

Great Dunmow Primary School

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

Inspection dates 24–25 April 2014

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.
- Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics in both key stages. Progress in mathematics was particularly impressive in 2013.
- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding.
- Pupils are eager to learn. Both they and their teachers expect the highest standards of behaviour.
- Pupils feel safe and the vast majority of parents agree with their children's views.
- Pupils are known and valued as individuals. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted.
- The headteacher, staff and governors are working successfully to improve teaching and ensure achievement continues to rise.
- The roles of subject leaders are well defined. Their work contributes well to pupils' good achievement.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school. While very supportive, they hold leaders accountable for the school's performance.
- The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes, teachers do not check quickly enough on pupils' understanding during lessons.
- Teachers do not always use the most recent data on pupils' progress to ensure learning is always challenging.
- The best examples of how marking and assessment are used to guide pupils' learning are inconsistently shared between staff.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons taught by 15 staff. Six joint observations were carried out with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also observed a range of activities provided by the school to support individuals and small groups of pupils.
- The inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, members of the governing body, staff and two groups of pupils. The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, inspectors took account of the 56 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and responses to an inspection questionnaire from 18 staff. Inspectors also spoke to parents in the playground to obtain their views of the school.
- The inspectors looked at the school’s improvement plan, its data on pupils’ attainment and progress, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, a wide range of policies and procedures, and the arrangements for the safeguarding of children.
- Inspectors attended two assemblies. They carried out a scrutiny of pupils’ work jointly with subject leaders and members of the senior leadership team.
- An inspector listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

