

Danesfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110277
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	378074
Inspection dates	11–12 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Susan Williams

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	395
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	S O'Callaghan
Headteacher	R Howell
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2007
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 24 lessons taught by 14 teachers. They held meetings with three members of the governing body including the Chair, the leadership team, staff and pupils. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers in the playground. They observed the school's work and looked at school documentation including records of pupils' progress, school policies and teachers' planning. They also considered the responses from 203 parents and carers to questionnaires as well as those from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which attainment fell in 2011 in reading and mathematics and whether this represented a dip rather than a trend.
- The effectiveness of school leaders in ensuring that all groups of pupils, particularly boys and pupils with special educational needs, make equally good progress.
- The impact that mobility has on pupils' attainment, progress and attendance.

Information about the school

Danesfield is a larger than average primary school. A very large majority of pupils are of White British origin. Most of the remainder are from other White backgrounds. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals and the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much lower than average. There are very few pupils whose first language is not or not believed to be English. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school during the school year is above average. Much of this movement is caused by the children of Royal Air Force (RAF) personnel. The school has gained Healthy Schools status and been awarded an Activemark. A new headteacher joined the school in September of this year following a period of time without a substantive headteacher.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Pupils achieve outstandingly well because of the excellent care, guidance and support provided for them as well as good teaching and an interesting curriculum. The school has excellent engagement with parents and carers; they are very confident in the school and are supportive of its work. As one parent commented, 'Danesfield is a wonderful school raising happy, bright and confident children.' This was typical of the views of others. Attainment is high across all subjects, and while there was a small dip in reading and mathematics last year, it has remained consistently high over a number of years.

The quality of pupils' learning and their progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is good, and this, along with their high attainment, leads to outstanding achievement. The excellent support given for pupils who join or leave the school during the year ensures they settle quickly into the school and make good progress. The school has good links with various partners to support pupils and strong links with the RAF to support children whose parents and carers are sometimes required to move frequently, often at short notice.

Excellent provision in Reception gives children a very strong start to their education and enables them to achieve high outcomes at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage. Provision in the rest of the school is good. Teaching is generally good, ensuring that they are challenged and engaged in their learning. For example, in one lesson, a higher-ability set was developing real-life writing skills in the style of Roald Dahl which enthused pupils to produce high quality written work. Sometimes, teachers do not match work well enough to the needs of learners and provide pupils with less time for independent or group work. Consequently, the pace of learning slows. While pupils have excellent speaking and listening and reading skills, their skills in writing, despite being strong, are not quite as good. Sometimes, opportunities are missed to develop writing through other subjects. Generally, however, the curriculum supports the development of pupils' basic skills well and is considerably enriched with trips and a wide range of clubs after school. This enhances pupils' enjoyment of their education and skills in a range of areas. As one pupil commented, 'There is a club for all of us, from study clubs to sports and music, so everyone is catered for.'

Danesfield is a harmonious community where pupils get on very well together. Pupils are courteous around the school site and considerate of each other in the playground. Behaviour in lessons is consistently good. As one child said, 'Everyone is

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friendly and school is interesting.’ Pupils said they feel extremely safe and well looked after. They are also very keen to develop healthy lifestyles and play a leading role in sporting developments in this area. This is reflected in the Healthy Schools status and Activemark award. Pupils really enjoy school and this is reflected in their high attendance.

Thorough self-evaluation helps the senior leadership team, governors and most middle leaders understand the school well and be clear about the strengths and areas for development. Data is used increasingly well to track the progress of individuals and to provide support for those in danger of falling behind. However, the use of this data by leaders at all levels to analyse the progress of different groups of pupils and to ensure consistently good progress in each year group is not yet fully established. Good at its last inspection, the school has consolidated and built on its many strengths. High levels of attainment have been sustained over a number of years, indicating that the school has good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that 50% is judged as outstanding by December 2012 by ensuring that:
 - work is consistently matched to the needs of all groups of pupils
 - more opportunities are provided for pupils to write for a range of purposes and audiences across the school.
- Develop the skills of leaders at all levels in driving improvement through better use of data in order to identify strengths and weaknesses and to ensure consistently good progress for all groups of pupils throughout the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

In classrooms, pupils respond well to their teachers and work collaboratively together to good effect. Children start in Reception with skills and understanding which are broadly in line with, and sometimes better than, those expected for their age, notably in aspects of their personal development and communication and language skills.

Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They said they had felt even safer since the school had enhanced its security arrangements with key fob entry systems on external doors. All pupils knew who to go to if there was a problem and felt that it would be dealt with effectively. Pupils’ behaviour around the school is often exemplary and in lessons it is good. Most sustain interest and concentration; occasionally, their attention lapses when an activity lasts too long or teachers spend too long on explanations. Pupils are considerate to one another and respond particularly well to staff, appreciating they are extremely well cared for. Pupils are responding very well to the school’s encouragement that they grow up to be healthy

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young people and the school council supports the school in this endeavour, promoting healthy food options and the take-up of sport across the school very successfully. While pupils have high standards in literacy and numeracy, they are sometimes less strong at applying these basic skills in real-world contexts, for example in writing. Despite boys performing less well than girls, their attainment is above average and achievement is outstanding. All groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, progress well. The school council, house captains and Year 6 prefects are excellent examples of how pupils contribute to their school community. Less well developed is their contribution in the local and wider communities.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan activities well to engage and enthuse pupils; they have good subject knowledge and explain ideas well supporting good learning in lessons. One teacher, for example, skilfully adapted her planning to address the misconceptions of some of her group who had struggled turning improper fractions into mixed numbers the previous day. She used her teaching assistant to challenge pupils who had understood the work and found an innovative way of explaining the work with the use of Kit Kats exploding in the factory and being pieced back together which engaged the pupils and supported their understanding. Occasionally, teaching is less effective when teachers spend too long on introductions or when follow-up work is not sufficiently tailored to the needs of pupils of different abilities. As a result, pupils’

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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progress slows.

