

Ghyllgrove Community Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114919
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357646
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Howard
Headteacher	Jean Clark
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who visited 16 lessons taught by eight teachers. Inspectors spoke with staff, parents and carers, members of the governing body and groups of pupils. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work, the analysis of the tracking of pupils' progress, attendance records, school policies and procedures, school leaders' and the local authority's monitoring records, notes of governing body meetings, school planning and risk assessments. They also analysed the questionnaires received from pupils, staff and 52 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Why has attainment fallen back and pupils' progress apparently slowed since the last inspection?
- What actions have been taken by leaders and the governing body to drive improvement since the last inspection and what have been the barriers to success?
- What changes have been made by the new headteacher and what has been their impact?

Information about the school

This is an average size infant school. Children attend the Nursery either in the morning or the afternoon, and there are two classes in each of the Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 year groups. Most pupils are White British, with other pupils coming from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A small number of pupils are learning English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In small part, this is because the school caters for deaf pupils, provision for whom is based in a specialist unit that is part of the adjacent junior school. A number of pupils have moderate learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Ghyllgrove Infant has Healthy School status. The headteacher joined the school in September 2010 and several other teachers are also new to the school.

The school runs a breakfast and after-school club, PAWS, which caters for children aged 3 to 11.

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?**4****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to governance, pupils' attainment and teachers' use of assessment information.

Pupils' attainment in writing has been low for several years and attainment fell further in 2010 so that it was also well below average in reading and mathematics. A local authority review in October 2010 identified a number of serious shortcomings, including in arrangements for ensuring pupils' welfare and, most especially, in the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, many of whom have been underachieving. More able pupils have also done less well than they should because teachers' expectations have not been high enough. Parents have remained supportive of the school even as attainment fell. They comment very favourably about the improvements they have seen this year. A parent typified the views of many in describing how: 'This school has improved greatly since the arrival of the new headteacher. She is approachable, understanding and very professional. Parents' and children's opinions count and are listened to. When my son first started at this school we were not happy, but this has changed drastically.'

Safeguarding arrangements now meet statutory requirements and the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has been dramatically improved so that these pupils now make satisfactory progress, when previously the curriculum provided for them and their progress had serious shortcomings. These and other changes for the better, achieved in the short time since the local authority review, show the school's satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The school has already come quite a long way this year but school leaders, in their very accurate school self-evaluation, have correctly identified that Ghyllgrove Infants still has further to go.

Pupils throughout the school are well behaved and they show that they are eager to learn. Pupils feel very safe at school and their good understanding of the need for regular exercise and a healthy diet is recognised in Ghyllgrove Infants' Healthy School status. Because the children in the Nursery benefit from good teaching and activities carefully designed to meet their individual needs, they make good progress. Progress is more uneven in the Reception Year and in Years 1 and 2, where teaching is satisfactory overall rather than good. This is because teachers do not always expect enough of their pupils and inconsistencies remain, especially in the way teachers use the information they have from assessment in order to plan their lessons. Achievement is inadequate. This is because the satisfactory progress made in lessons is insufficient for pupils to narrow their

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attainment gap or for those who have underachieved in the past to catch up on previously lost ground.

