

Danesfield School

Henley Road, Medmenham, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 2EW

Inspection dates

7–8 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The exceptionally dedicated headteacher leads the school with an absolute determination that all pupils can achieve highly and be happy in a nurturing environment.
- Leaders' and governors' vision for school improvement and their strategic planning are real strengths, enabling the school to constantly improve.
- Pupils achieve exceptionally well in reading, writing and mathematics. They make good or better rates of progress to achieve the standards expected for their age. Many pupils exceed expected standards to attain highly.
- Pupils are exceptionally well behaved in this friendly environment. They enjoy school, attend regularly and always try their best.
- The highly engaging curriculum is a strength of the school. Pupils learn very well across a range of subjects, but particularly in reading. They develop skills which are equipping them very well for life and work in modern Britain.
- Leaders use additional funding effectively to make sure that disadvantaged pupils and services children achieve highly and are exceptionally well cared for.
- Children in the early years benefit from high-quality teaching and learning experiences. They develop excellent social and communication skills and a love of learning.
- Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan imaginative activities which hook pupils' interest and ensure that they make great progress.
- Leaders have made sure that the quality of teaching has improved to meet the needs of the new curriculum. Strategies to further improve pupils' progress in mathematics and writing have worked well.
- Sometimes, leaders' evaluations of the difference that their actions are making to the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not precise enough.
- Commendably, leaders aspire for every pupil to achieve highly. They know that a few boys make less progress in writing than their peers. Strategies are in place to tackle this and are already paying dividends.
- The vast majority of parents are exceptionally positive about their children's experience at Danesfield. All agree that their children are safe and well cared for.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders fully evaluate the positive difference they are making to the achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to hone in on the very best practice and improve pupils' outcomes further.
- Continue endeavours to inspire boys' writing so that all pupils make the very strong progress in writing that nearly all pupils have achieved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher leads the school with a determination to make sure that pupils achieve highly in a nurturing environment. Her exceptionally clear vision, strategic thinking and commitment to the local community has transformed the school since her appointment. Leaders, governors and staff share her aspirations so that the school is very well placed to improve further.
- Leaders have worked hard to create a cohesive community. Although many pupils join at different times, they quickly feel like they belong at Danesfield. Parents particularly praise the 'new joiners' pack they receive which tells them about school routines. Pupils appreciate the buddy system which means they have an instant friend from day one.
- Leaders at all levels are highly skilled and work very effectively together. Together, they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders plan for the school's further improvement very well, by seeking out best practice from other schools, as well as by developing their own ideas. They monitor how well initiatives are implemented, making frequent checks on the quality of teaching and giving good support to staff when needed. For example, leaders have made sure that teachers' skills in teaching mathematics and writing have improved to match the demands of the new curriculum.
- Leaders know the strengths of teaching across the school. They have created an open culture where teachers are keen to talk about their practice and seek to improve it further. Teachers engage extremely well in improving their own performance. They value the carefully planned training and support they receive which is helping them to improve pupils' skills, particularly in writing and mathematics. Teachers who are at an early stage of their careers are supported well. As a result, the quality of teaching in the school is strengthened.
- Leaders' careful tracking and monitoring of the whole curriculum has made sure that it is highly engaging and allows pupils to develop their knowledge and skills in different subject areas exceptionally well. For example, in geography pupils excitedly used a computer simulation to build their own volcanoes, so enhancing both their computer literacy and geographical knowledge. In science, pupils discussed what might happen if things didn't decay, considering thoughtfully the impact this might have had on events in history, such as the Black Death.
- The curriculum is augmented by a range of artistic, sporting and extra-curricular activities. For example, during the inspection pupils observed the behaviour of insects during the 'bug club' and the school choir practised 'the Marlow song' which is due to be performed during the local regatta. Funds for primary sports and physical education are used carefully. For example, funding is used to improve teachers' skills in teaching physical education and to introduce pupils to a wide range of sporting activities. As a result, pupils enjoy sport and their participation rates have increased.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is superb and pupils model British values particularly well. For example, pupils explained sensitively how the money they raise for a child in Nepal is used to benefit her life and education, showing a real understanding of the similarities and differences between their lives. In line with

the general election, which took place on the second day of the inspection, pupils held their own mock election, examining carefully the different policies, before voting for the ones they agreed with the most. Consequently, the curriculum is equipping pupils well for life in modern Britain.

