

Great Denham Primary School

Greenkeepers Road, Great Denham, Bedford, MK40 4GG

Inspection dates 17–18 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils, having joined from many different schools, achieve well at Great Denham. This is because teaching is consistently good.
- Standards were above average at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2013.
- Pupils make good progress in writing because they have many exciting opportunities to write for a purpose linked to their topics.
- Teachers inspire in pupils a love and thirst for learning through their enthusiasm and high expectations for pupils' progress.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and their behaviour is outstanding. They say they feel very safe in school.
- All pupils know and promote the school's values and have a strong sense of belonging to their family groups.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well.
- The senior leadership team, including governors, has, in a relatively short time, succeeded in weaving a rich tapestry of high quality experiences to enable pupils to enjoy learning and to achieve well.
- Leaders, managers and governors have set up rigorous systems that have helped them to improve teaching and to raise achievement during the year that the school has been running.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' marking does not fully support pupils' progress. It does not consistently show pupils how to improve their work and teachers do not always follow up their advice with pupils to ensure that pupils act upon it.
- Children in the Reception classes sometimes do not make as fast progress as they might do because activities are not always sufficiently purposeful or linked to a unifying class theme.
- The school has several teachers who are new to teaching. They have not yet had the opportunity to benefit from observing the outstanding practice which exists in school and further afield.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 26 lessons or parts of lessons, some of which were seen jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors heard pupils read and, together with the headteacher, looked closely at examples of pupils' work.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of school documents, including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, evidence of the school's partnership work and information for families.
- The inspectors met with pupils chosen at random by the inspection team. Discussions were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers, subject leaders, the family support worker, the Chair of the Governing Body and seven other governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team took account of the 83 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also spoke with some parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors considered 34 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Buckingham	Additional Inspector
Piers Ranger	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It is a new primary school and opened in September 2012.
- The school roll is growing rapidly. The population almost doubled in the school's first year from the original 140 pupils who joined at the beginning, with pupils coming from 20 different schools in all year groups up to and including Year 4.
- The majority of pupils are taught in mixed-age classes in four family groups, each class containing up to two different year groups. There is a separate Early Years Foundation Stage consisting of two Reception classes and a pre-school.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds but an increasing number come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for certain groups such as pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school will not have any Year 6 pupils until September 2014. It cannot, therefore, be reported whether the government's current floor standards are met.
- The senior leadership team, consisting of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers, were all in post when the school opened. The school also has several staff who are new to teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more of the teaching outstanding and help pupils to make faster progress by making sure that:
 - less experienced teachers have more opportunities to learn from outstanding practice
 - activities in Reception are always purposeful and linked more to the class theme
 - marking consistently shows pupils how to improve their work and teachers regularly follow up any points for improvement with pupils so that pupils learn from them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The school faced an unusual situation during its first year, because it was taking in pupils in all year groups with varying experiences of education and different starting points from a very wide range of schools and settings. In the short time pupils have been at the school they have made good progress because the quality of teaching has been good.
- The skills and abilities of children who joined the Reception classes were below those typically expected for children of this age in 2012. Nonetheless, these children made good progress and the proportion reaching a good level of development compares favourably with the national figure.
- As a result of the good provision in the pre-school class, children moving to Reception this year are more advanced in their early literacy and numeracy skills. Current progress in Reception is not always as rapid as it could be because some of the activities do not have a clear purpose to extend childrens' learning.
- New pupils, especially those who speak English as an additional language, are made welcome and settle quickly in all year groups. The school is adept at assessing their needs and in identifying any gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Well-planned programmes of support help these pupils to acquire English and to catch up quickly with their peers.
- Pupils joined the school having had varying experiences of learning phonics (the sounds that letters make). The school's systematic approach meant that they made rapid progress from starting points which were often below those expected. While there was not enough time for this approach to have a great impact on the results of the screening check in 2013, when the proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the required standard was below average, the present Year 1 pupils are on course to meet and to exceed the standard.
- The impact of good teaching in Key Stage 1 was seen in above-average standards in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Pupils' mixed experiences of reading prior to joining the school meant that, even with good support, standards were average in this subject. The current Year 2 pupils are working at above-average standards in reading.
- The school did not receive any pupil-premium funding until the end of the year. This was for only half the number of pupils who were actually in the school by then, as more pupils joined later. Consequently, hardly any pupils benefited from this funding last year. Few of the eligible pupils had been in the school one year when they took Year 2 assessments so the large gaps in their attainment with other pupils in the school (four terms behind in English and two terms behind in mathematics) did not reflect the quality of support the school offers.
- This term pupils supported by the pupil premium have made accelerated progress because the funding is being spent wisely to give them help that is tailored to their needs. As a result, gaps in their attainment are closing rapidly with other pupils in the school.
- Pupils' writing assessment books show that they make at least good progress over time. Pupils have many opportunities to write at length on themes related to their topic. For example, pupils responded to the notice in 'The Times' from Sir Ernest Shackleton seeking adventurers to join him on his South Atlantic expedition, explaining why they were ideal for the position.

