

Germander Park School

1 Germander Place, Conniburrow, Milton Keynes, MK14 7DU

Inspection dates 19–20 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress throughout the school so that they attain standards similar to those found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching and learning are good across the school. Teachers usually have high expectations of what all groups of pupils can achieve.
- Pupils feel safe in school and their outstanding behaviour makes a significant contribution to how well pupils achieve.
- School leaders have a very accurate picture of how well it is performing.
- Effective monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher ensures that purposeful training for teachers improves their performance and accelerates the pupils' progress.
- School leaders, together with governors, are rigorous in their determination to improve both teaching and learning.
- Excellent relationships between staff and pupils help to create an environment where pupils develop a thorough love of learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. Teachers miss opportunities for pupils to find out more things for themselves.
- Occasionally teachers use worksheets which provide too little challenge and they do not consistently ensure pupils respond to their written comments.
- More-able pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, seeing all teachers. All of the lessons were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector observed five phonics (letters and the sounds they make) sessions being taught by teachers and teaching assistants.
- The inspector heard some pupils read and held a meeting with a group of pupils.
- Other meetings and discussions were held with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and school staff. The inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- It was not possible to take note of the online Parent View survey as too few parents and carers had responded. The inspector considered the school's own parental questionnaire, and also 20 returned by staff.
- The inspector looked at samples of pupils' work and a range of documents including minutes of governing body meetings, school improvement plans, priorities for development, achievement data and documents relating to safeguarding children.

Inspection team

Paul Edwards, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Germander Park is smaller than the average infant school.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above that seen nationally as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The largest groups are from White British and Black African backgrounds. Other pupils are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds.
- A significant minority of pupils arrive during the school year speaking no English.
- The proportion of pupils supported with pupil premium funding (additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils from service families) is above average. No pupils in school are from service families.
- A breakfast club, managed by the governing body, operates each morning from 8.00am and formed part of this inspection. A privately run nursery and a children's centre are situated on the school site. These are both subject to separate inspections.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure more teaching is outstanding by:
 - encouraging teachers to provide more opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves
 - eradicating teachers' use of worksheets that lack challenge for the pupils
 - ensuring that teachers provide opportunities for the pupils to act upon their written comments.
- Accelerate the progress of more-able pupils in mathematics by providing them with more challenging work sooner in lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Over the past three years there has been a continued improvement in pupils' attainment so that by the end of Year 2 it is broadly average.
- Children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that are well below the levels expected for their age. They make good progress so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Staff undertake careful assessments and build carefully upon their previous learning. Children make particularly good progress in their personal development and in their communication and early reading skills.
- Pupils, including those from Black African and White British backgrounds, make good progress. Those pupils from other ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well. While girls attain better than boys overall, well-targeted activities ensure that boys achieve well and that the gap between their attainment and that of the girls is closing rapidly.
- Pupils at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language and those who join the school later in the year make rapid progress, the result of intensive support and guidance from teachers and teaching assistants. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs progress well. Detailed assessments and well-targeted support ensure these pupils achieve as well as their peers.
- Pupils make good progress in their reading. The systematic teaching of phonics in all classes ensures all pupils develop good skills that enable them to decode words. The national screening check, undertaken by Year 1 pupils, shows their phonics skills to be above average at this age. Good opportunities for the pupils to read regularly and solve problems are improving their comprehension skills and enabling them to become more confident readers. Intensive, individual reading programmes ensure pupils in danger of falling behind make accelerated progress.
- There has been a good focus on improving pupils' writing skills. The effort to make writing activities more interesting and engaging for boys has helped to improve the quality and amount of writing they produce. Opportunities for pupils to write at length in different subjects ensure they become confident and fluent writers by the end of Year 2.
- Although achievement in mathematics is good, pupils do not attain quite as well as they do in other subjects, particularly the more able pupils. Teachers are using new and different approaches, particularly in mental arithmetic sessions, to enable pupils to 'visualise' when adding and subtracting numbers.
- Pupils eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority achieve at least as well as other pupils in the school in both English and mathematics. This is because pupil premium funding is used effectively to fund additional staff for one-to-one interventions, additional teaching assistants for the teaching of phonics and to fund intensive reading support programmes.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is consistently good throughout the school. There are excellent relationships between staff and pupils and this encourages pupils to ask questions if they are not sure and to have a go without fear of failure. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and pupils do not disappoint.
- Teachers usually have high expectations of what pupils can achieve; consequently pupils try hard and do their best. Occasionally, there is an overuse of worksheets that limit the amount the pupils can write and also do not help pupils in improving their handwriting. However, where the use of such worksheets is restricted, pupils produce written work of a good quality.
- Good questioning by the teachers encourages pupils to give extended responses, increasing their

confidence and improving their speaking skills. In the better lessons, there are good opportunities for pupils to discuss with their classmates and for them to suggest how they might improve their work. Teachers encourage all pupils to have a go, including those who do not put up their hands. In a good Year 2 mental arithmetic session, pupils demonstrated eagerness in responding to the teacher's questioning, showing good confidence in 'doubling' and 'partitioning' numbers.

