

Inspection of an outstanding school: Danesfield School

Henley Road, Medmenham, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 2EW

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 April 2023

Outcome

Danesfield School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have created an exceptional school where all pupils can achieve their very best. Pupils recognise the many high-quality opportunities they have to learn, including the excellent outdoor facilities. Pupils meet the high expectations set by their teachers. Teachers establish very strong routines for the youngest children which enable them to settle quickly and make friends. Pupils are highly motivated to learn because teachers inspire pupils. As a result, pupils fully embody the school's vision of 'Respect, happiness, ambition'.

Relationships at all levels are very strong. Standards of care for pupils are exceptional and pupils completely trust the adults who look after them. Instances of bullying are rare and leaders take swift action should it ever arise.

Pupils are taught to be resilient and independent. They are encouraged to use their talents to help others and they show respect for one another. Pupils work very hard in lessons and achieve highly. They have hugely positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils have a love of learning. This reflects the joy and happiness they experience in school. Parents and carers recognise and appreciate this very much. One parent commented, reflecting the views of many, 'This is an incredibly nurturing school with happiness at the heart of everything they do.'

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

Leaders have developed an incredibly ambitious, unique curriculum to meet the needs of pupils growing up in an increasingly digital age. The curriculum is completely embedded across the school in every subject. Subject leaders have identified the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn. They have made sure that the sequence in which pupils learn concepts is correct. This enables pupils to build their knowledge over time so they can commit learning to their long-term memory.

Leaders want pupils to aspire to achieve their very best. Leaders have high expectations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Support for these pupils is extensive. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve highly. Young children in Nursery and Reception are specifically taught to listen, concentrate and take turns. These basic skills are the foundation for their very strong start to school. Early years staff are highly skilled, knowing exactly how young children learn and progress.

Learning is exceptionally well organised across the school. Pupils find learning exciting so low-level disruption is extremely rare. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and this enables them to deliver lessons that match the ambition of the curriculum. Digital technology and computing are used effectively within all subject areas as a tool for learning. This is particularly the case in science, design technology and art. As a result, pupils have excellent computer skills and can choose the most appropriate form of media to present their work. For example, this might be in the form of a blog from a character in a book they are studying, like 'Journey to Jo'burg', or a podcast explaining the solar system.

Leaders make reading a priority. The school's phonics scheme is delivered effectively by skilful, well-trained teachers and teaching assistants. Young children learn to read very quickly. There is a structured, consistent approach to the teaching of reading, enabling pupils to build confidence and read accurately. Pupils regularly practise the phonics sounds they learn. If pupils fall behind in their reading, teachers take decisive action to make sure they catch up. Older pupils read with fluency and expression. Teachers read novels to pupils each day in class, which is one way in which pupils develop a love of reading.

Mathematics is well taught throughout the school. Younger children in the early years have many opportunities to experience number, both in structured learning in class or through playing outside. For example, once they have mastered their numbers from zero to 10, they quickly learn how to add one more or take away one less. Older pupils show very secure knowledge when tackling problem-solving and reasoning tasks. Pupils' use of mathematical language is excellent.

Leaders are rightly proud of the exceptional personal development opportunities that the curriculum promotes. Personal development is intricately planned. This might be personal financial management using the school bank or busking at lunchtime to enhance their ability to perform. Pupils place great value on their contribution to the life of the school. They enjoy 'giving back' as 'reading ambassadors' for younger pupils, 'eco worriers' who reduce plastic use in school and peer mentors helping their friends with mental health.

Staff trust school leaders and appreciate the extensive opportunities that they are given to develop professionally. Leaders always consider staff welfare when taking decisions. They listen to staff and have made a number of changes to help manage workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong, embedded culture of safeguarding in the school. Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. Staff receive very effective training, which is ongoing throughout the year. As a consequence, staff are confident about what to do if they have concerns about pupils' safety. Policy and procedures are tight. All incidents are recorded meticulously and actions are swiftly followed up. Leaders, supported by the pastoral support worker, work effectively with outside agencies to make sure families get the support they need.

Pupils feel exceptionally safe. Regular lessons on internet safety empower pupils, for example to understand the opportunities and threats posed by social media platforms.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in June 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	110277
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10268011
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	427
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-chair of the governing body	Kate Armstrong and Victoria Downie
Headteacher	Sarah Morgan
Website	www.danesfield.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	7 and 8 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This a larger-than-average size school.
- Each year group has two classes, with the exception of Year 4, which has three classes.
- The school opened a new nursery in September 2022 with 34 children on roll.
- The school manages its own before-school and after-school provision
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first 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 met with headteacher and other school staff.
- The inspector met with members of the governing body, including the joint chairs of governors.
- The inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and computing. For each deep dive, the inspector met with the subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector spoke with staff, pupils and governors. He met with the school's designated safeguard lead to review the provision for safeguarding and review records and actions. He also looked at safeguarding records and reviewed information about the safer recruitment of staff.
- The inspector spoke to staff and groups of pupils from different year groups. He observed behaviour in classrooms and at break and lunchtimes.
- The views of staff and pupils, including responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys, were taken into account.
- The responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including written responses, were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Bill James, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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