

Great Bentley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114736
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357602
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Norma Ball

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Harry
Headteacher	Mrs Diana Cleaver
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons and observed seven teachers. The inspectors met parents, informally, on the first morning of the inspection and held meetings with the headteacher, teaching staff, members of the governing body and pupils. The school's work was observed in addition to scrutinising samples of pupils' work, the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress, management and curriculum documentation, teachers' planning and safeguarding documentation. In addition, inspectors took account of questionnaire responses from 72 parents and carers, 15 staff and 104 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of teaching and assessment in improving progress and raising attainment for all groups of pupils, especially in Key Stage 2
- how well the curriculum and extra-curricular activities contribute to overall outcomes for pupils
- how well leaders and managers, including governors, promote continuity and improvement in the school.

Information about the school

Great Bentley is an average size primary school. Most pupils are of white British heritage with none speaking English as an additional language. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school at various times of the year has increased steadily but remains broadly average. A smaller than average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than that found nationally as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. The school has recently emerged from an unsettled period resulting from a number of staff changes. The senior leadership team has been in post for three terms. The school has gained Healthy Schools status and holds the PE Mark award.

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

Great Bentley is a happy, fully inclusive school in which pupils behave well and work enthusiastically because they are well taught and lessons are interesting. Pupils show a sense of pride and loyalty in their school. One parent wrote, 'My daughter loves school at Great Bentley and doesn't want to miss a day'. The strong leadership of the headteacher has united staff, many recently appointed and new to their areas of responsibility, in an ambitious drive to improve all areas of the work of the school. This is especially true of the senior leadership team who have embraced their roles and responsibilities quickly. They provide good leadership to other staff and monitor pupils' progress and new developments rigorously. Governors are taking steps to improve and extend how they hold the school to account and their involvement in strategic planning although there is still further to go. The accurate evaluation of the school's effectiveness and a clear, shared view of what needs to be done next, means the school now provides a good quality of education and has good capacity to improve further.

A series of staffing changes have, until recently, repressed the progress made by pupils and the standards they attained. Careful tracking of pupils' progress, effective new curriculum initiatives and improvements in teaching are now leading to visible improvements in achievement for all pupils. Children make a good start to their learning in Reception and this continues through Key Stage 1 where pupils attain standards that are above average. The progress made by pupils in Years 3 to 6 has improved markedly and is good, especially in English where standards are now above average. Progress is more even and consistent through all classes as teachers use what they know about pupils' progress to plan appropriately challenging tasks for groups of different ability.

The curriculum is adapted well for the needs of pupils and provides a broad and exciting range of experiences. Pupils love the exciting dimensions to their lessons and the wide range of extra-curricular activities they experience, particularly those linking them to their village community. Links between subjects are developing gradually to provide pupils with more opportunities to use their skills in English, mathematics and science in a variety of settings. The school provides an excellent level of care, guidance and support for all pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Good induction arrangements for these pupils, at whatever stage pupils join the school, mean they settle quickly and make good progress from their individual starting points. Pupils enjoy school as reflected in their above average attendance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in Key Stage 2 by extending links across subjects to enable pupils to apply their English, mathematic and scientific skills and improve the progress they make.

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- Improve the role of governors in holding the school to account for its performance and helping to ensure continued improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In the past three years standards have fluctuated but have shown gradual improvement. The marked improvement in Key Stage 1 where standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics is now emerging clearly in Key Stage 2. The standards attained at the end of Year 6 remain average in mathematics and science but are above average in English. A legacy of staffing changes is being effectively addressed and pupils' work, lesson observations and the schools own tracking indicate progress is good and standards in mathematics and science are also improving. Pupils settle quickly, show positive attitudes to learning and enjoy sharing ideas with their classmates and talking partners. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, many with emotional as well as learning needs, and those with physical disabilities make good progress because of good support by all staff.

The emphasis on a creative curriculum, with a selection of themes and topics, such as space and the alien space craft in the school grounds, arise from suggestions made by the pupils and engages and inspires them. Themes have been successful, especially in inspiring boys in literacy. As a result, writing has improved for both boys and girls especially in Key Stage 1 and this is now developing through the rest of the school. The possible failure of a circuit in the spacecraft doors was the subject of a fascinating Year 4 science lesson as pupils pondered the difficulties for the aliens whilst learning about an electric circuit. Lessons are fun and learning moves with a pace. In a Year 3 literacy lesson "Wow Woman", in cape and mask, inspired pupils to develop their use of exciting adjectives. Pupils try to do their best in lessons because learning is exciting. One pupil, representative of many others, said, 'I really like my school because we have great teachers and the lessons are fun.'

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and have a strong sense of responsibility both for each other and for the community. In school prefects, the school council and eco warriors carry out their duties with dignity and efficiency. They love being a part of their village community and care for the railway gardens as enthusiastically as their own allotment garden. The PE Mark and Healthy Schools awards illustrate their awareness of what makes for a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and reflected in their good relationships and their support of charities. Pupils' good achievement, enthusiasm for learning and good personal development ensures they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ 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?

The inspection confirmed the school's view that the quality of teaching is good and consistent between classes. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Good questioning encourages pupils to explain their ideas and develop their speaking skills. Classroom assistants are well deployed and work in good partnership with teachers to support groups and individual pupils. Information about the progress pupils make is used effectively to plan tasks that are well matched to the different abilities of groups of pupils and this is contributing to their good achievement. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own learning, identifying where they need further help and what they have understood. Marking is regular and also identifies clearly the next steps in pupils learning identifying a clear path forward for pupils. Teaching and learning are kept under close review by senior staff and there is an open approach to sharing good practice in lessons which is helping to improve the quality of learning and progress made by all groups of pupils across the school.

