- 4.9 In pre-inspection questionnaire responses, some pupils and parents expressed concerns about bullying. Inspectors found that the school has, and implements, a thorough anti-bullying policy, and that records of incidents and action taken are meticulously well kept. Both parent and pupil interviews indicated that the school deals swiftly with incidents and that staff are approachable at all times. The introduction of the buddy system between Years 8 and 6 and Years 7 and 5 is popular and effective. Pupils suggested that this programme could be extended to other years.
- 4.10 Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles, encouraged by attentive lunchtime staff and by a pleasant social atmosphere in the dining hall. Opportunities to reflect on what contributes to keeping healthy are provided through science, PSHE and physical education lessons as well as in assemblies. Many opportunities are available for pupils to participate in a wide-range of sporting activities. Pupils enjoy playtimes in the school grounds and can access a range of play equipment. The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.

4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.11 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.12 Pupils are well cared for in a nurturing environment. The safeguarding arrangements have regard to official guidance. Prior to the inspection, the safeguarding policy did not reflect all of the most recent requirements, but this was remedied swiftly as soon as the school became aware of this. All teaching and non-teaching staff have a thorough knowledge of their responsibilities for safeguarding and attend regular training updates. All staff within the school have been the subject of checks which have been properly recorded, and rigorous procedures exist for undertaking the necessary recruitment checks on all new appointments.
- 4.13 The school has suitable arrangements to minimise the risks from fire and other hazards. The health and safety policy is comprehensive and a representative committee meets half-terminly to review all health and safety matters, providing a valuable forum for discussion and subsequent action. The fire policy clearly defines

emergency procedures; carefully recorded fire drills are regularly carried out and any matters arising are dealt with promptly. Additionally, fire and electrical equipment is tested systematically and any deficiencies quickly remedied. Hazard warnings and clear signage reinforce the measures required to ensure a safe working environment. Risk assessments for activities and off-site visits are suitably detailed; risk assessments for the premises are in place and are regularly reviewed.

- 4.14 The medical centre provides a caring environment for pupils who are sick or injured, and a school counsellor is available for pupils to consult. Medical records are comprehensive and accidents are appropriately reported. Medicines are stored correctly and channels of communication between the medical team and the school staff are good. The needs of pupils with specific conditions are also dealt with thoroughly, and concern for the individual is paramount.
- 4.15 Admission and attendance records are correctly maintained and stored correctly. Efficient, prompt action is taken to follow up any absentees.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The school's proprietors keep a good oversight of the school through regular visits and discussions with senior staff. They help the school meet its aims of providing a welcoming and stimulating environment where each child can succeed and gain confidence. They fulfil their obligations to ensure the school offers a high quality education, spending their money sensibly and recruiting high calibre staff. They make sure that the accommodation is well maintained and that staff and pupils have good resources for learning across the curriculum. Recent investment in new music practice rooms and in the refurbishment of rooms for science and technology has benefited pupils' learning in these subjects.
- 5.3 The proprietors have a wide range of experience and expertise, particularly in the field of education, and are able to give senior staff knowledgeable support and challenge in providing direction to the school. They have a good understanding of the school's priorities for the future and its development needs, and high yet realistic expectations for its performance. Head office functions such as finance, human resources, marketing, and health and safety provide useful support in the daily running of the school.
- 5.4 In almost all respects, the proprietors have effectively carried out their statutory duties, although the most recent changes had not been fully incorporated into the safeguarding policy prior to the inspection. The school now complies with all statutory requirements. They undertake their annual review of safeguarding and child protection arrangements, and their impact, as required.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good.
- 5.6 The new leadership and management structures that have recently been introduced are effective in enabling the school to achieve its aims. The safeguarding and welfare of the pupils is given priority and the school ensures it provides a safe and welcoming environment. Minor shortcomings in reflecting the most recent requirements in the safeguarding policy were rectified swiftly. The checks required to ensure the suitability of staff are carried out thoroughly and the school's central register of appointments is appropriately maintained.
- 5.7 Very strong educational direction is set by the senior leadership team. New initiatives introduced are not yet always implemented consistently across the school. The new leadership posts and management structure have both enhanced the strategic direction of the school and are creating the environment to improve significantly the quality of the pupils' achievement and personal development.
- 5.8 Effective strategies for monitoring the ongoing development across the school are implemented appropriately by the senior leadership team. This allows them to identify both the strengths of the school and areas for further development, which

are then used to prepare the school's improvement plan. Leaders and managers at all levels of the school are involved in the formulation of this plan, which is understood by staff throughout the school. Following review and appraisal, both departmental and personal targets for staff are linked to whole-school planning targets. The school has strong communications systems in place to ensure that all pupils are known as individuals.

