

Great Waltham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	115114
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	379006
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2012
Lead inspector	Emma Aylesbury

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	147
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Eccles-Williams
Headteacher	Diane Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Emma Aylesbury

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. She observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons or part lessons, amounting to four hours and 40 minutes in total, observing all eight teachers. For seven of the lessons, the inspector was accompanied by members of the senior management team.

Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the governing body, staff, pupils, parents and carers. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at its monitoring, assessment and attendance records, improvement plans, minutes of meetings held by the governing body and safeguarding documents. In addition, she analysed questionnaires from 91 parents, 72 pupils and 21 staff.

Information about the school

Great Waltham Church of England Primary School is smaller in size than most primary schools. The largest group of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups is well below average. A small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average, these being mainly moderate and specific learning difficulties. The school meets the current floor standard.

The school has gained Healthy Schools status.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Great Waltham provides a good standard of education. It has improved rapidly on a number of fronts. As one parent commented, 'I feel my child's progress has been fantastic since starting this school'.
- Results in national tests are above average and pupils make good progress from their broadly average starting points. Most rapid progress is made in reading and in mathematics.
- Parents and carers say that behaviour and care are of a very high standard. Inspection findings confirm that, typically, pupils are courteous, polite and make an outstanding contribution to the positive learning atmosphere. Highly effective safeguarding provides a very safe environment and all pupils whatever their backgrounds get on well together and enjoy positive relationships with staff. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure, attend well and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent.
- Typically teaching is good and sometimes better, and regularly engages pupils in interesting and relevant learning activities that prepare them well for the future. However, in some lessons, teachers do not make sufficient use of marking to show pupils how to improve their work, or provide sufficient opportunities for them to respond to comments in their books.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage progress well in their early reading, writing, number and social development. By the end of Year 6, pupils achieve well in their learning, because the school has very high expectations of them. Staff work effectively to eradicate any differences in the achievement of groups of children.
- There is a strong contribution to pupils' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. As a result there is a respect for diversity which is promoted well through delightful classroom displays and inspiring assemblies.
- The headteacher and the senior management team provide a clear direction for the school's work and share the vision with staff well.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching to raise attainment by:
 - giving pupils regular advice on how to improve their work so that they understand how to achieve the next steps in their learning;
 - providing sufficient time for pupils to be able to respond to comments in teachers' marking on how to improve.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children start school mostly with skills that are expected for their age, particularly in the areas of personal and social development and communication. As a result of good teaching children make good progress from their starting points and make most gains in their literacy and reading skills. This was observed when children in Reception took part in a reflection on their 'Dear Zoo' stories using pictures, questions and answers to re-tell the story. Children thoroughly enjoyed practising their sounds and letters, and made good progress as a result of the teachers' skilful and encouraging questioning.

The quality of pupils' learning and progress in lessons is good. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with staff and respond very well to tasks set by teachers. For example, in a mixed Year 3 and 4 science lesson pupils thoroughly enjoyed working in groups to design circuits in order to discover and record which materials were conductors of electricity. As a result of good independent learning, children's knowledge of adding different materials to the circuit board to conduct electricity was striking as was their motivation and engagement in their learning.

Attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. National test results indicated that girls were doing better than boys in reading, writing and mathematics. This gap is narrowing through the use of boy-friendly strategies, such as dinosaur themes. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do as well as their peers, because staff make suitable adjustments to materials and activities so that they meet pupils' needs. Those who speak English as an additional language also make good progress as a result of staff providing practical activities using pictures and books to help give clues for word recognition in group activities. By the end of Year 2 reading is broadly average. Pupils' enjoyment of books is promoted effectively through guided reading programmes, so that by the end of Year 6 pupils' reading attainment is above average. This aspect of the school's work has become increasingly effective due to a strong focus on literacy through using dedicated programmes to improve writing through speaking. As one parent commented, reflecting the views of others from the Ofsted questionnaire, 'My child's reading age has gone up by six months over the last three months'.

