

Grendon Underwood Combined School

Main Street, Grendon Underwood, Aylesbury, HP18 0SP

Inspection dates 12–13 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Children make rapid progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and learn about the sounds letters make especially quickly.
- Attainment is above average by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics and pupils of differing ability achieve well from their starting points.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and make learning exciting by providing pupils with interesting and purposeful work.
- Pupils consistently behave well, help each other and are keen to take responsibility.
- Systems for keeping pupils safe and secure are outstanding. Consequently, pupils are confident and feel very well cared for.
- Leadership and management, including governance, are improving teaching and pupils' achievement rapidly.
- Leaders, under the direction of the inspirational headteacher, are relentless in their pursuit of excellence.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally pupils are not expected to move on to harder work when they have already mastered knowledge and skills.
- Pupils do not consistently check their spelling or follow up the good advice teachers give them in literacy and numeracy as soon as possible.
- Teachers do not always show pupils how to improve their work in science. As a result, they do not always do their best writing in this subject, or give reasons for their predictions and their findings from investigations.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching in 21 lessons, several jointly with the headteacher or acting assistant headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, teachers, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection took into account the 45 responses to the online Parent View survey. Informal discussions were held with a random sample of parents.
- The inspectors considered the views expressed in survey responses from 24 members of staff.
- A range of information supplied by the school was scrutinised, including the school's own information about how well pupils are doing, planning documents, checks on the quality of teaching, the school development plan, records relating to behaviour and attendance and safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Alison Cartlidge, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Colin Lower

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Grendon Underwood Combined School is a broadly average-sized primary school. The school expands in Years 5 and 6, because pupils join the school from two first schools.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are 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 well below average, and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The headteacher joined the school in January 2013. There have been many changes of teachers, including senior leaders, since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that pupils are moved on to harder work as soon as they are ready
 - making sure that pupils always correct their spelling and follow up comments teachers make on how to improve their literacy and numeracy work.
- Improve achievement in science by:
 - challenging pupils to use their scientific knowledge to help explain their predictions and findings from investigations
 - help pupils to know what they need to do next to improve their learning in this subject.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage varies from year to year. This year, the majority of children were working within the levels typical for their age when they started in the combined Nursery and Reception class. Children make at least good and rapid progress from their starting points, especially in learning about the sounds letters make (phonics). Occasionally, members of staff miss opportunities to extend children's speaking when they are working on activities they have chosen for themselves.
- Following disappointing results in the Year 1 phonics awareness check in 2013, the school has increased the rigour in the way it teaches pupils about the sounds letters make. Consequently younger pupils are keen to use their phonics to help them sound out unfamiliar words. As one pupil said, 'You sound it out if you are stuck on a word.'
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 has been rising over the last two years and is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make good progress over time, although there is a slight unevenness between classes and subjects.
- Attainment and progress in writing is not as strong as it is in reading and mathematics because pupils do not always produce their best work, especially in science, or check their work for avoidable spelling mistakes.
- The school promotes equal opportunities successfully. The very small number of pupils in each year group who are entitled to additional funding are making rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The few gaps that remain between their attainment and that of the other pupils are closing rapidly. Their individual needs are assessed and support provided to remove any barriers to their learning.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they receive valuable extra help in class and in special lessons.
- The most able pupils do well in most lessons, although occasionally, like other pupils, they are not encouraged to move on to harder work soon enough.
- The new provision to develop pupils' physical education is having a positive impact on their physical well-being. Pupils are developing new skills and a greater interest in the subject, enabling them to reach the levels of which they are capable. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 1 developed throwing and catching skills well in preparation for learning how to play cricket.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Members of staff are enthusiastic and form strong relationships with the pupils. As a result, pupils learn quickly and are confident and happy at school. One pupil spoke for others by saying that 'teachers always encourage us'.
- Teachers across the school provide interesting activities that make pupils keen to work hard and learn. For example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children were very excited about working in the 'mud kitchen' and the role-play airport. As a result, they learned about the properties of soil and how to arrange a holiday abroad. In Year 5, pupils were enthusiastic about writing their suspense-filled mock football commentaries, in anticipation of England's first match in the World Cup.
- Teachers share their good subject knowledge with the pupils, and in some lessons such as physical education and music, very knowledgeable subject specialists are used well to demonstrate skills and to extend pupils' learning.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and provide individuals and small groups, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, with valuable support. For example, they show pupils what they need to do and ask questions to help build their confidence.
- Teachers are good at providing challenge in most lessons. They often ask probing questions and

encourage pupils to form their own questions. For example, in Year 3, pupils were challenged well when asked to describe a journey through a rainforest.