- 5.9 The school takes care to select staff of high quality with excellent subject knowledge. A detailed staff handbook has been produced which contains a rigorous staff induction process. This ensures all staff have the relevant training and policies. All staff are well supported in their roles and have access to further ongoing external and internal professional development. They are suitably trained for their roles in meeting the needs of all children, safeguarding, and welfare, health and safety. In addition the recently introduced appraisal system, which includes the senior leadership team, is of high quality and is directly linked to the school improvement plan. The quality of teaching is monitored through lesson observation and work scrutiny undertaken by the leadership team and heads of department. Good classroom practice is shared by staff on an informal basis and this means that it is not promoted as effectively as it could be, as seen in the inconsistency in some aspects of teaching.
- 5.10 School policies and procedures are comprehensive and are regularly updated. They effectively promote equality. Teachers, classroom assistants, support staff and gap year students are deployed effectively and make a significant contribution to pupils' welfare and learning. Focused meetings across year groups and departments allow the staff to take a holistic view of the pupils' academic progress and personal development.
- 5.11 The school promotes strong and constructive links with parents and achieves its aim of providing a welcoming environment. Parents regard it as a friendly school and responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show that most parents are positive about the majority of the school's provision.
- 5.12 The school has invested in many open and varied channels of communication, including the parent portal and a commercial system for communicating with parents at short notice, via email or text message. Working parents in particular appreciate that these are vital to their awareness of and involvement in their children's educational lives.
- 5.13 Parents of current and prospective pupils are given access to the required range of information about the school via the parent portal. In addition, this incorporates weekly newsletters, curriculum overview documents and a very detailed calendar and sporting fixture programme. Parents can access key school documents via the portal and are aware of, and support, the school's position on bullying. They have access to the school's complaints procedure and feel the school handles complaints well and in good time.
- 5.14 Parents have direct contact with teaching staff via email. Teachers respond promptly and positively to parental contact, and are often proactive in bringing matters to parents' attention in good time. Homework diaries are also used for daily communication and parents view their relationship with the teachers as collaborative and mutually supportive.
- 5.15 The school welcomes contact from parents on all matters and provides valuable guidance to parents on the best routes for communication. The school holds a

variety of communication events for parents at the start of and throughout each year, such as 'meet the tutor' coffee mornings and Common Entrance information evenings. Parents are also invited to take part in engagement groups which focus on areas for improvement and they are pleased to see positive results from their consultations.

- 5.16 The school has a suitable process for handling complaints. A very small minority of parents indicated in the pre-inspection questionnaires that the school has not handled their concerns very well, but records of complaints indicate that these are dealt with appropriately. A similar proportion of parents indicated that more able pupils throughout the school do not receive appropriate support. Inspection observations and book scrutinies indicated that more able pupils are well supported.
- 5.17 A small minority of parents are not satisfied with the information they are given about their child's progress. Inspectors judged that parents are kept well informed in this respect. The school provides several written reports to parents on their children's progress every year, and each year group has at least one parents' evening a year, with most enjoying two. Reports provide pertinent information to parents about their child's progress in academic subjects in the current reporting cycle, and in standardised tests. However, the provision of targets within the reports, and guidance for making progress is inconsistent. In discussions, parents indicate that they would like formal, written guidance on their child's attainment in assessments more regularly than the report cycle allows, although they do appreciate that this information is available orally at parents' evenings.
- 5.18 The Downsend Parents' Association is valued for its support of the school and the range of activities it provides. Parents value the wide range of opportunities available to their children and, in particular, the opportunity for their children to be individuals.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.