

Greenvale Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118317
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	358309
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Geraghty-Shewan
Headteacher	Elizabeth Caldwell
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2007
School address	Symons Avenue Chatham Kent ME4 5UP
Telephone number	01634 409521
Fax number	01634 819823
Email address	office@greenvale.medway.sch.uk

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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 15 lessons taught by nine staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation and pupils' workbooks. They held discussions with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, including the Chair of Governors, and senior staff. Questionnaires from 63 parents and carers and 20 staff were analysed to help inform the inspection process.

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

- How well children in the Early Years Foundation Stage attain in their language and number work.
- Whether teaching promotes pupils' basic reading, writing and mathematical skills well in Years 1 and 2.
- The extent to which pupils' personal qualities, particularly their healthy lifestyles, are developed to help improve their overall achievement.
- The effectiveness of senior leaders in identifying what will help raise pupils' academic outcomes further.

Information about the school

The school is a similar size to other infant schools.. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of improvements to the school's accommodation and grounds. A Nursery unit was opened in September 2009. The Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in two Nursery bases and two Reception classes. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Approximately a third of pupils are from minority ethnic heritages. The school has both national and local authority Healthy Schools awards.

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

Greenvale provides its pupils with a good standard of education. Its strengths lie in the way in which individuals are nurtured, cared for and developed so they are better able to become confident learners. Pupils' attainment is now rising nearer to the national average. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school.

Pupils say they 'love the school' and 'staff help us if we are unhappy'. The vast majority of pupils behave well both within lessons and at playtimes. Pupils' academic achievement has not always kept pace with their levels of well-being and enjoyment. Since the last inspection, results of national tests have been well below average, but in the most recent national testing, these improved significantly. Pupils now reach broadly average levels of attainment in their work. One of the reasons for this is the good start they now have in the Nursery and Reception classes. The Nursery, developed since the last inspection, provides a more secure foundation for children's learning as they move into Reception and then further through the school. In Years 1 and 2, there are still some weaknesses in aspects of pupils' writing, spoken abilities and number work and not all pupils reach the levels expected. Although children write with increasing confidence, their spelling ability is too variable and their writing is not always presented to best effect. Pupils, while generally confident, do not use a wide vocabulary when answering questions. In number work, pupils are not confident or accurate enough to solve simple number problems mentally.

Teaching is generally good, although this varies between classes and subjects so that pupils' progress sometimes slows. Lessons are usually fun and practically based, which helps pupils enjoy them. On some occasions, however, pupils are not given enough opportunities to choose how they might learn. Although teachers give pupils opportunities to speak to the class or each other, they do not always expect them to expand upon their answers to increase their speaking skills further. Recent changes to the curriculum mean that learning in one subject often complements learning in another. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, along with their peers, as their needs are identified and addressed quickly. Pupils from minority ethnic heritages also keep pace with classmates in their learning as there are a number of specific adults assigned to help them, to interpret instructions, or aid them when completing work.

The headteacher, senior staff and the governing body manage the school effectively and to maintain the good outcomes noted at the previous inspection. The school's effective and accurate self-evaluation involves parents, carers, pupils, others beyond the school and the governing body. Priorities help guide efforts to improve pupils' academic outcomes to complement the school's drive to be an inclusive and caring school. Given that senior leaders have maintained the school's effectiveness since the last inspection and that it has improved in some areas such as pupils' academic outcomes, the provision for Nursery children and school grounds, the school has good capacity to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment in English and mathematics in Years 1 and 2 by:
 - giving pupils more guidance in how to spell words more accurately and in presenting their written work more carefully
 - helping pupils develop a wider spoken vocabulary to enable them to speak confidently and at length
 - helping pupils to be more confident and quicker in their mental number calculation.
- Improve further the quality and consistency of teaching through the school by:
 - ensuring the teachers give pupils more time to respond to their questions and encourage them to respond at greater length
 - allowing pupils to choose activities or materials themselves more frequently in Years 1 and 2
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) in their day-to-day lesson activities
 - ensuring that children's outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage has a greater degree of focus and adult support so children learn more effectively.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children's personal outcomes are good, particularly those relating to their sense of safety, their development of healthy lifestyles and their behaviour. The school's local and national health awards are well deserved. Pupils' good contribution to the school and wider community is reflected in the way they help each other, raise money for charities, visit local places of interest and are community minded. The school council helps guide and influence school direction.

