

# Germander Park School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110375
<b>Local Authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	362791
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Callow

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	84
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tim Reid
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Edwards
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 October 2009
<b>School address</b>	1 Germander Place Conniburrow Milton Keynes MK14 7DU
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed four teachers, visited 14 lessons and held meetings with staff, pupils, parents and carers, and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the schools work and looked at pupils books. Documentation was considered, including data on pupils progress, monitoring records and information relating to pupils safety and welfare. Questionnaires were not distributed to parents and carers during this inspection, although their views were gained through discussions.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the schools work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

Pupils attainment, especially in reading and writing in Years 1 and 2.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Years 1 and 2.

Pupils behaviour at work and at play in Years 1 and 2.

The schools capacity to improve from within its own resources.

## Information about the school

The school, which is smaller than average but growing, serves a socially mixed community with pupils coming from a wide range of backgrounds. White British and Black African are the largest groups. A significant number of pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language to Spanish, Italian, Somali, Polish, Lithuanian and French. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is made in two Reception classes.

At the time of the last inspection, when the school was judged to require special measures, the acting headteacher had only just been appointed. She became the permanent headteacher in April 2010. The school holds a number of awards including Healthy Schools and Sports Activemark.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Germander Park is a good school. As one parent commented, It has improved dramatically, which is a great credit to all those who work there and support the school. Under the determined and effective leadership of the headteacher and with good support from senior staff, the governing body and the local authority, highly successful strategies have been put in place to rapidly address the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. As a result, pupils are achieving well, are enthusiastic about their learning and enjoy going to school. From levels of skill which are well below national expectations when children enter Reception, attainment is now broadly average in Years 1 and 2.

The staff have created a calm, happy and purposeful atmosphere within the school which supports all groups of pupils to settle quickly and make good progress both socially and academically. Those who are newly arrived from other countries, speaking little or no English, make outstanding progress. All the adults show a high level of care and concern for each individual child so that they feel safe and secure and a valued member of the school community. Pupils show a great deal of respect for each others backgrounds and cultures, they cooperate well and behaviour is good in lessons and at play. Strong links with the local community and different agencies make a significant contribution to pupils good personal development.

The quality of teaching is good in all classes because it is well planned to meet the wide-ranging needs of the vast majority of the pupils. As a result, different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to be eligible for free school meals, make similarly good progress. In some lessons, however, there is insufficient challenge for more-able pupils to reach the standards of which they are capable. Teachers effective use of assessment strategies has been a key factor in helping to raise attainment in all subjects, but particularly in reading and writing. Teaching assistants have not yet developed the same skills to ensure that all pupils move on quickly to the next stage in their learning.

The curriculum is well focused on ensuring that pupils acquire the basic skills and there are some very effective programmes and groups which support language development. The school is rightly aware that more could be done to ensure that pupils have greater opportunities to practise and improve their skills, particularly in language and literacy, in different subjects. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by a wide variety of clubs and activities, especially those such as multi-skills which promote pupils physical development and enjoyment.

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Parents and carers are keen to say how much the headteacher has achieved in a short space of time. They greatly appreciate the effective partnership they feel they now have with the school, particularly as a result of much better communication including the use of text messaging to remind them of events. The positive attitude of everyone working in the school, together with the headteachers drive and accurate self-evaluation, demonstrates that the school has good capacity for further improvement. Other senior leaders are rightly gaining more confidence in their own assessment of its areas for development and recognise the need to take a greater role in determining the schools priorities, particularly to raise attainment even higher.

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

- Raise attainment by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills, particularly in language and literacy, across the curriculum
  - ensuring there is sufficient challenge for more-able pupils in every lesson
  - enabling teaching assistants to play a greater role in assessing pupils understanding and moving them on quickly to the next stage in their learning
  - taking greater account of all senior leaders monitoring and evaluation in determining the priorities for the schools further improvement.