- In a short time the school has established a neat cursive style from the wide range of handwriting script pupils brought with them from previous schools.
- In mathematics the school has a clear calculation policy which is published in the home-school diary for parents to refer to. Pupils benefit from a wide range of mathematical experiences.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their needs are clearly identified and they receive skilful support from a strong team of teaching assistants.
- The school makes sure that more-able pupils are sufficiently challenged so that they reach the higher levels of attainment.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils achieve well and have made rapid progress since joining the school because teaching is consistently good and some is outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy learning and enter wholeheartedly into the well-planned activities.
- Strengths of teaching include the following.
 - Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace so that all pupils are fully engaged in learning.
 - Teachers are enthusiastic and make learning enjoyable and fun for pupils.
 - Learning has a clear direction and teachers know exactly what knowledge and understanding they want pupils to gain from the lesson.
 - Pupils are actively involved; this maintains their interest in what they are doing.
 - Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve and are constantly challenging them to do even better.
- For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 immersed themselves in exploring the eruption of Mount Vesuvius and the destruction of the Roman town of Pompeii as part of their topic on 'Swords and Sandals'. Activities included reproducing the flow of molten lava down a slope, composing a suitably cataclysmic sound poem to accompany the eruption, and reporting the event from the 'class television studio'. Pupils enjoyed recording one another on electronic tablets reading the news. This all fed into high-quality writing about the eruption and what it would be like to be in Pompeii at that time.
- Good questioning in the pre-school class helped children to develop their thinking about the theme of autumn. Purposeful activities linked to this topic engaged children well. In the Reception classes the activities are not always so effectively tied together around a central theme and consequently children do not always make such rapid progress in their learning.
- Teachers develop pupils' mathematical skills well through providing them with a wide range of enjoyable, practical activities in lessons and on-line programmes to support their learning.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well. They are fully included in class activities and given all the support they need. Teaching assistants are skilled at helping them when required, and in 'stepping back' to let them find out things for themselves.
- Pupils take a real pride in their work, as reflected in their topic books which are attractively presented. Marking, however, does not consistently show pupils how to improve their work and teachers do not always follow up points for development to make sure that pupils learn from

their advice and act upon it.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are eager to participate in lessons and are engrossed in their work. As one pupil stated, 'We have all different kinds of work.' Their behaviour is exemplary, a view supported by parents who spoke to inspectors or who responded to Parent View.
- As part of its commitment to inclusion the school has taken some pupils who have been excluded from other schools and has seen them thrive in the caring atmosphere which is underpinned by a consistent approach to managing behaviour. A focus on the school's values, including 'determination', 'excellence' and 'friendship,' helps pupils to take control of their own conduct.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. They say that bullying is not an issue – 'we don't do that here'. They know about different types of bullying, such as name-calling and cyber bullying, and how to combat them. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Pupils say they feel completely safe at school. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe, for example when using the internet. During the inspection Year 5 pupils spent a day learning about how to keep safe in different situations down 'Hazard Alley'. All pupils have nominated five adults they would be happy to turn to in case of difficulty. The school's 'safety squad', made up of representatives from each class, stays alert to keep all pupils safe.
- The school council organises fund-raising for charity and has purchased play equipment. Pupils have also supported their local community through collecting food for a homeless shelter.
- The recent appointment of a family support worker has helped the school to tackle successfully rates of attendance, which lagged behind the national average last year. Attendance is now rising rapidly as the school works very closely with the few families whose children miss a lot of school.

The leadership and management are good

- Members of the senior leadership team came together before the school opened and have set out a very clear vision based on helping each and every individual pupil to achieve their very best. They have established a set of values that the school community wholeheartedly supports and this shapes the direction of the school.
- Leaders have been successful in bringing together pupils from a wide range of backgrounds whose experiences of education have at times been disjointed and fashioned them into family groups that shine with enthusiasm and a love of knowledge. Leaders' 'no excuse' culture means that all pupils are included and given equal opportunity to thrive.
- Leaders' relentless drive for improvement means that they are very reflective about the school's work and ambitious for its continued success. Rigorous checks help them to form an accurate picture of how well the school is performing and to prepare strategic plans for improvement that are clear, practical and easily measured.
- The school has not had time yet to build up a track record of sustained high achievement, as pupils do not take Key Stage 2 national tests before July 2015. It is also only beginning to

develop a tier of other managers as several of the teachers outside the senior leadership team are relatively new to teaching.

- Leaders use the management of teachers' performance very effectively to improve teachers' practice by setting them challenging targets and holding them accountable for the progress of their pupils. The several less experienced teachers have gained from high quality training and individual support, but have not had enough opportunity to observe outstanding practice both in the school and in excellent schools further afield.
- The highly engaging and stimulating curriculum feeds pupil's hunger for learning. Whole-school themes and mixed-age classes enable pupils to work collaboratively. The curriculum is enhanced extensively by 'stunning starts', 'marvellous middles' and 'fabulous finishes' that include visits, visitors and special events such as an Indian bazaar.
- Parents are delighted with the school and satisfaction ratings on Parent View are extremely high. Many parents have chosen to send their children to the school from other schools and say they are very pleased with the quality of education their children are receiving at Great Denham.
- The school makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through its programme of social and health education and through a wide range of sporting, artistic and musical activities. The primary school sport funding is being spent on additional swimming and coaching and on pupils' participation in sports festivals. The school has suitable plans to measure its impact.
- The local authority provides helpful, light-touch support to the school as and when this is required.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors take a keen interest in the school and are well informed about the quality of teaching and what data show about pupils' performance. They visit regularly to check on the school's work, and use their extensive experience and expertise from outside education well in order to support the school in specific areas, such as health and safety. Governors know how leaders use the management of teachers' performance to improve their practice, what the school does to reward good teachers and how it tackles underperformance. They make sure that the school's budget runs smoothly and is spent well. They understand how the pupil premium funding is being spent and the impact it is having on closing gaps in pupils' attainment. They ensure that all safeguarding measures meet requirements to keep pupils safe.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135996
Local authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	425153

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	258
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Weir
Headteacher	Denise Burgess
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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