The governing body is supportive but governors now realise that they have been overly dependent on reports from senior leaders. They have not done enough to find out for themselves what happens in the school, or to set appropriately challenging targets, measure the school's performance or challenge school leaders over pupils' attainment and progress. Although the school works as a friendly, harmonious community, not enough has been done to broaden pupils' awareness of other cultures and ways of life elsewhere in the United Kingdom and around the world. The governing body has not fulfilled its duty to evaluate the school's contribution to community cohesion.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in reading, mathematics and, particularly, in writing by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do
 - ensuring that pupils are properly focused on reading activities during their guided reading sessions
 - encouraging pupils to routinely check their own and each other's spellings and punctuation and to take greater care with the presentation of their work
 - reducing the reliance on worksheets and giving pupils more opportunities to use and apply what they learn in literacy by writing in other subjects
 - teachers consistently modelling accurate punctuation and spelling when marking work
 - clearly distinguishing standard English from colloquial English and local dialect.
- Ensure that pupils of all abilities make good progress in the very large majority of lessons by making full use of assessment information to plan lessons so that:
 - work is carefully matched to pupils' different capabilities and individual needs
 - pupils build steadily on what they have learnt before and none are repeating work they have already done
 - pupils are not expected to listen passively to long lesson introductions that slow the pace of learning
 - all pupils have clear guidance through their targets and through marking that shows them what they need to do to improve their work.
- Increase the effectiveness of governance by:
 - ensuring that members of the governing body check the school's provision first-hand and are not just dependent on reports from school leaders and staff
 - setting challenging but realistic targets for attainment, rigorously monitoring performance against those targets and holding the school to account when any identifiable groups of pupils fall behind
 - evaluating the impact of the school's contribution to community cohesion and ensuring that pupils learn about other cultures and ways of life in the United Kingdom and the wider world.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Children join the school with capabilities that are well below those expected for their ages. They make satisfactory progress overall in the Early Years Foundation Stage but attainment remains lower than expected by the start of Year 1. Attainment at the end of Year 2 is lower than it should be because of past underachievement, particularly by those pupils who need extra help with their learning and some more-able pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and some of those speaking English as an additional language, have made insufficient progress in the past because their specific learning needs have not been adequately planned for or met. Provision for these pupils is much improved this year and they now make satisfactory progress as a result. There are still lessons, however, where teachers make insufficient use of assessment information to plan work that is appropriately matched to all pupils' individual needs. This also slows the progress of more-able pupils, especially in those classes where an overreliance on worksheets limits opportunities for pupils to extend their writing. Progress also slows when lesson introductions go on for too long and on those occasions when work is repeated. In a lesson on doubling numbers, for example, pupils' recorded work showed that they had already understood how to represent doubling as a 'number sentence' but the lesson continued with belaboured further examples and pupils' attention drifted as a result.

Throughout the school, pupils get on well together and they treat each other with politeness and respect. Pupils behave well and are keen to learn. However, teachers do not always capitalise enough on this enthusiasm. Although pupils are involved to a very limited extent in evaluating their learning, they are not routinely expected to check their own or each other's work for spelling and punctuation errors. Pupils have a pride in their school, including in the opportunities that they have to take responsibilities such as school councillors, but they are not all encouraged to take the same pride in the presentation of their work. In some cases, pupils make errors because of the untidiness of their work.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

Teachers succeed in motivating pupils and they manage their classes well so that pupils generally settle to activities without fuss. The exception can sometimes be 'guided reading' sessions, where some of those not directly supported by the teacher can spend more time shuffling books than reading them. Teachers routinely set out for pupils the learning objectives for each lesson, along with criteria so that pupils can assess their success. This self-assessment can be cursory, however. Pupils' books show improvements in marking and the use of targets but inconsistencies remain. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but they do not always model writing well for the pupils. On occasion, teachers' instructions contain misspellings and advice to pupils to remember to end a sentence with a full stop is undermined when the teacher omits the correct punctuation when writing in pupils' books. When speaking to pupils, some staff slip into local dialect rather than standard English, asking them, for example, 'What was you most pleased with?'

Improvements to the curriculum, including some specialist subject teaching, have only very recently been introduced. An already embedded improvement has been the 'Arc' nurture room, where a group of Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils are withdrawn from their regular classes for part of the day and taught together. The quality of this provision is much appreciated by parents and carers. Parents who confess they had initial reservations about their child going to the Arc, voice particular praise for the way the staff 'fulfil all of our son's social, educational and medical needs' and say they have noticed