- Leaders have established strong systems for checking pupils' achievement. They are determined that all pupils are supported to achieve highly. Frequent meetings are held to discuss how well pupils are learning so that leaders know the progress pupils make. Additional help is given to pupils who are identified as needing it. This is especially well targeted for pupils who join the school part way through a key stage, to make sure any gaps in their learning are filled in. As a result, progress for all groups has improved since the last inspection, including for disadvantaged pupils and services children.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and services children is used well to support their learning and welfare. However, sometimes leaders' appraisals of the impact of their actions on the progress of these pupils could be sharper so that they know precisely which actions make the most difference.
- Leaders have considered carefully parents' views as they have developed the school in the last two years, for example by developing some voluntary homework projects which pupils can do independently. Parent View, and discussions with parents during the inspection, shows that the large majority of parents are very happy with the education and care that the school provides.
- Most parents are full of praise for leaders, recognising the exceptional dedication of the headteacher in particular. As one said; 'The headteacher is totally dedicated to the well-being of all the children. Her huge amounts of positive energy and creative ideas have transformed the school.' Another commented that, 'The fabulous headteacher and her team have worked exceptionally hard to drive the school forward.' A small minority of parents expressed less positive views.

Governance of the school

- Governors play an active role in supporting the school's ongoing improvement. They are highly committed and share leaders' vision to nurture every child to achieve their full potential. They possess an appropriate range of skills and experience to equip them well for their roles. Governors' strategic plans to further develop and embed the work of the school are well organised.
- Governors know the school well. They hold leaders to account by asking challenging questions, for example about the achievement of different groups of pupils. Governors support leaders effectively, for example, by investing in time and training to make sure that leaders' work is highly effective.
- Governors make sure that performance management procedures are robust and that pay increases are linked to performance. They carry out their statutory duties extremely well. They have paid particular attention to making sure that the school site is safe and secure.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders follow safer recruitment procedures well. Thorough checks are made on employees and visitors, and record-keeping is thorough and accurate.
- Staff are well trained in child protection procedures. They know pupils well as individuals and look out for their welfare regularly. Staff know how to raise a concern. Leaders are diligent in following up concerns, including by referring to outside agencies for further support and advice when children need help.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in their community and online. Several pupils cited the school's lockdown procedures as being very important in helping them to feel safe. Pupils are also happy that there is always an adult they can turn to if they are worried about something. Parents agree that their children are safe and well cared for in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers plan imaginative activities which hook pupils' interest in learning. Teachers' questions encourage pupils to discuss, investigate and think about things for themselves in a range of subjects. For example, in an outdoors science lesson, Year 2 pupils discussed whether items were dead or alive, helping each other to choose more descriptive words to make their writing interesting.
- The school environment is tailored especially well to promote pupils' enjoyment and purposeful learning. The '21st century classroom' and 'outdoor classroom' areas allow pupils to experience different ways of learning new skills, particularly those associated with resilience and independence. Pupils value the high-quality displays and language-rich classrooms, which they say help them to meet teachers' high expectations for their work. They especially appreciate seeing their best work displayed in class and opportunities to show their favourite pieces of work to their parents.
- Reading is taught very well. Adults promote the importance of reading from an early age. Younger pupils are taught phonics very effectively so that they have the strategies that they need to read. As they progress through the school, pupils use the school reading scheme to choose books which interest them as they develop their reading skills. Less confident readers are given extra help to catch up. Pupils enjoy reading a broad range of books. For example, one pupil said he liked reading non-fiction books to find out about the world. Another pupil said she enjoyed fantasy novels because she liked to imagine how she would cope in different situations.
- Leaders have made sure that the quality of teaching in mathematics has improved to match the demands of the new curriculum. Teaching encourages pupils, particularly girls, to develop confidence in mathematics. All pupils are able to use practical equipment if they need help to understand a mathematical concept. Teachers make sure that pupils' calculation skills are developed well, and that reasoning skills are taught throughout the school. As a result, pupils make strong and improving rates of progress, with the most able pupils in particular attaining highly.
- The teaching of writing has improved so that pupils now make strong progress.