## **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**2**

Pupils attainment when they left in Year 2 in 2010 was well below average in reading, writing and mathematics, with boys performing significantly less well than girls and no pupils reaching the highest level. Despite this picture of very low attainment at that time, pupils in both Year 2 and Year 1 had begun to make much more progress than formerly. As strategies to bring about improvement have bedded down, particularly in reading and writing, progress since September 2010 has accelerated even more quickly across the school. Achievement for all groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is similarly good. There is now no difference between the progress made by boys and girls, and those pupils who arrive speaking little or no English make outstanding progress, particularly in their language development. As a result of this much-improved progress, the majority of pupils are on track to meet the levels expected for their age by July 2011. While there has been a focus on raising attainment for more-able pupils, this group is still not being consistently challenged in all lessons to reach the higher levels of which they are capable.

Pupils accelerated progress reflects a much more positive approach to, and interest in, their learning. They say they enjoy coming to school and, as one pupil commented, I like being with my teachers and my friends. Pupils say that they feel safe and well supported by adults. A calm, purposeful atmosphere and an appropriate pace to lessons are major contributions to pupils good behaviour in class. Adults high expectations and pupils respect for one another mean that behaviour around the school, including at play, is also good. Examples of this observed during the inspection were pupils holding the door open for one another and cooperating in their games and activities. They know how to keep healthy and pupils talk confidently about eating fruit rather than sweets, and drinking milk rather than fizzy drinks, in order to look after their teeth.

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Pupils particularly good cultural development reflects the strong ethos of inclusion within the school. Every opportunity is taken, including through parents and carers coming in to school, to talk about their festivals and cultures, and to explore the diversity of backgrounds within the community. Pupils also contribute to their own community and the wider community. The school council, for example, is currently taking a lead in fund-raising to buy playground equipment, including by running a stationery stop where children can buy pencils and paper. They are also active in supporting national charities such as Children in Need, Water Aid and Comic Relief. Pupils very well-developed social skills, and sound basic skills, equip them satisfactorily for future life.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

**How effective is the provision?**

An improvement in the quality of teaching, as evident in lessons and from pupils books, has had a significant impact on raising attainment and accelerating the progress of pupils. Lessons move at a brisk pace and teachers use a range of good assessment strategies, including varied questions, to meet the different needs and abilities of pupils. All pupils are expected to make a response, which keeps them engaged and attentive. Teaching assistants do not yet have these skills, which mean that opportunities are missed to help pupils move on quickly to the next stage in their learning. The use of learning partners is proving to be an effective strategy in developing pupils speaking and listening skills, which supports both their reading and writing.

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The good match of work to different groups of pupils is the result of teachers detailed and careful planning that builds on assessments from previous lessons. Learning intentions and success criteria are well referenced and made explicit to pupils at the start of activities so that they know clearly what is expected of them. Despite this, there is insufficient challenge in some lessons for the more able so that, particularly in whole-class activities, they have work to do which is too easy. A review of the marking policy has resulted in a more consistent approach, especially with regard to the need for pupils to have time to discuss and reflect on both oral and written feedback.

The strong focus in the curriculum on ensuring that pupils acquire basic skills, particularly in speaking and listening, reading and writing, has been very effective in helping to raise attainment. Those who are in danger of falling behind, or those newly arrived from other countries, receive additional help, either in small groups or individually which helps them to make at least good progress. Not enough consideration has been given to how these basic skills can be developed further in different subjects across the curriculum. The curriculum is increasingly considering the interests of pupils and there are a good range of visits, such as those to Build-a-Bear, which motivate pupils and inspire them when they get back to school to make their own bears. Activities such as maypole dancing in Year 1 demonstrate their impact not only in pupils enjoyment but in their personal skills of cooperation and taking turns.

Pastoral care is a strength as a result of all staff knowing pupils extremely well, particularly those who are vulnerable. Procedures when pupils join and leave the school, as well as transition between the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1, are good and help to ensure that learning continues without interruption.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Underpinning the rapid improvement of this school has been the drive, determination and vision of the headteacher who, with good support from other leaders and the local authority, responded so positively to the challenge of being in special measures. The Chair of the Governing Body has also been totally committed to supporting the school and has been highly influential in building the capacity of the governing body and helping it to develop its role in holding the school to account. This is now good.