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'marked improvements in him and in his self-confidence'. In addition to this, and the dramatic improvements this year in provision for pupils with additional learning needs, arrangements for pupils' welfare are considerably improved on the poor picture reported by the local authority just last term so that they are now satisfactory. Attendance has been low for some years at this school but action taken this year by the headteacher and leadership team, working in partnership with the local education welfare officer, have persuaded parents of the importance of regular attendance and have substantially reduced absence rates to the extent that attendance is now average. The school day is extended through the PAWS breakfast and after-school club which provides a supportive environment for the pupils and is valued by parents and the pupils who attend it.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has quickly started the task of tackling historic weaknesses at this school. Staff morale is high as leaders, teachers and support staff all increasingly share the headteacher's vision and ambition for success. Although it is early days and key improvements are very recent, they show that the school is already on the path to tackling underachievement and raising standards. Shortcomings in safeguarding procedures identified in the local authority review have been dealt with, so that safeguarding now meets statutory requirements. The recent improvements in provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities mean that the promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory and any discrimination is being tackled. Requirements to promote community cohesion have not been met, however. There is relatively little arranged to broaden pupils' awareness of different cultures, and the governing body have not audited provision or evaluated how it can be extended. The lack of challenge from the governing body over historic weaknesses at Ghyllgrove Infant means that governance is inadequate. The governing body appreciate this. They have recruited several new members this term, including new parent governors, and are keen to develop their role.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

From starting points that are often relatively low, children make satisfactory progress over their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage but attainment remains below expectations for the children's ages by the end of the Reception Year. Children settle well in the Nursery because expectations and procedures are clear and, as a parent put it, 'Staff are friendly and helpful.' Welfare arrangements are good so children feel safe and happy. Good teaching makes learning fun so children are fully involved and enthusiastic. They are keen to talk about what they are doing and are proud of their work. They make good progress, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. Progress slows in the Reception Year, where the quality of teaching is less consistent. Here, assessment is not always used sufficiently to ensure that activities match children's individual needs and provide sufficient challenge.

Throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, children respond well and their behaviour is good. Children learn to share resources and develop their imaginations through playing together. There is a satisfactory balance between activities which children choose for themselves and those directed by the staff. This helps children to develop skills in learning alone and with others. Teachers' planning does not always take full account of what children are expected to learn, however, particularly when playing outside. Leadership and management are satisfactory and appropriate areas for improvement have been identified, although it is too soon for recent changes to show through in terms of impact. Nevertheless, staff have recently improved the way they assess and record children's attainment and progress and this is providing them with a good range of information across all areas of learning.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents voice overwhelmingly positive views about all aspects of the school. Several wrote to comment favourably about the changes they have seen this year. Inspectors' findings confirm that the school is improving, although previously pupils have not all done as well as they should.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ghyllgrove Community Infant 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 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 171 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	65	16	31	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	60	19	37	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	32	62	20	38	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	63	17	33	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	34	65	17	33	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	63	17	33	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	62	20	38	0	0	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)	21	40	24	46	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	54	21	40	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	48	25	48	1	2	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	48	23	44	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	54	22	42	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	65	17	33	1	2	0	0

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



27 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ghyllgrove Community Infant School, Basildon, SS14 2BY

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when we came to visit your school. We were pleased to see how well behaved you all are and how well you get on together. That helps to make your school such a happy place to be. It was good to see how much you know about keeping healthy and to learn that you feel very safe at school.

We could see that lots of things have already improved at Ghyllgrove Infants, but the school is still not as good as it ought to be. That is why we have recommended that the school be given some extra help over the next year or so. Inspectors will come back to check on the school's progress. The children in the Nursery get off to a good start but progress could be faster in Reception and Years 1 and 2. In fact, it needs to be faster if you are to catch up and reach the levels expected for children at the end of Year 2. At the moment, standards in reading, mathematics and especially writing are too low. We have asked the school to give you more help to improve these important basic skills just as they have already improved important things such as attendance and the provision for those of you who need extra help with your learning. You can all help by taking extra care to check your spellings and that you are correctly using capital letters and full stops. You can also help by making sure that your work is as neat and tidy as it can be.

We have also asked your teachers, when they plan your lessons, to make more use of all the information they have about how each of you is doing. That way you can be helped more to build on what you already know. Again, you can help your teachers by telling them any time you find the work you are doing is too hard or too easy.

We would also like to see the governing body take a more active role in checking how well you are doing and in making sure you all have the chance to learn about people in different parts of the country and around the world. I am sure that will only add to the many interesting things you already learn about in school.

Thank you again for looking after us.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector

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