- Teachers often check up on how well pupils are doing during lessons, although occasionally they miss opportunities to move pupils on to harder work when it is clear that they have mastered the task they have been given. This is particularly noticeable in science, where pupils are frequently not challenged to explain their reasoning behind their predictions and findings in their investigations.
- Teachers all mark pupils' work frequently and include worthwhile comments to support learning, although they do not always make sure that pupils respond to advice given as soon as possible. Marking is less well developed in science than it is in literacy and numeracy, and consequently written work is weaker in this subject.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their good attitudes towards school are having a positive impact on their learning. As one pupil said, 'You get to learn something new every day.'
- Pupils are keen to take responsibility for tasks around the school such as running the stationery shop, and work together sensibly in lessons.
- Pupils are proud of their school and are very polite and friendly. Good manners are taught successfully, including when pupils are eating in the 'Four Trees Restaurant'. Pupils' attendance is well above average and they come to school smartly dressed and ready to learn.
- Pupils appreciate the new systems in place to help them develop positive learning behaviours, and these are helping to rectify the occasional drops in attentiveness in class and carelessness in spelling and writing. For example, the school has a 'Licence to Quill' awarded to pupils who consistently take care with their written work.
- Senior leaders are aware that pupils do not always respond to advice given through teachers' marking. As a result, lessons frequently start with a time when pupils can reflect on comments made, 'Grow Your Greens'. However, pupils do not consistently make best use of this opportunity.
- Most parents and pupils are pleased with behaviour at the school and agree that it is typically good. There are times during the day when behaviour is exemplary, such as during whole-school assembly, when pupils are very attentive and respectful.
- The school does not tolerate discrimination of any kind and there is a strong sense of belonging to the school community. For example, all pupils and members of staff decorated wooden bricks to represent themselves. These are stacked together in the entrance hall to show how all members of the school work together and are equally important.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils feel very safe at school and know how to stay safe. Pupils receive training on how to keep safe when using the internet and feel that their emotional needs are very well supported. Bullying or unkind behaviour of any kind is rare, and pupils are very happy with the way the school tackles their concerns. Parents are very pleased with the level of care and support the school provides their children.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and acting assistant headteacher are relentless in driving the school forward and consequently there have been tangible improvements in teaching and pupils' progress since the last inspection.
- Leaders have accomplished much in a short space of time and are fully aware of what needs to be done to make the school outstanding in the future. They expect the best from teachers and pupils, and members of staff are fully behind their decisions and keen to rise to the challenge.
- Expectations for teaching are uncompromising. Rigorous systems for checking up on teaching and well-focused training have improved teaching rapidly. Consequently, teaching is typically

good, with some outstanding teaching from the senior leadership team. Teachers feel well supported and are accustomed to reflecting on their own performance. As a result, they have a clear understanding of how to improve next time.

- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Members of staff are very caring and are well trained in looking after the pupils. They are checked for their suitability for working with pupils when they join the school.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a great strength. The school promotes core values of respect, helpfulness and responsibility in all activities. Pupils are shown respect by members of staff and in turn learn to respect others. They reflect sensibly on the importance of determination and listen well to the views of others.
- Leaders make sure that plans are in place to help pupils to learn quickly in different subjects. Pupils are supported especially well in making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. A wide variety of additional activities are well attended and appreciated by the pupils.
- The special funding to improve sport is being used well to bring in specialist coaches and to provide a wide variety of sports clubs. These activities are very well attended and much appreciated by the pupils.
- The relatively new middle leaders are taking positive steps to strengthen the way subjects are being taught, and literacy and numeracy are being checked rigorously. Senior leaders are aware that written work in science is not being monitored with enough rigour to ensure it is consistently of a high enough standard.
- The few pupils who are entitled to additional funding, receive good support. They attend additional activities depending on their specific needs and receive extra help in class if necessary. For example, they can attend the 'Brains at Breakfast' club to support their learning and social needs. Leaders are right to be proud of the effective way they are 'busting' the few remaining differences in attainment between groups of pupils.
- The local authority has provided good support for this rapidly improving school. Successful training has been provided for the literacy and numeracy leaders and governors have been helped to develop their roles and responsibilities.
- Parents are pleased with the way the school has improved and make positive comments such as, 'the new headteacher has been inspirational' and 'staff give it their all'.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is strong and effective. Governors are supportive and challenging. They ensure that statutory requirements are being met and that leaders are held to account for how well pupils are achieving. They are knowledgeable about the systems in place to improve teaching and to reward best practice. They understand clearly how good teaching is and how achievement at the school compares with that at others. Governors play an active part in planning for future school improvements. Responsibilities are given to individual governors depending on current priorities and this has helped them to become more rigorous in checking up on how well the school is doing. Governors have a good understanding of the school's financial management, including additional funding.

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	110278
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	442445

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	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sangita Skilling
Headteacher	Pippa Brand-Benee
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 October 2012
Telephone number	01296 770388
Fax number	01296 770388
Email address	office@gucs.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