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Quality of teaching

Typically, teaching is characterised by secure subject knowledge, high expectations and good use of pace to engage pupils. As a result of these and more rigorous monitoring and support, teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. This view is reflected in the responses of parents and carers who returned questionnaires. For example, in Reception, technology was used well to enable children to develop their understanding of patterns and shape. Teachers make good use of the planned curriculum to interest and engage pupils. For example, in a mixed Year 4 and 5 class pupils made good progress in a history lesson about the difference in Britain during and after the Second World War. Pupils began to work in pairs discussing how it might feel to have food rations after the war and then used their literacy skills to write sentences about their feelings. As a result their learning thrived. This joint history and literacy curriculum project offers a variety of experiences that contribute well to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and enables them to deepen their knowledge of social history and culture. Nevertheless, marking is inconsistent across the school, because some teachers do not always give pupils sufficient guidance on how to take the next steps to improve their work. Where comments are included in books, pupils do not always respond to them.

The practice of sharing pupils' work through display is imaginative and attractive throughout the school and captures and responds to children's interests and enthusiasm. For example, the clay house tiles, about me French display and Roman mosaics. Pupils comment that they like the colourful displays in all classrooms which promotes a sense of pride.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils demonstrate highly positive attitudes to learning and behave maturely. They respond well to the high expectations of staff and respect each other both at play and within the classroom. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and really enjoy lessons. As a result, pupils' excellent behaviour contributes strongly to the good progress they make. Their behaviour throughout the school is calm and orderly. They know how to keep themselves safe and each other safe such as by using the schools anti-bullying strategy. The school's records show this to be the case over time. Parents and carers also agree that behaviour is a strength of the school and that on the rare occasions bullying occurs it is dealt with effectively. All of the pupils asked said that any incidents of bullying are quickly dealt with. This, together with their above average levels of attendance and improving basic skills in English, mathematics and technology, demonstrates that they are prepared well for the next stage of their education. Pupils enjoy and feel safe coming to school, as one parent described, 'What attracted me to Great Waltham is how safe and warm the environment felt when I walked around'. Pupils develop a mature understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives. For instance, they have a keen awareness of the importance of drinking water and eating fresh fruit available in the classrooms. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes being healthy.

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Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior team have focused on improving the quality of teaching. This has had a positive effect on pupils' achievement over time and has strengthened the quality of teaching.

The curriculum meets pupils' needs and engages them well. Pupils' improving basic skills are complemented by a range of opportunities to develop their creative talents. The curriculum is further enriched by orchestra trips, guest speakers, themed events and clubs ranging from the fencing club to dance. These, together with residential visits, provide good opportunities for pupils to broaden their social skills. Good partnerships with outside agencies contribute effectively to pupils' good achievement. They contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This enables young people whose circumstances may make them vulnerable to overcome their difficulties and make significant changes in their attitudes and in their lives at home by becoming more independent and self-confident. As one parent commented, 'Great Waltham has given my child an exceptional springboard with which to enter the next stage in her life. It has given her confidence, happy memories and a fantastic education'.

Leaders and managers promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination well through ensuring that every pupil has an equal chance to learn. All groups in school make the good progress they are capable of because of the actions taken by leaders. Members of the governing body know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and fulfil their statutory duties. As a result, this enables them to challenge and hold the school to account effectively. The school has excellent procedures for safeguarding that meet government guidelines. Checks on adults and risk assessments are rigorous.

Pupils are well prepared for life in the United Kingdom and a global society because of the good provision made by leaders who have an effective understanding of their own community and the different faiths, ethnicities and cultures that exist within it. The school's international links are developing and promote a solid awareness of global issues, for example through fund-raising for 'Macmillan Cancer Research', and forming a partnership with a school in Romania.

Since the previous inspection, the school has strengthened leadership and management, improved teaching and introduced more rigorous monitoring systems. These successful actions demonstrate a strong capacity to make further improvements.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



30 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Waltham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Chelmsford CM3 1DF

Many thanks for the warm welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking with you to discuss your views of school, and hearing you read. I was particularly impressed with your public speaking and behaviour in assembly.

You go to a good, caring school. Your behaviour is outstanding, you learn well, your progress is good, you all feel very safe and your attendance is above average. Your headteacher and staff are working closely together to make sure your school continues to improve and they are determined to help you to succeed. So I have asked them to:

- use marking to help you understand what to do next so you can improve your work to achieve your very best.
- provide you with an opportunity to respond in your books to what the teacher has asked you to do.

You too can all play your part in improving the school by attending regularly and reviewing the work your teacher has marked. It was very good to meet you all. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Emma Aylesbury
Lead inspector

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