Teachers develop pupils' writing skills well. Pupils think carefully about the words they choose to make their writing more interesting. They are encouraged to talk about their writing, often sharing their ideas with each other. Pupils appreciate teachers' structured and imaginative approaches to teaching writing. For example, they speak proudly of publishing their work using computers and value talking to visiting authors about what inspires them to write.

- Teachers take pride in their teaching. Teachers know pupils very well and are responsive to their changing needs. They make very good use of assessment information so that tasks allow pupils to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects, to a high level. Although sometimes pupils say that work is easy, this is because teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to make sure that activities contain the right amount of challenge for pupils to make strong progress and to succeed.
- Pupils' work is presented neatly, which demonstrates the pride they take in learning. Pupils welcome feedback from teachers and opportunities to edit and improve their work so that, in key stage 2 especially, pupils use some complex grammatical structures and accurate spelling when writing.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those who need help to catch up. However, from time to time this support is not as precisely targeted as it could be.
- Parents are very positive about the quality of teaching. As one said, 'Teachers work very hard to provide the children with the skills and ability to cope with changes in everyday life.' Another said, 'The teaching my son receives has inspired him to learn. He loves school.'

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are proud of their school. Throughout the inspection, pupils were eager to tell inspectors about their highly positive experiences in school. They demonstrate respect for each other and for adults superbly. This was highlighted during an assembly where prefects helped younger pupils to sit quietly, relishing the privilege of standing at the side of the hall to make sure everyone was paying attention, which they were.
- Around the school, pupils are friendly to each other. They have no concerns about bullying of any type. Pupils told inspectors that if anyone feels lonely at breaktime they can sit on the friendship bench and someone will come and talk to them. As one pupil said, 'I'm really enjoying school. Everyone is really nice.'
- Parents praise the school for the nurturing welcome they and their children receive when they start school. Pupils who join the school part way through a year or key stage are cared for especially well. This includes the many service children whose families serve in the Royal Air Force. These pupils speak warmly of the extra support they receive to help them settle in quickly and learn well. For example, many value the poppy club where they meet up with pupils with similar experiences. Pupils especially

praise the exceptional work of the service children support coordinator, who is always willing to listen to any concerns they may have.

- Pupils' physical well-being is promoted well by the provision of healthy meals and snacks. Younger children are supported to develop their independence through choosing their own food. There is a community feel when pupils eat together at lunchtime. Healthy lifestyles are also encouraged through the wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs. These activities include sporting activities, such as cricket and football, and the mindfulness club, which highlights the importance of maintaining good mental health.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are especially considerate of each other. They move around the school sensibly and take care of their environment, for example by taking part in the gardening club at lunchtime.
- Behaviour in lessons is exemplary for all year groups. Pupils work very hard, demonstrating excellent attitudes to learning. They cooperate especially well together as they learn, for example when sharing interesting words and phrases, or when helping others to learn a new skill on the computer.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are exceptionally rare, but should they happen they are dealt with promptly and effectively by leaders. Leaders address individual needs carefully, involving parents well and taking advice from outside agencies if necessary so that pupils are well cared for and safe.
- Attendance is above average because pupils enjoy coming to school. Leaders work effectively to improve the attendance of the very few pupils who are persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils throughout the school attain very highly. In 2016, the vast majority achieved the expected standards for their age at key stage 2, with the majority of the most able pupils achieving the new higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. While pupils' progress in writing was broadly average, progress in mathematics was in line with the top 25% of pupils in the country. In reading, progress was in line with the top 10%.
- At key stage 1, pupils consistently attain standards above others nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. A much greater proportion of pupils than nationally achieve the greater depth standard.
- Pupils develop their early reading skills well, with the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check higher than that found nationally. Those who do not meet the standard in Year 1 make good progress to catch up, so that last year all pupils met the standard by the end of Year 2. As they progress up the school, pupils read with increasing fluency and expression. The most able pupils confidently explain complex storylines and characters.
- Pupils achieve well across a broad range of subjects because teachers use their strong

subject knowledge effectively. Pupils' scientific knowledge is especially well developed.