Michael Sutherland-Harper, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Evelyn Riley	Additional Inspector
Margaret Dutton	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The very large majority of the pupils are White British.
- More pupils than is usual nationally join the school part way through their primary education or at times other than the usual starting dates.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below the national average. This is additional government funding for particular groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, and those in the care of the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has recently been through a period of significant staff changes.
- The executive headteacher has been in post since January 2014 following the promotion of the previous headteacher. The executive headteacher was previously a headteacher of the school. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed and will take up their posts in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of more teaching and learning to outstanding by:
 - checking and questioning pupils' understanding more regularly in lessons to help them make even faster progress
 - making more effective use of tracking data on pupils' progress to increase teachers' understanding of how to stretch and challenge all pupils
 - sharing the most effective practice in marking and assessment to ensure the best guidance to pupils' learning so they further improve their work and reach the highest standards in all areas.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with attainment broadly in line with national expectations but with some variation between year groups. The school's own assessments on entry, done during the first term, show that children's personal, social and writing skills are usually weaker than their ability with numbers.
- From these starting points, children make good progress in English, mathematics and other subjects because they are all known as individuals and well supported by all adults. Current school data show that the very large majority of children are in line to achieve a good level of development in Reception.
- Pupils' good rate of progress continues throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, including for pupils who arrive in school at times other than the usual starting points. The school takes care to ensure that these pupils, and all others, enjoy equal opportunities and that there is no discrimination of any kind because it knows its pupils well as individuals. As a result, pupils often exceed the nationally expected rate of progress across Key Stage 2. The school took prompt action to restore good progress when some results dipped in 2013 during the period of staff changes.
- Achievement in English is good. Attainment in reading, grammar, spelling and punctuation is significantly above national standards by the end of Year 6. Writing is improving, including in results for more-able pupils, and is a current whole-school focus. For example, standards of writing in Year 1 are currently above age-related expectations and reflect the good start that those pupils made in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils are encouraged successfully to write at length and on a variety of stimulating topics which appeal to both boys and girls.
- Attainment in mathematics is above average in both Key Stages 1 and 2. More-able pupils gain impressive results. The school has produced its own scheme of work to supplement nationally available materials and to build on topics of special interest to the pupils, such as problem solving. More-able pupils in Year 6 worked together successfully to make the maximum number of shapes from a collection of 50 short straws; they also worked out the probability of how many villages three different buses were likely to visit given the distances involved.
- Pupils make rapid early progress in reading. They get off to a good start in the Reception class through their work to break down words into sounds and letters (phonics). They have daily opportunities to read and explore texts in both key stages. All staff recognise that reading is a key skill to pupils' future success and make it a priority. Results in the Year 1 phonics screening check are considerably above the national average.
- Achievement in literacy and numeracy is high. Skills are reinforced in different subjects and topics. For example, in cookery, pupils were involved in discussion of the recipe, precise measurements and explaining what their initial ideas for their product might look like in reality.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium are making good progress according to current school data and what inspectors saw. Work set is effective in quickly supporting pupils' learning, and regularly reviewed to ensure that it results in good progress. Year 6 test results in 2013 show eligible pupils were about a term behind others in writing, and ahead in reading and mathematics. Illness and late arrival in the school have affected eligible pupils' progress in the current year and the attainment gap has widened. However, it is now steadily narrowing due to the school's continual refinement of its programmes for those eligible for the pupil premium.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because appropriate support is quickly put in place following a prompt identification of their learning needs. Their individual interests are encouraged with activities, such as the popular gardening sessions to encourage communication and social skills.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Learning is carefully planned to stretch and challenge all abilities in each class and key stage, including the Early Years Foundation Stage. Strong working relationships are built up between adults and pupils. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and are well supported by the work of learning support assistants. The good quality of teaching is leading to good progress and results for pupils.
- Engaging topics and encouragement to work together with their peers ensure that pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning.
- Literacy is well taught. For example, in Year 2, pupils were seen to make rapid progress because well-chosen materials, incorporating written text and pictures, encouraged discussion and led pupils to think about the meaning of what they were reading. As a result of the interest generated, pupils applied themselves to finding out more about dinosaurs and making their own small story books. The tasks challenged all groups, including the more able, who reported that they enjoyed the work being 'a bit more tricky'.
- Although school collection of data to track pupils' progress is regular and provides an accurate picture of progress, teachers do not always make full use of the most recent information to ensure that work is challenging for all pupils. In these situations, checks on pupils' understanding are not frequent enough and questioning is not always used as effectively as possible to check on pupils' understanding.
- Reading, writing, mathematics and communication skills are taught well. A wide range of material is covered in English and mathematics lessons. The resources used in mathematics lessons are especially appropriate to the age and interests of the pupils, including situations and challenges they might encounter in their own lives.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well taught. They benefit from the work of well-trained learning support assistants who know them well. Communication with each other is encouraged and leads to good development of social and academic skills. Pupils are encouraged to explain what they are working out and what they need to do next.
- Teachers have good skills in promoting learning, including through assessment and marking, but best practice in this area is not well enough shared across the school to ensure all practice is at the highest levels.
- Work is regularly marked and usually provides clear guidance about what pupils need to do next to improve their work. However, teachers do not always check that pupils understand the detailed guidance provided and misunderstandings sometimes slow progress for some pupils. Pupils' presentation of work is almost always of a high standard.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are proud of their school. They demonstrate high levels of courtesy and respect for each other and for adults in and out of classrooms, and as they move around the school.
- Pupils work very well with each other during lessons. Their excitement about learning and positive attitudes to the work they are doing were clear in lessons and in inspectors' discussions with them. Management of behaviour is skilled and of a consistently high level.
- Parents spoken to during the inspection and those who responded to the online survey (Parent View) think that behaviour is good. Pupils set themselves a very high standard and expect each other not to let the school down. Pupils' awareness of the importance of good work and behaviour was apparent during the rewards assembly, when they responded with enthusiasm to recognition of excellent work and behaviour.
- Pupils say that bullying is very rare because they are aware of the different forms of bullying, such as name-calling and cyber-bullying, and what to do to avoid it. They know that they can always turn to any staff for support and guidance because pupils are known and valued as individuals.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Parents, staff and pupils are unreservedly positive that pupils are safe in school. Pupils are clear about what constitutes an unsafe situation and know that friendship with others in the school is one way to help stay safe.
- Pupils know the importance of fitness and healthy living as another way to stay safe. The subjects on offer, such as swimming, gardening and cookery, help to ensure that pupils are well prepared for possible future activities. All aspects of safety are covered in detailed school policies and reflected in thorough case studies of individuals.
- Attendance has improved and is currently ahead of the latest national figures. Absence in 2013 was adversely affected by prolonged absence of a few pupils. Persistent absence has fallen significantly and was well below the national average in 2013. Exclusions are rare; there have been none in recent years, either permanent or fixed term.