Pupils' good levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness underpin their willingness to cooperate with each other in this diverse community. Pupils enjoy learning Tai Chi and about Chinese culture from a visiting teacher. In lessons, pupils' improving levels of academic abilities complement these personal qualities so that they achieve well, given their very low starting points on entry. The combining of different subjects is starting to pay dividends in motivating pupils and helping them practise their skills more regularly. For example, work on Kenya in Year 2 skilfully combined writing, artwork and knowledge of the country's features. Pupils' writing skills vary in quality, both in presentation and consistency of spelling. Therefore, while they are keen to put their thoughts on paper, their skills sometimes let them down. Pupils' skills in ICT are broadly at the level expected, but are not used frequently enough in day-to-day lessons. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of simple scientific principles, such as how things grow and develop, were confirmed when some told inspectors about growing vegetables and when others protected a small spider they had discovered in the playground.

Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from good adult support both individually and in small groups, as do those who are at the early stages of learning English. The diverse nature of children in the school presents little problem to

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them as their willingness to include others or appreciate their differing beliefs is well developed. While pupils enjoy attending, a small number of parents and carers still find it hard to send their children to school regularly and attendance levels are satisfactory rather than good. Pupils' improving academic levels mean they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

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	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	3
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?

Recent changes to how the curriculum is taught help teachers to plan lessons which are fun, interesting and increasingly demanding in terms of raising the levels of pupils' basic skills. Teachers develop good relationships with their pupils and usually pitch activities at the right level for all abilities. Good use of group work, often supported by teaching assistants, helps pupils to make generally good progress within lessons. On occasions this progress slows, when pupils are not always stretched in their verbal abilities or in presenting their work carefully. Good, practically based lessons are sometimes let down by not allowing pupils enough choice in the way they tackle problems or use ICT to record work. Teachers give both written and verbal feedback to the pupils well. The use of simple targets to help pupils improve, while generally good, is better in some classes than others. The good curriculum combines different subjects, which is helping to make learning more fun and relevant. A wide range of well-attended extracurricular clubs broadens pupils' horizons and some clubs provide extra opportunities to develop their physical abilities. A

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number of visits, visitors to the school and trips to local places of interest help broaden the curriculum further. The Chinese and ICT clubs are particularly popular, according to the pupils.

The determination of all staff to provide extended care for pupils shows itself in various ways. For example, links with parents and carers and direct support help those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable or those starting school with limited English speaking skills. The informal small group called 'sparklers', designed for those children who need extra emotional support, succeeds in helping them become more ready to learn. However, there is an opportunity to plan activities to foster their academic learning more. The links developed with other schools and professionals contribute well to pupils' well-being, resulting in them feeling safe, valued and emotionally supported.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders, supported by staff and the governing body, have driven improvement in the school's learning environment and outside facilities, as well as providing new Nursery provision. As a result, pupils learn better and the school's academic results this year are the best for some time. Careful monitoring of pupils' progress indicates that this trend is forecast to continue next year. Teaching is monitored regularly, with diagnostic feedback given to the staff to help improve it further. Middle leaders are comparatively new in their role, but have identified weaker areas to tackle and are ambitious to improve further. However, they are not yet fully involved in observing the work of others to gauge progress in subjects. The governing body gives the school good support, despite a small number of governors being relatively new in their role. They visit regularly, are keen to help the school improve and maintain the good links that exist with parents, carers and other professionals. Safeguarding routines are of good quality, as are checks on site security. Governors vet staff appointments carefully and thoroughly. They ensure policies are robust and updated regularly. Senior leaders identify the various groups in the school closely and identify any differences in progress. These are reducing quickly, as the groups' specific needs are identified clearly. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and efforts to ensure that all pupils benefit from activities or attendance at clubs are effective. The school promotes community cohesion well and there are harmonious relationships between pupils, parents, carers and the local community. The new family room is used to good effect to enhance links and as a community venue. Working arrangements with other local schools are well established to help with staff training, for example. Pupils have a good awareness of their local area, and their global perspective is developed through topics and specific links with a Chinese school and other schools. Their knowledge of

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places within the United Kingdom is less well developed, but they appreciate that other areas may be different from their own.

