



Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Little Downsend Epsom

June 2022

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School's Details

School	Little Downsend Epsom			
DfE number	936/6199			
Address	Little Downsend Epsom 6 Norman Avenue Epsom Surrey KT17 3AB			
Telephone number	01372 385438			
Email address	littledownsendepsom@downsend.co.uk			
Headteacher	Mrs Vanessa Conlan			
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Limited			
Age range	2 to 6			
Number of pupils on roll	54			
	EYFS	45	Year 1	9
Inspection dates	7 to 10 June 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Little Downsend Epsom (previously known as Downsend Pre-Preparatory School Epsom) is an independent co-educational day school situated in Epsom. It is administered by Cognita Schools Ltd and is part of the Downsend Schools family, comprising Downsend School, Little Downsend Epsom, Little Downsend Ashstead and Little Downsend Leatherhead. The school comprises the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for children aged 2 to 5 years, and Year 1, for pupils aged 5 to 6 years.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has also become the headteacher of the other two Little Downsend Schools.
- 1.3 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims to inspire a generation to embrace the future, shaping incredible people with the emotional intelligence to build relationships, lead teams and adapt to a changing world. It seeks to inspire a global perspective and find the creativity within all pupils. It aspires to digital mastery with the intention to equip pupils with the ability and the mindset to tackle the technology of the future.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Most pupils come from local families representing a range of professional and business backgrounds. The school's own assessment data indicate that the ability of pupils on entry to the school is average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified five pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include a variety of conditions impacting physical and cognitive abilities, all of whom receive additional specialist help. One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for ten pupils, six of whom receive additional support for their English. The curriculum is modified for pupils the school has identified as the most able in the schools' population.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

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 specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
First Steps (for children aged 2 to 3 years)	Nursery
Rising Reception (for children aged 3 to 4 years)	Nursery

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- Pupils' attainment is excellent. They make rapid progress from their starting points.
 - Pupils exhibit outstanding skills, knowledge and understanding across the range of subjects.
 - Pupils demonstrate highly advanced communication skills for their age.
 - Pupils' attitudes towards learning and achievement are excellent. They are extremely eager to engage in their lessons and activities.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils demonstrate extremely high levels of self-confidence.
 - Pupils exhibit outstanding moral development and behaviour.
 - Pupils display notably strong teamwork skills.
 - Pupils exhibit an advanced understanding of the importance of staying safe and keeping healthy.

Recommendation

- 3.3 The school should make the following improvement.
- Further enhance pupils' already strong capacity to develop and express their learning according to their own imagination.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 The school's own assessment data indicate that the percentage of EYFS children achieving age-related expectations by the time they leave Reception is particularly high. The data also indicate that pupils, including EYFS children, make rapid progress overall from their starting points. Pupils consistently

attain well beyond age related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics by the time that they leave the school. Information presented about the progress of individual pupils with SEND indicates that gaps in learning and understanding are closed successfully. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that teaching enables their child to make progress. Scrutiny of children's and pupils' books confirms that they achieve highly and make rapid progress over time. This is due to precisely targeted support for individual pupils that results from leaders' and staff's highly effective analysis of assessment data, which is monitored closely by the proprietor.