- The very few disadvantaged pupils make good and often rapid progress from their starting points. They attain standards in line with others nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because pupil premium funding is used well to support them.
- Service children achieve in line with their peers. Leaders make sure that teachers know what these pupils already know, understand and can do when they join the school, and provide extra teaching to make sure any gaps are closed. Pupils say this extra support is very welcome because it reassures them that they are not missing out on parts of the curriculum that others in school may already have covered.
- Leaders and teachers have improved their use of assessment information so that pupils make even more progress than they have in the past, particularly in writing and mathematics. As an indicator, this has helped to improve girls' progress in mathematics across the school.
- Leaders recognise that a few boys make less progress in writing than they should, particularly in key stage 1. Staff have adapted the curriculum, providing activities which encourage boys to write in more detail. This is having a positive impact on boys' progress.
- From their different starting points, the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong. Nonetheless, extra support could be targeted even more precisely to meet these pupils' individual needs in order to boost progress still further.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children enter the Reception Year with skills and knowledge above those typical for their age. They make excellent progress, especially in mathematics, reading and writing, so that the proportion that reaches a good level of development is consistently above the national average, with increasing numbers achieving the 'exceeding' standard.
- The early years classrooms and newly resourced outside area are highly stimulating and tailored carefully to meet children's needs across the whole curriculum and to develop a love of learning. Teachers provide high-quality, imaginative learning experiences that capture pupils' interests especially well. For example, some children used different toys to act out their own stories, based on the theme of castles. Others chose to use their phonics skills to write invitations for a party in an imaginary castle.
- Children use the outside area to develop their mathematical skills particularly well. For example, some children used blocks to practise counting in fives. In the mud kitchen, adults' skilful questions helped children to develop their understanding of measurement as they pretended to make cakes.
- Children develop their social and communication skills exceptionally well. They like to be helpful, sensibly packing up at the end of the day. Children are confident and listen to each other's ideas well. For example, in a phonics session they discussed whether words were real or made up.
- Leadership in the early years is highly effective. Adults know each child very well. They

assess children's learning accurately through asking children questions and carefully observing their work and play. Children's progress is recorded thoroughly, and teachers and parents liaise regularly about the new things children can do and understand. Teachers use the information they collect about children's progress to plan their next steps in learning particularly well. As a result, children are very well prepared for Year 1.

- Children in the early years are safe and well cared for. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about their children's experiences in the early years. As one commented, 'The pace of learning and enjoyment is exceptional. I am astounded at how well my child has improved since joining the school.' Another said, 'My daughter loves going to school. What she has learned in a short space of time is amazing and I am kept well informed.'

School details

Unique reference number	110277
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10000984

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	414
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Sean Collins
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Morgan
Telephone number	01628 483031
Website	www.danesfieldschool.bucks.sch.uk
Email address	office@danefieldschool.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 October 2011

Information about this school

- Danesfield is a larger-than-average primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average, as is the proportion that speaks English as an additional language.
- There have been significant changes in the leadership of the school since the last inspection. The current headteacher was appointed in February 2015, with the deputy headteacher joining in September 2015.
- The chair of the governing body supports other governing bodies as a national leader for governance.
- Very few pupils are eligible for the pupil premium.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school during the school year is above

average. Much of this movement arises from the postings of families belonging to the Royal Air Force personnel.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's floor standards that set out the minimum expectations for primary schools.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection began as a short inspection of a good school led by one of Her Majesty’s Inspectors. The inspection converted to become a full inspection and three Ofsted Inspectors joined the team on the second day.
- Inspectors observed learning across the school. Many lessons were visited jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed an assembly, and pupils playing at breaktimes.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other school leaders and teachers. They considered the 22 responses to the confidential staff survey.
- Her Majesty’s Inspector met with a group of governors and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and experiences of school life. They looked at a range of pupils’ work and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents gathered from the 180 responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also had conversations with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation including safeguarding information, school improvement plans, information about pupils’ progress and attainment, the school’s checks on the quality of teaching, and minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Nigel Cook	Ofsted Inspector
Charlotte Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Krista Dawkins	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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