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	2
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 have a good start in the Nursery. Their welfare needs are catered for very well and those children who join other than at the normal times of year integrate well due to the carefully considered routines. Nursery children happily work and play together with children in the Reception classes. This helps them to socialise with older children and develop their confidence. Children in the Reception classes are catered for well in their basic skills such as learning letter sounds and basic counting. Children enjoyed, for example, writing simple sentences on an electronic postcard where they could hear the sounds of letter combinations. Other children developed their role-playing abilities in the kitchen by preparing an imaginary breakfast which one child said was 'yummy'. Other children enjoyed developing their painting skills linked to their project about animals, while others showed inspectors how their toy tractor was cutting the crops on their farm. When they enter Year 1, children have made up ground in their learning from their well below average starting points, although aspects of their learning, such as their language skills and knowledge and understanding are below the levels expected. Children have access to a large outside area with many activities, although the wide diversity of activities means that sometimes children lack focus in developing their learning. While adults are conscientious in supervising children, they are not always as skilful or prompt in guiding children's learning in order that they gain the full benefit from the activities they are choosing. There are good arrangements to link with parents and carers before children start, as this aspect of the school is managed well. Assessments on children are carried out regularly, which helps staff to modify activities and to develop written 'learning stories' for each child's work and progress which can be shared with parents and carers.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2
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

The number of questionnaires returned by parents and carers was below average, compared to other schools. However, there was an overwhelmingly positive response. Although few chose to comment, those who did spoke highly of the school, of the way it treats their children and of the wide variety of activities on offer. There are no comments which indicate that parents or carers want improvement. The inspection findings endorse the positive responses made by parents and carers relating to the way in which pupils' well-being is developed and promoted.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Greenvale 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 63 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 263 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	68	20	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	70	19	30	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	38	60	25	40	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	63	22	35	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	63	23	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	59	26	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	62	23	37	1	2	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)	32	51	27	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	57	25	40	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	57	25	40	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	56	28	44	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	42	67	21	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	75	16	25	0	0	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



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25 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Greenvale Infant School, Chatham ME4 5UP

I enjoyed meeting with you, looking around your school and seeing all of the things you do. We think that you go to a good school that really looks after you, and makes you feel safe.

We particularly enjoyed looking at the new storytelling area, the new amphitheatre and your new vegetable plots. I hope you manage to grow your vegetables. We think the school is helping you to learn well, although some of you need some extra help in your writing and number work. We know that some of you like talking, but we think you can make some of your answers a little bit longer sometimes or use more words when you answer any of the teachers' questions.

We liked looking at your work about Kenya and thought it was good that you knew so much! I enjoyed looking at some of the work you did in the computer suite, but I have asked the teachers to help you use computers a little bit more in your classrooms if possible. In some lessons, you need to have more choice in the things that you want to do or the materials that you choose to complete your work. The headteacher, staff and governors want to make the school even better and we think they have done a good job in helping you to get better at your reading, writing and number work, particularly those of you in Year 2. We thought you did a lot of running around at playtimes to keep fit and you told us that you try to eat healthily ? so keep trying to eat the right things. We know that you have found out a lot about China recently and those of you that were learning Tai Chi moved calmly and carefully.

All of you can help too by working hard at your writing and number work as well as keeping up your good behaviour. It is nice that you all get on so well with each other, even though you have different ideas, backgrounds or beliefs.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge (on behalf of the inspection team)

Lead inspector

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