- 3.6 Pupils demonstrate outstanding skills, knowledge and understanding. In a personal, social, emotional development (PSHE) lesson, Reception children exhibited excellent knowledge of names of parts of the human body for their age. Some children were able to explain simply but correctly what the function of various body parts was. In a French lesson, Reception children showed confident knowledge and use of French words for numbers, colours and parts of the body. In art, Year 1 pupils were able to replicate key features of some of Monet's paintings. In English, pupils, including those with SEND, demonstrated advanced knowledge of the characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and were able to match appropriate actions to key characters and events in a sophisticated manner. Science work demonstrates excellent understanding of properties of materials. Topic books display considerable knowledge and reflection about the Jewish festivals of Shabbat and Hanukkah. Teachers match work and levels of challenge to individual pupils' needs and abilities very effectively.
- 3.7 Across the school, children and pupils demonstrate highly advanced communication skills for their age. The youngest children spoke very articulately, describing the movements made by the toys they manipulated very well and identified their names on labels to put on their wrapped sandwiches. Reception children spelt a range of body parts correctly and could explain advanced spelling rules for their age. Year 1 pupils' English books typically contain writing that is highly sophisticated and developed. For example, pupils' stories and non-fiction writing feature highly imaginative vocabulary and very effective use of different writing techniques. Some of the work seen is of the quality more typically displayed by pupils in much older years. Pupils acquire excellent reading skills because staff model the pronunciation of words very clearly and accurately. They make highly effective use of songs and other stimuli to engage the children and help them to learn to read specific words. Marking makes extremely effective use of precise, clear and challenging success criteria which pupils use to improve their work.
- 3.8 Pupils are extremely eager to learn and engage in their lessons and activities. Young nursery children were highly engaged and eager to join in a French lesson, supported by highly effective use of songs, play and puppets to stimulate and excite the children. Reception children were highly motivated by the use of the *Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes* song and a drawing made of the outline of one of the children lying down. They were intrigued by the names and locations of different body parts, including ones new to them, such as intestines. All Year 1 pupils were very keen to join in the retelling of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as a result of engaging, encouraging, and well-paced teaching with very high expectations.
- 3.9 Pupils demonstrate outstanding mathematical knowledge, skill and understanding. Older nursery children demonstrated excellent understanding of one-to-one correspondence during registration, benefiting from teaching staff's highly effective use of such times to consolidate previous learning. They demonstrate very secure counting skills. Reception children's books exhibit mathematical knowledge and understanding well beyond age-related expectation, as shown in work on counting, money and fractions. Year 1 pupils show advanced mathematical knowledge and understanding, such as in work about subtraction and fractions. Pupils use mathematical symbols accurately and solve real-life mathematical problems very well. This is because staff make consistently effective use of precise learning objectives and very clear task instructions.
- 3.10 Pupils demonstrate excellent information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Older nursery children independently code programmable toys and vehicles. They use book creating programmes, recording their voices telling the stories and choosing the content to display on the pages, including

images and writing. The oldest nursery children make successful use of such programmes independently and spontaneously, including to create books about mathematics. By Year 1, pupils independently create books that exhibit much creative and imaginative choices of a range of content, including sound, music, image and text. Leaders and staff promote digital literacy and digital citizenship effectively from the time children enter the school. The school has been accepted into a national digital innovation programme, achieving 'Incubator Status'. The school fully meets its aim to equip pupils with the mindset to tackle the technology of the future.

- 3.11 Children demonstrate strong study skills. The youngest children confidently predicted the order in which they would construct their sandwiches, and could answer questions about what they needed to do next. Reception children use their digital devices to independently access QR codes for finding out more information about things they are learning about, such as additional activities about fractions and letters and sounds. Year 1 pupils' topic books demonstrate a strong ability to investigate, compare and record information, such as in the pupils' investigations of common wild plants. However, in some lessons seen, pupils did not demonstrate their strong capacity to develop or express their learning according to their own imagination. This was when activities were very teacher-led or controlled and did not include as much scope for pupils' own creativity as typically seen during the inspection. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school equips their child with the team working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life.
- 3.12 Pupils' academic and other achievements are excellent for their age. Nursery children's 'wow' moments completed by parents indicate a wide range of significant achievements that individual children have accomplished out of school. Older nursery children performed dance movements and their *Giraffes Can't Dance* disco sequence with notable precision, control and balance for their age. Year 1 pupils exhibited a high quality of dramatic expression, as shown when they flew imaginary rockets and collected imaginary flowers and plants for conservation. There have been individual successes in regional and national ISA art competitions. Several pupils have had their poems published in a national young writers competition anthology. The inspectors saw recorded examples of pupils achieving challenging personal bests in running and swimming, some of which resulted in the awarding of relevant certificates by external bodies. These achievements stem from the school's highly effective use of specialist teachers to advance children's and pupils' skills.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils demonstrate extremely high levels of self-confidence. Year 1 pupils, including those with SEND, were extremely confident to join in sustained drama activities and express themselves to others. Pupils explained to the inspectors that they feel confident in activities and said that teachers make them 'feel happy to have a go'. This is because staff relate extremely well to pupils and treat them in a warm and wholly encouraging manner. Staff observe the needs of pupils with SEND very carefully and offer effective support and reassurance exactly when they are required. Pupils' books contain mainly accurate and increasingly self-critical self-assessment against success criteria. Staff encourage pupils to self-assess their own learning. They make effective use of clear marking and visual symbols that represent success criteria to do so. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their child to be confident and independent.
- 3.15 Children and pupils across the school show excellent awareness of the importance of fairness, kindness and other behaviours and are able to talk about these articulately. This is strongly promoted by the ethos of the school including through a 'Kindness Tree' display which encourages thoughtful reflection on the importance of kindness and how it is demonstrated in school. Year 1 pupils talked to inspectors about jealousy and said that this was not a desirable way to feel. Children's behaviour towards one another is very good for their age. They show respect and courtesy, spontaneously saying please and thank you from the earliest ages and listening attentively to each other and to staff during

all activities witnessed. Pupils are empathetic towards others, showing understanding of each other's personal circumstances.

