

Inspection of a good school: Great Denham Primary School

Greenkeepers Road, Great Denham, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK40 4GG

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 March 2023

Outcome

Great Denham Primary School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love their time at Great Denham Primary School. Pupils, including those in early years, enjoy a rich, exciting curriculum that is brought to life through a range of different learning experiences. Pupils follow a curriculum that is engaging, thoughtful and builds on their knowledge and independence as they progress through the school.

Whether in class or on the playground, pupils behave exceptionally well. They listen attentively to staff or each other's opinions. Pupils and children in early years are absorbed in their learning. A range of interesting and engaging activities at breaktimes and lunchtimes support pupils to play, compete or relax with their friends. Everyone gets along as the school is a positive, welcoming community. Adults manage any rare incidents of bullying or poor behaviour really well.

Pupils value being part of a school community where they help one another. Pupils talk excitedly about being in one of the school's four 'families' teams, where they work together to earn points and share the prizes with each other. Lots of pupils take on responsibilities, for example as STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) ambassadors or mental health champions. Pupils really enjoy the trips and experiences that complement the curriculum and help them remember what they have learned.

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

The headteacher and her team have put in place an innovative, well-planned curriculum that supports all pupils to do their best. The full range of national curriculum subjects are covered. Leaders' constant critique and evaluation ensure that the curriculum continues to develop and improve.

Leaders have thought carefully about how to make their curriculum work. Most subjects, such as history and art, are taught through projects and 'big questions'. Each subject is carefully planned. Subject leaders identify the most important knowledge for pupils to learn. This knowledge is effectively weaved through each project or subject so pupils build their understanding step-by-step. The building blocks for each subject start in early years. For example, adults support children in early years to discuss things that have happened in the past, to develop children's vocabulary for their history learning in Year 1. Pupils learn exceptionally well, securing detailed understanding of the small chunks of knowledge which allow them to learn complex concepts over time.

Staff use their expert knowledge to choose engaging activities that support pupils' learning. Curriculum documentation allows teachers to check on what knowledge should be taught and when. This means that staff can quickly spot if a pupil has fallen behind or has a misconception. They act quickly and effectively to help pupils to keep up with their classmates.

The curriculum is highly accessible for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Well-trained adults know the individual needs of pupils and what works best to help them take part in lessons and learning. Pupils with the most complex needs receive appropriate and timely specialist help and guidance. Consequently, pupils with SEND are exceptionally well supported to access, learn and progress through the high-quality curriculum.

The curriculum offers many rich and varied opportunities for pupils to explore and read different books, poetry and texts covering a range of genres. As a result, pupils read widely and talk animatedly about the books they meet. Pupils who find reading tricky catch up with their peers because they are supported through well-considered reading interventions. In early years and in the nursery, adults support children well to build their beginning reading knowledge.

The life skills curriculum combines the school's six values with a well-planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme. Pupils are taught about a range of important topics, for example how others are different or how to manage friendships. Pupils value the rewards badges for consistently demonstrating a value like 'friendship'. The school is a harmonious community where everyone gets along.

Leaders' expectations of what pupils can do and how pupils should behave are high. Pupils work reflects their knowledge and the seriousness with which they undertake their studies. Pupils want to do well so they work hard in class and support each other with their learning. Pupils produce work of a high quality and rarely misbehave.

Leaders' thorough training and coaching supports staff to ensure that the delivery of the curriculum is consistent. Staff feel part of the team and strive to do their best to help pupils learn in their classroom. There is a strong focus on both pupil and staff well-being.

Governors robustly support and challenge leaders. Governors have an excellent understanding of the curriculum and the experiences of pupils in the school. Leaders have

the overwhelming support of staff, pupils, and many parents in their drive to make the school the best it can be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a positive culture of safeguarding across the school. Leaders ensure that staff access effective safeguarding training. As a result, staff are knowledgeable about the risks to pupils, and they know that 'every little thing' should be recorded on the safeguarding system. Leaders use this information to build a picture of any safeguarding concerns. Detailed safeguarding records show prompt actions and referrals in response to any worry about pupils. Robust pre-employment checks on adults are in place.

Leaders work with a range of different external agencies to help pupils and their families get the support they need.

Pupils access high-quality teaching that helps them know how to stay safe in class, while online or when in the community.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2017.

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.

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	135996
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10268647
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	597
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul James
Headteacher	Denise Burgess
Website	www.greatdenhamprimary.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 December 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in place since the school opened in 2012.
- The school has a nursery with provision for three-year-olds.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club for pupils.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils about learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- The inspector visited lessons and looked at a range of curriculum documentation and pupils' work across other subjects, including science, art, music, PSHE and physical education.

- The inspector spoke to pupils in class, in small groups and on the playground.
- The inspector spoke to representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector held a telephone call with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector visited the breakfast club before the start of school.
- The inspector spoke with parents at the gate about their experiences.
- The inspector met with a range of leaders across both days of inspection, including the school's special educational needs coordinator.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with the school's safeguarding leaders. He scrutinised training records and looked closely at safeguarding systems, processes and records. Across both days of inspection, he spoke to pupils, staff and governors about safeguarding.
- The lead inspector considered the 201 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 200 free-text responses. The lead inspector also considered the 49 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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