- All teachers and teaching assistants have been extremely well trained in the teaching of phonics. The excellent organisation for teaching this aspect of reading enables all pupils to be taught in small groups according to their level of reading ability. Teachers and teaching assistants demonstrate good skills in this aspect of their teaching. As a result, pupils make rapid progress in acquiring early reading skills.
- Teachers assess the progress of pupils during lessons and provide good help to encourage improvement. Their work is marked regularly and systematically. Teachers usually identify how the pupils might improve their work but they do not provide sufficient opportunities and encouragement for them respond to the written comments they have made.
- Where teaching is less strong, teachers miss the opportunities for pupils to find things out or choose how to solve problems for themselves. This is particularly so for the more able pupils in mathematics where they are occasionally given too much information and not encouraged to move on to more challenging work soon enough in lessons.
- Skilled teaching ensures disabled pupils and those with special educational needs progress well. Good planning ensures work is matched to their individual needs. Teaching assistants provide invaluable support for small groups and on a one-to-one basis.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The school is a very calm, orderly and friendly place in which to learn and work. It was a delight to observe how pupils from the many different cultures and backgrounds worked and played together so well. Pupils' above average attendance and punctuality are testament to their enthusiasm for school.
- In lessons, pupils' behaviour is outstanding and, consequently, teaching is not disrupted. They listen very carefully, cooperate with their classmates and contribute enthusiastically. Behaviour at break times is equally good so that pupils can enjoy 'keeping fit' on the recently installed 'trim trail' and playing games on the spacious grounds.
- Pupils enjoy the rewards system; they place the coloured marbles in the jars they gain for good work and actions, purely for the pride they feel when doing so.
- Parents, carers and pupils believe that behaviour is very good. Pupils are aware of the different forms of bullying but say it is extremely rare and that there is always someone to help them should it happen. Parents and carers also feel that bullying is an unusual occurrence. There have been no exclusions or racist incidents in recent years.
- Pupils respond exceptionally well to the school's promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They demonstrated a maturity beyond their years when talking with the inspector about the current value of 'respect'. They spoke in depth about their respect for adults, other pupils and equipment. They have a very clear understanding of right and wrong.
- The many cultures represented in the school are celebrated, developing the pupils' understanding and appreciation of people from different backgrounds.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and they say the school is a 'very safe' place.
- The well-attended breakfast club is a safe environment for those pupils who arrive early and provides them with a healthy start to the day.

The leadership and management are good

- The strong leadership of the headteacher and the high expectations of what the school can achieve are significant factors in the continued improvements made since the previous inspection. Teaching continues to improve in key areas such as the teaching of phonics and in the teaching of writing and this is resulting in pupils making much better progress.
- The key to the school's good improvement is the decisive leadership of the headteacher and the excellent teamwork. Excellent monitoring of teaching identifies key areas for improvement and staff take advantage of a wide range of opportunities for professional development. Salary progression and rewards for areas of responsibility do not happen as a matter of course. The leadership ensures that it is the result of improved performance.
- Staff are keen to support one another. The headteacher currently provides guidance to a school and its lead teacher is currently on secondment supporting another school. All staff receive detailed feedback on their performance. Due to secondments there have been a number of changes in subject leadership roles and the school is providing training and guidance to develop leadership skills further.
- Salary progression and rewards for areas of responsibility do not happen as a matter of course. The leadership ensures that it is the result of improved performance.
- Information on pupils' progress is used very well to check on the quality of teaching, what is working well and where improvements need to be made. For example, the school rightly identified that boys' writing needed to improve. Changes to the curriculum and more opportunities for boys to write about things that they find more interesting have had a positive impact.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is at the centre of the curriculum, with evidence in all lessons, at break and assemblies. Pupils' social and moral education is promoted particularly well. This was illustrated during a discussion with pupils when they were very keen to talk about the importance of 'respect'.
- The school looks after its pupils very well. It works hard to encourage parents and carers to become increasingly involved with school, for example by providing workshops to demonstrate how phonics are taught. These good links and those with the children's centre and the pre-school contribute much to the pupils' achievement and social development.
- The leadership works hard to ensure there is no discrimination and that all pupils have equality of opportunity. Good use is made of the pupil premium to enable eligible pupils to take part in after-school clubs, visits and residential journeys.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this good school. The leadership, however, avails itself of its expertise where appropriate to improve areas the school has identified as being in need of improvement.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors offer good challenge to the school on its performance. They have a clear picture of how well pupils are achieving through their analysis of data and how they compare to other schools'. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and where improvements need to be made. They have undertaken training to better equip themselves to provide challenge and support.
 - Governors are regular visitors, meeting with staff and pupils and gathering the views of parents and carers.
 - Governors work closely with the headteacher to ensure that good teaching is rewarded and that any underperformance is tackled decisively. They manage the school's finances very effectively, including checking how well pupil premium is used. They are aware of how this funding is being used to make a difference to the achievement of eligible pupils.
 - Governors have undergone safer recruitment training and are rigorous in ensuring the pupils
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are safe and secure.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	110375
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	400075

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gemma Carter
Headteacher	Jane Edwards
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 March 2011
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