The curriculum has been successfully adapted to provide interesting learning experiences and support for pupils who find learning difficult. Themes are woven through lessons and teachers are now working to improve links between subjects to provide further opportunities for pupils to extend their skills, especially in English and mathematics, but also in science and information and communication technology. Enrichment of learning experiences outside of lessons is good and a broad range of extra-curricular clubs and

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visits involve and enthuse pupils. Entrepreneurial initiatives are very popular and pupils spoke enthusiastically about their ability to raise funds for charities based on their schemes to make a profit from the ten pounds given to each class by the headteacher.

The care, guidance and support provided by the school is excellent. Links with local pre-school groups and secondary schools are used well especially in helping pupils prepare to move to their next school and to ensure a smooth transition. Within school all staff give a very high priority to the care and welfare of all pupils. Sensitive and well-planned arrangements are made for pupils with disabilities as well as those with social and emotional needs. Assessments of pupils needs are rapid and support networks planned by the school are flexible and respond quickly to changing needs. They mix well with their peers and independence and full participation are encouraged. Very good links with a range of agencies and support services extend the excellent care and guidance provided in school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has worked with determination through the challenges posed by rapid staff changes. The establishment of a new senior leadership team and other recent staff appointments has resulted in rapid and effective action to address the previously slow improvement in standards attained by pupils. There is a united ambition in the school which is fuelling improved progress for all pupils. The improved attainment for pupils in Key Stage 1 is now developing well through the school. The introduction of a range of well chosen strategies, supported by staff training and improved teaching has led to clear improvements in the progress made by all pupils. Leadership teams ensure that staff work in co-operative partnerships to share skills and ideas as well as monitor their areas of responsibility efficiently. The partnership with parents is good and strengthened by the encouragement of parents to become involved with their children's learning through workshops and joining in learning in the classroom, for example in Year 3 French lessons. Good information is provided regularly through termly reports and consultation evenings.

Governors are supportive of the school, plan focused visits and are improving the level of challenge they offer. All safeguarding requirements are met well and the school is a harmonious and inclusive community in which each pupil is valued. Community Cohesion is well planned to ensure pupils have an awareness not only of their local community but also of other parts of Britain and cultures in other parts of the world. Staff are efficiently deployed and resources are used well to ensure the school achieves good value for

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money. Issues identified in the last inspection have been addressed and achievement for all pupils has improved.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly in school because learning is fun and they receive good care. Resources are used well by staff to plan enjoyable activities that cover the six areas of learning. However, the sparse cover for the outside learning area limits its use during poor weather, especially to extend children's physical development. Children mix well, learn to share and independence is fostered carefully. As a result children follow routines well, tidy things away sensibly and are careful to wash their hands before snack time. Children make good progress in their time in Reception because they are well taught, gain confidence and develop a love of school. Speaking, thinking and number skills are developed well and by the time they enter Year 1, their skills and abilities are generally similar to other children. Children with special educational needs and those with disabilities are included well. They enjoy talking and playing with other children and are well supported so they too make good progress.

There is a good balance between activities led by adults and games created by the children themselves. Adults take good opportunities to subtly intervene in such games to encourage children to share their ideas and develop their speaking skills. The alien space ship in the school grounds was a source of great interest and excitement. One child said very quietly, 'Its quite a big silver thing and I think alien people are inside it.' Children's development is carefully monitored by all staff and parents and carers are kept closely informed about the progress their child is making through both informal daily exchanges and termly meetings with staff. The leadership and management of the Early Years

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Foundation Stage is shared and the new leaders have quickly fostered a close, efficient and dedicated teaching team.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

A minority of parents responded to the questionnaire, but a large majority of the 35 per cent who did respond and those who spoke to the inspectors are pleased with the school. They value the fact that their children like school, are well taught and are prepared well for the future. Parents and carers also feel confident that their children are safe and helped to have a healthy life-style. The inspectors fully endorse these views. A small minority of parents expressed some concerns about progress, how well they were informed about how well their children were doing and how well their child's needs are met. The inspection evidence indicates that the needs of all pupils are carefully assessed and met well. Progress is improving for all pupils and parents are kept well informed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Great Bentley Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 72 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 197 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	50	31	43	3	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	64	21	29	2	3	2	3
My school informs me about my child's progress	18	25	43	60	9	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	32	34	47	7	10	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	25	35	37	51	3	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	29	40	56	6	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	31	44	61	2	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	24	33	40	56	3	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	25	43	60	7	10	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	36	38	53	3	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	31	38	53	5	7	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	26	36	34	47	3	4	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	44	33	46	5	7	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



16 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Bentley Primary School, Colchester, CO7 8LD

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so helpful and polite to us. We were very lucky that our visit was at the same time as the alien space ship - that was an exciting event.

We were impressed to see how much you enjoyed your lessons and you told us you find learning fun because teachers make your lessons interesting. You get on well together and behave well. You know a lot about being safe and healthy. We think that you make good progress in your time at Great Bentley and that you are extremely well cared for. You make an excellent contribution to your community and are learning a lot about the world in which you live. Your headteacher, other staff and governors work well together to make your school a happy and successful place in which to learn.

You told us yours was a good school and we agree with you. We have suggested two things which we think would help to make your school even better.

- to help you improve your English, mathematics and science skills we have asked that you get the opportunity to use these skills in other subjects
- governors will continue to improve the way they check how well the school is doing and help to plan its future so that you all make better and better progress.

You can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best at school. It was a great pleasure to visit Great Bentley and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Norma Ball

Lead inspector

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