- 3.16 Pupils display notably strong teamwork skills. The youngest children demonstrated excellent sharing of resources and playing together during self-chosen activities. Reception children worked together very well to create a rocket to their mutual satisfaction. During a superhero workshop, Year 1 pupils worked entirely collaboratively in pairs or threes to create little sequences of superhero actions. Expectations of positive and collaborative teamwork are promoted and reinforced from the time children start at the school. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their child to develop strong teamwork and social skills. Inspection evidence confirms this view. The school fully meets its aim to equip pupils with the emotional intelligence to build relationships and lead teams.
- 3.17 Pupils exhibit an advanced understanding of the importance of staying safe and keeping healthy. Pupils attending an after-school sports club articulated why it was important to stay in their own lane while practising sprint races. The youngest children could explain very well why they needed sun cream, saying 'the sun can burn us'. They are aware that green lanyards indicate that visitors were safe. Children engaged in a cooking activity using knives very carefully and explained that they had to keep their knives pointed down and not swing them. Older nursery children spontaneously made use of the bannisters while walking up and down the stairs. In dance, they understood the notion of having a 'bubble' around themselves that they should not 'pop' by moving too close to someone else for safety. Year 1 pupils' PSHE books convey a strong understanding of ideas such as balancing the use of devices and watching television with more active pursuits, such as watering plants. Pupils are able to express what makes them feel safe and compare what makes them feel happy and sad. They are capable of identifying important ways of saying safe when online, including alerting a trusted adult should something appear that does not look right.
- 3.18 Pupils display strong decision-making skills for their age. Younger Nursery children make sensible choices of purposeful activities and snack. Reception children confidently chose partners and gave each other instructions about how to create construction brick models. Year 1 pupils made careful selections of different colours and shades of colour in their artwork. Pupils make thoughtful decisions on behalf of others. For example, the pupils' eco-committee has successfully petitioned the school to stop using plastic straws and plastic googly eyes. Pupils also show spiritual understanding and aesthetic appreciation. For example, Year 1 pupils were highly immersed in exploring and enjoying Monet's paintings. The most able pupils were able to talk about the effect of shadows on a bridge. They were observant of details, such as wisps of grass that could be seen through the bridge. In an English lesson, Year 1 pupils exhibited deep delight in and enjoyment of the story and key events of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Such delight was expressed and modelled by staff.
- 3.19 Pupils show an outstanding sense of social responsibility for their age. Children and pupils are highly motivated to help each other and those in the wider world. Nursery children of all ages spontaneously helped each other tidy up before morning break. Year 1 pupils demonstrated a clear awareness of the importance of recycling and re-using materials during a drama workshop. Children's and pupils' contributions to others include performing at the local Garden of Remembrance ceremony, collecting for a local foodbank, and raising money for a national tree-planting charity and to support the people of Ukraine. Within the school, pupils have put up bird feeders, maintained the bug house, and requested a hedgehog house, which has been built for them. The oldest pupils support younger children by leading story-telling sessions and reading stories to the rest of the school. Older children enjoy carrying out responsibilities such as being 'leader for the day' and giving out books to others.
- 3.20 Children and pupils of all ages act inclusively towards one another. They demonstrate a strong awareness and appreciation of diversity for their age. While talking to the inspectors, Year 1 pupils spontaneously referred to 'black history' in an appreciative manner and explained that it was not fair to treat people less respectfully because of the colour of their skin. During a talk about Islam, pupils reflected very thoughtfully about the different ways people believe in God. All parents who responded

to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. The school fully meets its aim to inspire a global perspective.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the director of education of the proprietary body. The inspectors observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and an assembly. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents and staff to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Steven Popper	Reporting inspector
Mrs Julie Lerbech	Compliance team inspector (Director of finance and operations, GSA and HMC school)
Miss Kaye Lovejoy	Team inspector (Former head, ISA school)