The curriculum provides a solid basis for pupils to be able to make good progress across the school. There are a wide range of enrichment opportunities such as sports and arts clubs which are supported well by local clubs, for instance the local rugby club, who assist the school in delivering some of the activities. A large number of pupils take instrumental lessons and whole-class music-making takes place; for example, while inspectors were in school, one class enjoyed a ukulele lesson. These aspects enrich the curriculum and give the pupils access to a wide variety of opportunities to develop new skills and to perform with others.

The very well-targeted support to all groups of pupils has enabled them to make the best of opportunities offered by the school. In particular, there is excellent support for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, for instance children of RAF personnel whose parents or carers may be away in action for long periods of time. There is very good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities which helps pupils with a variety of needs to make the most of their opportunities at school. Pupils are well supported and known as individuals. The school has very effective and sensitive mechanisms for supporting attendance and punctuality in their particular context leading to high levels of attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are clear about the strengths and areas for development within the school and are ambitious to make it even better. They are generally well supported by a group of middle leaders who are ambitious for improvement in their areas and keen to drive forward new initiatives. A strong example is the mathematics faculty which went through a review last year and adapted its planning which led to significantly above expected progress for pupils and a high number achieving the highest possible level. There is still some variability, however, in the extent to which middle leaders are driving improvement and using data to identify strengths and weaknesses. Senior leaders monitor teaching effectively, although not all middle leaders have yet been fully involved in this area of the school's work.

The governing body is clear about its strategic role. It supports and challenges the school's leadership team well. It has recently revised its roles and responsibilities,

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effectively deploying governors with particular areas of expertise outside school, for example, in finance. It is actively developing succession planning and has plans in place to ensure all key roles are filled when governors who are service personnel are posted abroad. Safeguarding procedures are robust. Staff and governors are well aware of their responsibilities and have ensured the school has adopted good safe practice in all areas.

The school is effective in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination, as can be seen in the harmonious school community. No groups of pupils are significantly underperforming, although the school’s analysis, monitoring and evaluation of different groups are not yet sophisticated. The school has a good understanding of its situation based on its analysis of its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context. While the school has a link sponsoring a child in Nepal and success in developing community cohesion at school level, its national and global strategies are less well developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

A few weeks into the new term, children were responding well to the high expectations of all staff throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. They quickly settle in the warm and welcoming environment and become confident and eager learners. They were fully engaged in a range of activities, maintaining concentration well, playing and learning happily together. Teachers and support staff have an excellent understanding of how young children learn and plan a range of challenging activities to meet their needs in all areas of learning. There is a very effective balance of activities led by the adults, for example in developing early numeracy and literacy skills, and opportunities for children to explore their environment for

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themselves. Learning is planned thoughtfully around themes, for instance children are finding the current topic of 'space' very exciting, particularly the boys. They enjoyed building their 'rocket' together and 'blasting off' in the role-play corner. At the same time, teachers were using the theme with other groups of children to develop their understanding of simple shapes and phonic knowledge (sounds and letters). As a result, children's attainment is significantly above average by the time they move into Year 1.

Staff are highly motivated and committed to further improvement with a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. They have very good relationships with parents and carers who quickly develop great confidence in the school as a result. Staff use a range of observations to develop comprehensive learning journals for each child, which helps them increasingly to meet individual needs. However, the data gathered are not yet being used in a strategic way to demonstrate the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. This is in part because lines of accountability are not clearly delineated in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although it runs extremely smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Over half the parents and carers returned the Ofsted questionnaire, which is higher than average. An overwhelming majority were positive about all aspects of school life. Parents and carers confirm that they value the school because of the way it cares for and supports their children. One parent, whose comment summarises the thoughts of most, said, 'The school has a nice friendly feel about it and the teachers work hard to make it a positive learning environment,' Parents and carers commented on the recent improvements to the site which made their children feel safe. A very small minority of parents or carers raised concerns about how their children with particular special educational needs and/or disabilities were supported in school. During the inspection, inspectors found that support for children, particularly the more vulnerable, is good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Danesfield School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 203 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 395 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	151	74	48	24	3	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	130	64	71	35	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	100	49	99	49	3	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	109	54	83	41	4	2	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	134	66	66	33	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	99	49	91	45	10	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	94	46	108	53	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	98	48	91	45	3	2	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	94	46	95	47	9	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	96	47	91	45	7	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	78	38	108	53	5	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	110	54	83	41	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	131	65	70	34	2	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Danesfield School, Marlow SL7 2EW

Thank you for warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and finding out about your school. A special thanks go to members of the school council who told us about life at Danesfield School. We were impressed by how polite you were and how sensibly you played together in the playground. You told us how much you enjoy school. We were able to see this in many of your lessons. We found that you go to a good school.

Here are some of the highlights from our report.

- You make good progress and reach high levels of attainment by the end of Year 6 that are better than most schools.
- Staff take excellent care of you so that you feel safe.
- Pupils who join the school in the middle of the year are made to feel welcome and are well supported by other pupils and their teachers.
- Your behaviour is good.
- You are ambassadors in supporting healthy lifestyles.
- Your attendance is high.

Even though you are doing well, your teachers want to make things even better for you. We have asked the school to:

- improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is outstanding; we have asked your teachers to make sure that you are always challenged and to provide more opportunities for you to write for different purposes and audiences
- ensure that leaders in charge of different areas of the school use information about how well you are doing to drive improvement to ensure you all continue to make good progress.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Susan Williams
Lead inspector

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