

# Inspection of a good school: Grendon Underwood Combined School

Main Street, Grendon Underwood, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP18 0SP

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Inspection date:

1 February 2024

## Outcome

Grendon Underwood Combined School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to this welcoming and nurturing school each morning. They are rightly proud of their inclusive and supportive school community, where pupils' differences are celebrated. Kindness, warmth and respect run through every interaction. Break and lunchtimes are joyful and filled with excitement and exploration. Pupils, including children in the youngest years, cooperate with ease as they share games and discuss ideas.

High expectations are routine. This means that pupils behave well because they know that it is the right thing to do. Those same high expectations extend to learning. Pupils know that they need to work hard and challenge themselves to make continuous improvement, which they do. As such, pupils achieve well here. They are curious, questioning and have a palpable love of learning. Pupils thrive in this safe, caring and ambitious environment.

Pupils enjoy having responsibilities as technology or school ambassadors and eco-warriors, to name just a few. These are meaningful opportunities, and every pupil is encouraged to take on a role during their time at school. Pupils organise fundraisers, activities for other pupils, or develop presentations for assemblies. They know that this helps to prepare them for life beyond school.

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

The school has designed a high-quality and ambitious curriculum, which begins in the early years. Children learn numbers and sounds enthusiastically through songs and practical activities. Phonics is delivered consistently well, so pupils learn to read quickly. Pupils who need extra support receive precise intervention, which means they catch up rapidly. They enjoy reading to staff and having books read to them. Reading and stories are woven into all subjects. This means that pupils understand why reading is important, and they develop a real love of reading.

Staff have secure subject knowledge across the curriculum. New knowledge is broken down into small chunks so that pupils can master each piece fully before moving to the next. Staff model learning effectively and explain new ideas clearly. This means that pupils know what is expected of them. Pupils articulate their thinking confidently. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive expert support when needed. This means that they benefit from the same curriculum as their peers. The school is inclusive in every aspect. The most vulnerable pupils have the best chance to achieve well and develop socially and emotionally, ready for their next steps.

Pupils achieve well across the curriculum. They have strong foundations in each subject. In lessons, staff check what pupils know through effective questioning. They identify misconceptions and correct these quickly. Pupils know that mistakes are part of their learning journey. Staff skilfully draw out in-depth verbal responses to challenge pupils further. However, teachers' checks on pupils' written responses are not as consistently effective as they could be. The school is intent on pupils achieving even more highly. Staff have already rightly identified that the quality of pupils' written work and how this is checked could be more consistent. Improving this further will support pupils to develop their knowledge in greater depth.

Pupils have highly positive attitudes to learning, including the youngest children. They value the education that they receive here. This means that they behave well and staff rarely have to refocus pupils in lessons. Lessons are industrious and alive with debate and discussion. This is because the learning is so engaging and purposeful. However, while pupils enjoy coming to school, some pupils miss too much learning. The school is working well with the school community to address unnecessary absence and will continue to do so.

Pupils' wider development is a high priority. Staff know every pupil very well. This means that opportunities are tailored to meet pupils' needs. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. They enjoy trips within the community and beyond, such as the choir singing at the Royal Albert Hall. Pupils have an acute sense of right and wrong. This is coupled with remarkable tolerance and understanding of behaviour. Pupils are mature while also being enthusiastic and excited children. They are very well prepared for life beyond their village school.

Staff morale is high. They love working in this school, which is at the heart of the community. Staff value the personable approach of the leadership team. There is a culture of nurture and high standards for staff as well as for pupils. Governors have an accurate oversight of the school and their statutory duties. They are a helpful critical friend for leaders as the school continues to go from strength to strength.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Currently, the assessment of pupils' written work and what they have learned over time is not consistently effective. This means that pupils are not always challenged to demonstrate knowledge at greater depth. The school is aware of this and is already working on improving assessment so that staff know how well pupils have learned the curriculum and support pupils to achieve even more highly.
- Despite leaders' actions, some pupils are absent too often from school. As a result, these pupils are missing out on the effective curriculum and their progress is hindered. The school should continue to work with these pupils and their families to improve attendance.

## 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 June 2018.

## 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110278
<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10296158
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	165
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Rachael Day
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jayne Myers
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.gucs.org.uk">www.gucs.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative providers.
- The new headteacher took up her post in September 2023.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also looked at work in some other subjects.

- The inspectors met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils during playtimes and in lessons.
- Responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey for parents, including parents’ free-text comments, were considered. The inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey for staff and pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils’ interests first.

## **Inspection team**

Ally Aldridge-Gibbons, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Paul Hemmings

Ofsted Inspector

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