

Great Horwood Church of England Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110441
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	356742
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Norman Ellison
Headteacher	Janet Hatfield
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2008
School address	School End, Great Horwood Milton Keynes Buckinghamshire MK17 0RG
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 12 lessons taught by five teachers as well as making other observations of teaching and learning. The inspectors held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher, parents and carers, and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation relating to safeguarding, the school's analysis of pupils' attainment and progress, baseline assessment of when children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, various reports written about the school and the acting headteacher's evaluation of teaching and learning. Questionnaires from 55 parents and carers were analysed as well as those from 10 staff and 53 pupils.

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

- Inspectors looked at pupils' achievement in reading and writing across the school.
- Inspectors looked at the effectiveness of systems aimed at raising attainment and improving teaching and learning.
- Inspectors looked at the use of assessment in challenging all groups of pupils, but especially the more-able pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Inspectors looked at the effectiveness of the present leadership and management in enabling the school to move forward during a period of change.

Information about the school

Almost all pupils at this small primary school are of White British origin. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes in all but Year 3 and Year 6 where they are taught as single-age classes. Nursery- and Reception-age children are taught in the Early Years Foundation Stage unit. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very small. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and with a statement of special educational needs is average. The nature of their needs relates to autism, learning difficulties and speech and language difficulties. Eight per cent of the school's population are from Traveller families of Gypsy/Roma heritage. The school is led and managed by a substantive deputy headteacher and acting headteacher. A new headteacher has been appointed and will take up the post in September. The school has gained several awards, including Healthy Schools, Activemark and International Schools Award (Intermediate).

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Since September 2010, under the good leadership and management of the acting headteacher and substantive deputy headteacher, the school is improving. Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Many systems have been implemented to curb the falling standards evident in 2010, such as the regular reviews of pupils' progress and the coaching of teachers to accelerate pupils' progress. The school has good capacity for further improvement as demonstrated by the improvements in teaching and learning, the good partnership with parents and carers, the regular tracking of pupils' progress and the accountability of staff in ensuring that all groups of pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Parents and carers recognise the improvements made recently. 'We feel part of the school, we know how to help our children learn and our children are happy here,' said one parent.

The school's internal data show, and are confirmed by inspection judgements, that pupils' attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the time pupils leave school. In information and communication technology (ICT) and science, their attainment is broadly average, but there are weaknesses in experimental and investigative science and in the use of ICT in all subjects. Pupils' achievement in speaking and listening is outstanding, largely as a result of the introduction of 'talking partners' and the consistency with which all staff ensure that pupils give detailed explanations on how they tackle mathematical problems. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, but their progress remains uneven across the year groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are from Traveller backgrounds make satisfactory progress. The best rates of progress are in Year 6 where teaching is consistently outstanding. In the Years 1/2 class, progress is satisfactory, but is not yet secure in reading and writing. Pupils have difficulty in spelling and in breaking up unknown words in their reading. More-capable pupils are not sufficiently stretched because staff do not use all the information that they have on pupils' prior learning to match appropriate tasks to their needs.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so children get off to a good start because of the high emphasis placed on teaching them the basic skills of reading, writing and number. They enter Year 1 having exceeded the expectations of the early learning goals in all areas of learning. However, pupils' progress slows down in the Years 1/2 class as their starting points are not always built upon well enough. Pupils enjoy school, which is reflected in their high attendance. 'Our teachers are fantastic' and 'they care about us and make learning fun' are just some of the comments made by the older pupils.

Pupils behave well and develop good relationships with their teachers. They have a sound understanding of healthy eating, having worked hard for the Healthy Schools award. They

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have a good knowledge of how to stay safe because of the rigorous safeguarding procedures, which are well documented and meet national requirements. Care, guidance and support are strong, especially in the way that the school provides timely support for pupils who may be vulnerable, which ensures that all pupils have full access to the curriculum.

