

Inspection of a good school: Great Dunmow Primary School

Walnut Walk, Woodlands Park Drive, Great Dunmow, Essex CM6 1ZR

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 June 2023

Outcome

Great Dunmow 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 achieve well and enjoy learning. They are proud to belong here. Everyone is made to feel welcome. Pupils like the way that the staff are kind and helpful. They value the time staff take to get to know them as individuals. Pupils rise to the high expectations adults set. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) also benefit from adults' expert help.

Pupils, including in the early years, have positive relationships with all adults. Pupils willingly cooperate. They feel safe and comfortable to learn. Pupils trust the adults who work with them. They are confident that they can always go to an adult with a concern. If there is bullying, pupils know adults would sort it out immediately.

Pupils enjoy debating the school's core values of honesty, effort and respect. Their leadership skills are nurtured as school council members or learning ambassadors. Older pupils participate in tasks to support younger pupils at lunchtimes. Pupils value having a say in what happens in school.

Pupils perform in music festivals. They appreciate having cooking lessons with their peers in school. Visits from the police help them understand road safety.

Parents and carers are also overwhelmingly positive about the school.

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

Leaders know their pupils' specific needs very well. Their mission of 'striving for excellence in learning and all that we do' is realised in daily practice. Leaders have ensured that the school's curriculum makes clear what individual pupils must know and be

able to do in all subjects. Leaders have planned this learning carefully so that it is taught in a way that helps pupils to build up knowledge and skills over time.

Teachers have a secure understanding of the school's curriculum. They have good subject knowledge. Pupils' understanding is deepened by teachers' skilful questioning. Teachers plan regular opportunities to revisit previous learning in all subjects. Misconceptions and any gaps in knowledge are, therefore, quickly addressed. As a result, pupils successfully and consistently meet the curriculum aims.

Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND participate in, and benefit from learning, the same ambitious curriculum as their classmates. Teachers successfully adapt activities for any pupils who need additional help. Leaders make sure that advice from therapists and other external professionals is understood by staff. Staff use this advice effectively to provide bespoke support where required. This means that pupils with SEND achieve well.

Children in the early years get off to a flying start. Teachers design meaningful learning opportunities that develop children's curiosity. Children eagerly participate in lessons. Adults skilfully model the language they wish children to use. Teachers interact well in children's play to embed and extend children's understanding. Children are able to listen and pay attention well. As a result, children are well prepared for learning in Year 1.

Leaders prioritise reading. Teachers deliver the reading programme systematically across the school from the moment children start in early years. Pupils regularly read books that let them practise the sounds that they are learning. Teachers make timely checks on how well pupils are developing their reading knowledge. Pupils who find reading tricky get the help they need to quickly catch up and to become fluent readers. As a result, pupils learn to read well. There is a love of reading throughout the school. Pupils talk passionately about their favourite stories.

Pupils, including the very youngest, behave exceptionally well. Well-trained staff help pupils to manage their emotions and feelings successfully. This means all pupils can focus fully on their learning. Pupils move around the school calmly and with great respect. They play cooperatively together as they all know and understand the school rules and routines.

Leaders and staff promote pupils' personal development effectively. Pupils know why they should respect other faiths and cultures. They learn about healthy relationships and lifestyles. They have an age-appropriate understanding of democracy through elections to the school council. Pupils are encouraged to take part in debates about key British values. They take up the many clubs and enrichment activities on offer. Older pupils attend careers fairs. This means pupils are being prepared for their futures.

Staff feel positive about how leaders consider well-being and workload for all. Leaders allocate sufficient time so staff can fulfil their responsibilities.

Governors fulfil their duties well and provide effective challenge to leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils are kept safe in school. Leaders ensure that the required checks are carried out when appointing new staff. All staff have regular training on how to keep pupils safe. They know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil.

Leaders know pupils, families and the community well. This enables leaders to direct families to get extra help, where needed. Staff engage proactively with outside agencies to help and support pupils to stay safe. Adults help pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe online. Governors provide effective oversight of safeguarding processes.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2014.

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	115298
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10284256
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	422
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Dr Christine Hemming
Headteacher	Kevin Watts
Website	www.greatdunmowprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs a before- and after-school club daily.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. The inspector also met with members of the governing body and the school effectiveness partner from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives into early reading, mathematics, history and design and technology. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers and pupils. The inspector looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.

- The inspector met with the leaders responsible for early years and looked at a range of documentation.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour throughout the school day, including during lesson visits, at breaktimes and at lunchtimes. The inspector spoke to groups of pupils about their views on behaviour and the wider experiences they receive at school.
- The inspector studied a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, attendance data and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Lessons were visited to see the learning experience of pupils across the school, including children in the Reception classes.
- A discussion was had with the school's designated safeguarding lead. The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's single central record, which includes recruitment checks made on staff.
- The views of 50 staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey were considered.
- The 163 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, were also taken into account, as well as the 112 free-text comments. No pupils responded to the pupil survey. However, a range of pupils were spoken to during the inspection.

Inspection team

Ahson Mohammed, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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