Staff and governors have made it a priority to build effective links with parents and carers and the local community so that the school is now well regarded. Partnerships with local schools are developing well, and participation and success in events such as the Milton Keynes Dance Showcase contribute strongly to this, as well as to extending pupils

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learning. The school is a very inclusive and cohesive community. Every child is made to feel equally welcomed and valued so that nearly all make the progress that they are capable of. As a result, equality of opportunity is good and there is no evidence of any form of discrimination. There are developing links with a small primary school in a contrasting location and a school in Africa which are extending pupils understanding of other communities.

Leaders at all levels take their responsibilities seriously, paying equally good attention both to the welfare of pupils and to ensuring that they are well taught. The highly responsive care and attention paid to individual pupils, along with good links with local agencies and strong safeguarding procedures, contribute to their safety and well-being. The increasing ability of the headteacher and governing body to identify the strengths and remedy the weaknesses of the school without external support has been critical in building the capacity of the school to improve further. However, other senior leaders have not had sufficient opportunity to use the knowledge they have gained from monitoring and evaluation to help determine the schools priorities.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

**Early Years Foundation Stage**

The quality of provision has improved since the last inspection, as a result of sustained good leadership, so that children make better progress. An effective induction programme for children starting school is now well established and makes a strong contribution to them settling quickly. The staff develop a good understanding of the wide variety of childrens backgrounds and pre-school experiences so that when they start school, activities are pitched at the right level to develop their skills. The majority enter with levels well below those normally expected, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development and in their language and literacy. By staff focusing on these areas, children



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make rapid progress in their learning so that by the time they enter Year 1, they have caught up a lot, although their attainment is still below average. Childrens progress is rigorously tracked, and effective use is made of observations and data to adapt the provision to meet individual childrens needs.

Ongoing good links with parents and carers and a stimulating and well-resourced environment for learning make a significant contribution to the progress children make. They particularly enjoy the extensive outdoor area which is well used to develop childrens skills across the curriculum. Adults have good relationships with the children, praising and encouraging them so that they are motivated to learn. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to explain to children what they are learning. There is a little inconsistency in the quality of teaching, but the good leadership has accurately identified this and taken measures to ensure that all children receive equally good provision. Effective use is made of learning partners, not only to develop childrens speech and language but to explore their feelings as part of their personal development, as was observed when they discussed what made them sad.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so. However, discussions with a small number of parents and carers confirmed the views of inspectors that the school had made rapid improvement since its last inspection. They recognise the significant role of the headteacher in this and are appreciative of the effective partnership that has been built with parents and carers, particularly through better communication. They are keen to stress how much more their children enjoy school, with one parent commenting, They are buzzing about their learning and keen to do their homework. Parents and carers say that the staff know all the children, that they are well looked after, and if parents and carers have any concerns, they can talk to any of the adults working in the school.

## **Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire**

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



11 March 2011

Dear Children

**Inspection of Germander Park School, Milton Keynes MK14 7DU**

I have really enjoyed my visits to your school over recent months and I would like to thank you for being so friendly, including when I came with my colleagues very recently. I am delighted to be able to tell you that because of everyone's hard work, your school no longer requires special measures to help it get better. It is now a good school and you have helped it to improve. Congratulations!

These are some of the best things that we found.

All of the teaching is good so that you are making more progress than you used to.

You are reaching higher standards in your work, particularly in reading and writing in Years 1 and 2.

You behave well and are kind to one another.

The adults look after you carefully to make sure you are happy and safe.

Your headteacher leads the school very well. She wants the very best for all of you and other leaders give her a lot of support.

Although your school is good, these are two of the things that we have asked your school to do to make it even better.

Make sure that all of you reach the highest possible standards in your work that you are capable of, particularly those of you who find learning easy.

Give you more opportunities to develop your speaking and listening, reading, and writing in the different subjects that you learn.

I hope that, because you have already helped your school to get better and you work like a big family, all of you will continue to help and remain keen to learn.

Yours sincerely

Peter Callow

Lead inspector

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