The satisfactory curriculum is enriched with a good range of visits and visitors. Nevertheless, opportunities for pupils to learn about the life of children in other parts of the world are limited. Pupils contribute well to the local community, attending all Christian festivals at the church and distributing harvest produce to older people.

Although there are strengths in the leadership and management of the school by the acting headteacher and the deputy headteacher, overall, these aspects of the school's work are satisfactory. Subject coordinators are not yet fully involved in analysing data and pupils' performance in their areas of responsibility, so their impact on raising attainment is underdeveloped. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well, but is not yet fully analysing the cost effectiveness of their spending decisions.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in experimental and investigative science and ensure that ICT is used regularly to support learning in all subjects.
- Raise the quality of teaching in the Years 1/2 class so that all pupils, especially the more-able pupils, make consistently good or better progress in reading and writing, by ensuring that:
 - planning builds upon prior learning and makes full use of available data to set more challenging work
 - children's good achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is built upon more effectively in Year 1
 - more emphasis is placed upon teaching systematically the breaking up of letter sounds to aid spelling, reading and writing.
- Improve the skills of subject coordinators in analysing and using information on pupils' performance more effectively.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Attainment in Year 6 is above average. Pupils enjoy coming to school and, in Year 6, their achievements are outstanding because of the high-quality teaching. Throughout the school, however, pupils' achievement is satisfactory because of inconsistencies in the progress made in different year groups. Sensitive, targeted support ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and learners who may be vulnerable make similar progress to their classmates. Pupils from Traveller families receive targeted support to overcome any gaps they have in learning. Progress is not better than satisfactory because not every teacher uses pupils' individual provision maps rigorously to support learning and the more-able pupils are not challenged enough at times, especially in the younger classes. Attendance by all groups of pupils is high.

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Learning is good when the teaching provides the pupils with interesting and relevant activities that challenge them. In a good Year 3 literacy lesson, pupils marvelled at the intricacies of mini beasts and squealed with delight when they found out that female scorpions can eat male scorpions. They learnt well because of the class teacher's insistence on demonstrating correct learning behaviour. In an excellent Years 4/5 mathematics lesson, pupils made excellent progress in calculating how much money they needed to get a 'takeaway' pizza meal. This made a sound contribution to helping them develop the skills necessary for their future economic well-being as their responses were sensible and mature. Assemblies give pupils good guidance in developing Christian values and reflecting on issues such as pride and pomposity and contribute positively to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community by taking on a range of responsibilities, such as older pupils looking after younger ones and raising funds to help those less fortunate than themselves.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	2
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	1
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?

Teaching is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, pupils are spellbound by their teachers' explanations. In these lessons, the effective use of time ensures that pupils remain totally focused on and stick to the task set by the teacher. Good questioning, which probes pupils' understanding well, has a positive effect on their thinking skills. Not

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all teachers identify clearly the next steps in learning in their planning. This prevents more able pupils from making better progress in lessons, especially in reading and writing in the younger classes.

The broad, balanced curriculum is enriched with a good range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy gardening, dancing, cookery and multi-sports. However, there are some missed opportunities to develop writing and use ICT in other subjects. There are good links with other schools and pupils are effectively supported in their next stages of education. Transition to secondary school runs smoothly, with pupils, parents and carers clear as to what is expected of them.

Pupils receive good care, guidance and support. The personal, social and health education and physical education programmes contribute well to the development of pupils' personal and social skills. A good number of intervention programmes, which are effective, is offered to pupils who need additional support in literacy and numeracy. Little evidence was seen of ICT resources being used by pupils who find aspects of learning difficult. The school works well with play therapists, bereavement councillors and the speech and language service. The pastoral care given to pupils is good and the Worry Box, where pupils can highlight their concerns, is used to good effect.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher and substantive deputy headteacher have been leading the school with great determination, creating a positive climate for further development and driving improvement through the regular support of all staff. In a very short time, they have brought in many systems of accountability, such as performance management, reviews of pupils' progress and the regular monitoring of teaching and learning. This has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement. The personal needs of pupils are identified carefully so that equality of opportunity is satisfactorily addressed. However, not all year groups are making the same rate of progress as others. The school ensures that safeguarding procedures are robust and well documented. The governing body fulfils its duties in relation to ensuring that the school is a safe environment. It deploys resources appropriately to achieve satisfactory value for money and, as part of its role in holding the school to account, it asks pertinent questions relating to pupils' progress.