The leadership and management are good

- After a period of significant staff changes, the executive headteacher has acted quickly and effectively in her interim role to ensure that good achievement and teaching are maintained. She has also ensured the highest expectations of behaviour are clear to all.
- The executive headteacher has assembled a committed and united staff team. She and the governors are giving careful attention to planning for the arrival of new leaders in September 2014. The school's self-evaluation, which is broadly accurate, is also closely linked to the achievement of the priorities in the school's improvement plan.
- Subject leaders have well-defined roles in regular reviews of attainment and progress data and hold staff to account for results. Their actions contribute well to pupils' good achievement. They take part in regular lesson observations, including of the work of learning support assistants. All areas, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, are well led. The new special educational needs coordinator has quickly addressed his responsibilities to ensure good progress for all

pupils within his remit.

- The range of subjects taught is extensive and expands pupils' learning well. Subjects are well supplemented by extra-curricular clubs and activities. During the inspection, pupils arrived enthusiastically with fresh soda bread, which they had just prepared under careful guidance, for all staff, and the inspection team. Such topics are one of the factors which ensure that pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning across the school.
 - Primary school sports funding is used well to provide additional sports coaching and resources. For example, a leased minibus transports pupils to the many sports competitions in which they take part and are frequently winners. Regular swimming sessions in the school's own pool and an emphasis on healthy eating also contribute to pupils' physical well-being.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and promoted well in displays around the school. Spiritual matters are considered in many assemblies and help to ensure that pupils' sense of right and wrong is highly developed. Teaching focuses on use of the imagination to make writing more attractive and engages all pupils, including reluctant writers and the more able, to that end.
 - Procedures for the management of staff performance are rigorous. Promotion up the pay scales is not automatic but closely linked to achieving pupils' good rates of progress and the targets set for individual staff development.
 - Links with parents are good. Leaders send a regular newsletter and parents are encouraged to contact the school with any concerns. Parents spoken to by inspectors in the playground were very positive about the school's attention to care for the individual.
 - The local authority has had close links with the school during the recent transition period of staffing. It carried out a review in November 2013 at the request of the governing body and the results have been used by the school to develop learning, for example, by expanding the indoor and outdoor spaces in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
 - Safeguarding procedures meet all current requirements. Staff and governors are trained in all aspects of safeguarding and child protection and several governors in safer recruitment.
 - The capacity for sustained improvement is good. The school's track record in sustaining pupils' good achievement and a good quality of teaching during a period of staffing difficulties shows its strong capacity to go forward. The executive headteacher has set out clear priorities for improvement, responsibilities have been distributed across staff and senior leaders to ensure smooth leadership succession.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governance is good. The governing body has an accurate picture of the school, formed by visits and links to subject areas and year groups. Governors are very supportive of the school but also offer appropriate challenge to leaders when necessary. They bring a variety of complementary skills to their roles, including experience in schools, and are trained in the use and analysis of attainment and progress data so that they can ask the right questions. They are currently reviewing use of the pupil premium funding to ensure it is used as effectively as possible. Governors visit lessons to assess the quality of teaching in conjunction with their thorough management of staff performance; they know what the quality of teaching is across the school. They ensure that opportunities exist in the school to recognise good teaching by career development through further responsibility. They make sure that teachers are rewarded

for their competence in ensuring that pupils make progress and achieve well.

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	115298
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	431251

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	402
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Lee
Headteacher	Sylvia Ruck (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	29 June 2009
Telephone number	01371 873184
Fax number	01371 876932
Email address	admin@greatdunmow-pri.essex.sch.uk

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