

Inspection of a good school: Germander Park School

1 Germander Place, Conniburrow, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK14 7DU

Inspection dates:

2 March 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Germander Park is a friendly and welcoming place. All adults cherish the children in their care. There are many languages spoken and staff make sure that everyone is valued.

Previously, a tide of low expectations has beset this school. Too many pupils leave unable to read well enough, and without the depth of mathematical knowledge they need. New leaders are on a mission to transform this. They have set the wheels in motion, pressing forward at great speed. Expectations have been lifted and pupils are starting to get a better deal.

The pupils are delightful. They know how to be a good friend to each other. Most behave well and are keen to do their best. They are very accepting of everyone. One child said, 'Being different is OK, nobody is perfect but each one of us is a special person.' Bullying does not really happen. If friends fall out, staff quickly fix it. Pupils feel safe. They know they can turn to any adult for help.

Leaders give pupils social and cultural experiences so nobody is disadvantaged. Pupils learn to play sports, visit museums and become immersed in theatre.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The federation has reinvigorated the school's direction of travel. Before this, standards had dipped significantly, and pupils were not learning an ambitious enough curriculum. Since her arrival, the executive headteacher has wasted no time. She has ensured that the school improvement plan's actions are sharp and focused. Governors are right behind her. They are well informed and utilise their skills effectively. Committees ask intelligent questions to probe the impact of leaders' decisions. They do not take leaders' word at face value. They test things out for themselves. Staff are buoyant and ready for change, and morale is high.

In learning to read, many pupils need to catch up. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this. Leaders know the urgency to fix this. Therefore, they have implemented a new phonics programme and made sure that all staff are fully trained. Each year group is having double the time of phonics each day. This is a smart move. Leaders are carefully tracking where pupils are on the phonics programme. Additional tutoring is planned for any child who is struggling. Teachers ensure that pupils read books that match the sounds they know. Currently, older pupils are not reading widely enough. Staff are not providing them with books from renowned authors. Consequently, pupils are not well prepared for the demands of key stage 2.

In mathematics, the curriculum is planned and sequenced logically. Leaders are coaching staff to teach the subject with greater skill. This includes breaking down new knowledge into smaller steps to help pupils retain more information. Many pupils do not have fast recall of key number facts. This means that they struggle to solve calculations and problems. They do not have the mathematical fluency expected for their age.

Across the curriculum, leaders have revamped content so it is ambitious. However, not all subjects outline the knowledge that pupils must learn within a unit of study. This means that pupils are not learning concepts in the right order in some subjects. Furthermore, they are not making the connections needed between different topics. Leaders do have this in hand, and are nearing completion of this work.

Currently, there is variability in teachers' knowledge of how to deliver what is planned. Sometimes, concepts are not taught well, which then impacts on pupils gaining new knowledge. Teachers do use regular questioning to check pupils' understanding and they encourage pupil discussion. In lessons, pupils are settled and participate well. They show interest in what they are learning.

Typically, children start school having not reached key milestones. Many do not speak English. Staff in early years plan a comprehensive programme to promote children's language and listening skills throughout the day. Social etiquette is prioritised too. At lunchtime, adults continually reinforce the school's expectations. This ensures that pupils model good habits and manners.

The way staff work with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is impressive. The SEND coordinator has established clear policies and procedures so that all pupils can learn the curriculum. Teachers know they must oversee all the children in their class. Where pupils have more complex needs, leaders create bespoke provision. Staff are well trained to give one-to-one instruction in short bursts throughout the day. In addition, pupils' sensory and physical needs are planned for effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide much outreach for families in the community. Parents know the school's door is always open to them. Leaders make excellent links with the on-site Children's

Centre. They provide education on the risks that children face in the area. Leaders identify concerns early and put in the right support. If it is needed, they promptly make a multi-agency referral. The executive headteacher is meticulous in updating staff on safeguarding matters. As a result, staff always operate a vigilant culture. Pupils know who they can talk to if they have a worry. They are taught how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The core skills have not been taught well enough. Some pupils are not able to read fluently, and do not have the basic mathematical skills they need in order to be well prepared for key stage 2. Leaders need to continue to raise academic standards, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Older pupils who can read fluently are not accessing enough high-quality literature. They are not independently reading a wide range of books from established authors. This is limiting pupils' vocabulary and general knowledge. Leaders need to plan the progression of core books that will widen pupils' thinking and foster a love of reading for pleasure.
- Not all subjects lay out the knowledge content that pupils need from Reception to the end of Year 2. This means that teachers are unsure of what material must be taught and the best order for pupils to learn this. Leaders should continue with their work in reviewing all foundation subjects so that knowledge is coherently sequenced. They should then train teachers to deliver this content effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	110375
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10211164
Type of school	Infant
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	82
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Nolan
Headteacher	Kate Mathews
Website	www.germanderpark.com
Date of previous inspection	12 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- In January 2022, the school federated with two other schools to form the Boulevard Primary Partnership. The headteacher is the executive headteacher of the federation. Prior to the federation, the headteacher joined the school in an interim role in February 2021. The deputy headteacher started in September 2021.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with two governors and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. To do this, they met with subject leaders, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.

- Some pupils in Years 1 and 2 were observed reading to a familiar adult by the lead inspector.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the safeguarding team to examine records and actions. This included sampling a range of safeguarding documentation. A team inspector reviewed checks on the safer recruitment of adults.
- Inspectors talked to pupils from different year groups about their learning and experiences at school.
- The views of staff and parents were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school improvement plan, leaders' self-evaluation, policies, curriculum documents, published information about pupils' performance, a school improvement visit report from the local authority and minutes of governors' meetings.

Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lizzie Jeanes

Ofsted Inspector

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