Self-evaluation is accurate and the tracking of pupils' academic progress is now secure. School development planning is based on the areas identified through its self-evaluation, with the correct focus on raising attainment. A thorough audit of community cohesion has been undertaken which has highlighted that pupils' knowledge of global issues is not as

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strong as their knowledge of their immediate community. Overall, community cohesion is satisfactory. The school engages well with parents and carers, keeping them fully informed of how their children are doing. The school is a harmonious community, benefiting from links with other agencies and secondary schools.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Because of the very small cohorts of children, attainment on entry is very variable, but children's skills and experiences when they enter the Nursery are typical of children of this age. The children make good gains in their learning and enter Year 1 exceeding the expectations for their age. They make particularly good progress in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy and more able children are already writing number sentences. Children make good progress in speaking and listening and personal, social and emotional development. They play well with one another, for example measuring how far their paper aeroplanes fly outdoors. They play with puppets and act out stories and this prepares them well for when they enter the Years 1/2 class.

Teaching is good, particularly in the way adults enhance children's language and model the correct formation of sentences. Teachers keep a detailed record of children's activities and their successes in learning. However, they do not yet formally identify their next steps in learning so that these can be shared with parents and carers. Parents and carers are rightly pleased with the good welfare arrangements and know that their children are safe.

Children know how to care for their immediate environment by playing with toys carefully and this contributes to their emerging skills of citizenship. They behave well and they get on well with one another, especially when eating their fruit at snack time and commenting on how healthy it is for them. They have positive relationships with their teachers and all welfare arrangements are good. Good leadership and management ensure that parents

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and carers are seen as partners in learning and are helped to gain access to any services that their child might need.

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

Almost all parents and carers who returned the questionnaires say that their children enjoy school and are pleased with the education that their children receive. A very small minority felt that the school does not deal effectively with behaviour. The inspection team found pupils' behaviour to be good, with all policies and procedures adhered to consistently by staff. Parents and carers commented that they felt included in most aspects of school life and that the acting headteacher was always ready to listen to their concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Great Horwood Church of England Combined 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 55 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 109 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	60	19	35	2	4	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	30	55	23	42	2	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	23	42	30	55	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	38	30	55	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	33	36	65	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	45	28	51	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	42	32	58	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)	16	29	34	62	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	38	33	60	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	36	26	47	8	15	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	42	30	55	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	42	27	49	4	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	53	25	45	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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.



24 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Horwood Church of England Combined School, Milton Keynes, MK17 0RG

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We were particularly impressed with your excellent speaking and listening skills and how well you could talk about school life. You attend a satisfactory school. Some things in the school are good but other aspects need improving. These are the main things we found out about your school.

- You make satisfactory progress in your learning and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. Those of you in Year 6, though, make outstanding progress in your learning.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start and make good progress.
- You behave well, are polite and well mannered and you look after one another well, especially in the playground.
- You are well looked after and you know how to keep safe.
- Your attendance is high and clearly you like coming to school.
- The school has good partnerships with your parents and carers.
- Your acting headteacher and deputy headteacher are doing a good job in helping your school get even better.

We have asked your teachers to do three main things to improve the quality of education that you receive.

- Provide you with more opportunities to learn about setting up experiments in science and to use information and communication technology (ICT) more often in other subjects.
- Help those of you in the Years 1/2 class to make faster progress by improving your writing and spelling, building on what you have already learnt in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and to set you more challenging work.
- Ensure that teachers with subject responsibilities use the information they have on your progress more effectively.

You can help by paying particular attention to your writing, spelling and asking your teachers if they will let you use ICT more often to support your learning.

Yours sincerely

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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