

Grove Road Primary School

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 117341 |
| Local Authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 379397 |
| Inspection dates | 18–19 October 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Christopher Parker |

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 | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 449 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | John Manning |
| Headteacher | John Grubb |
| Date of previous school inspection | 22 January 2009 |
| School address | Grove Road Tring HP23 5PD |
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|---------------------------|--------------------|
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 27 lessons, taught by 16 teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, and representatives of the governing body. The inspectors looked at a range of documentation and examples of the pupils' work. Questionnaire responses from pupils, staff and 131 parents and carers were analysed.

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

- How effectively is assessment used to help the pupils to learn and make progress?
- How effectively have senior leaders monitored and evaluated the impact of its target setting and improvement activities over the last three years?
- How effectively does the school analyse, promote and evaluate its work on community cohesion?

Information about the school

This primary school is larger than average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average, as is the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language. A very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much lower than in most schools.

The headteacher has commitments as a representative of a headteachers' forum, which results in him being out of school one or two days each week. The headteacher provides the strategic leadership of the school. The deputy headteacher takes responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school.

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

4

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 the leadership and management of the school.

Although the school is providing an acceptable standard of education for the pupils, its leaders and managers have not demonstrated the capacity to bring about the improvements needed to make sure that the pupils make consistently good progress. The school does not have a clear or well-developed strategy to bring about improvement in the future. The school's plan does not contain challenging targets, timescales or criteria against which success can be measured. Furthermore, there is no indication of who is responsible for its completion or for monitoring its implementation. This clearly illustrates a lack of ambition and drive to ensure all pupils make good or better progress and attain high standards.

The children start school with a broader and better-developed range of skills and abilities than in many schools. They make generally satisfactory progress through the school, making better progress in some years than others. Progress in English is better than in mathematics. The teaching is satisfactory. The teachers prepare conscientiously for their lessons. However, the work they set for the pupils is not always well matched to their needs, nor is it consistently challenging to the more able. In some lessons the teachers stifle progress by talking for too long, or repeatedly interjecting once a task has been set. Consequently the time available for pupils to develop and practise their skills is reduced, and they make satisfactory rather than good progress. The quality of marking is inconsistent.

The teachers are engaged in activities to bring about improvements. In one year group, they are exploring ways of providing better feedback for pupils through their marking. However, these activities are piecemeal and do not constitute a coherent approach to bringing about whole-school improvement. Although the monitoring of the quality of teaching does highlight areas where improvements can be made to each teacher's performance, it is not sufficiently focused on the impact of the teaching on pupils' learning and progress. Therefore, it does not accurately inform the school's evaluation of its own performance, which is consequently too generous.

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The deputy headteacher ensures that the school runs smoothly from day to day. The care, guidance and support of the pupils are good. They are happy and feel safe at school. Levels of attendance are high. The pupils acquire a good knowledge of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. They make a good contribution to the school community and have a good range of skills for their future well-being. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory but is not extended further because the school does not plan or evaluate its promotion of community cohesion.

The governing body has been challenging the school about its performance for some time. In 2010 and 2011, the teaching and learning committee carried out incisive, detailed and accurate evaluations which asked searching questions of senior leaders. The governing body has exerted some influence over the strategic direction of the school. However, despite its best efforts the governing body has not been able to ensure that the headteacher brings about the improvements which it knows are necessary.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics, so that they reach the highest standards, by:
 - raising expectations of what the pupils can achieve
 - making full use of assessment information about what pupils already know and are able to do, to ensure that the more-able pupils are consistently enthused and challenged
 - using time more purposefully and productively in lessons
 - improving marking so that it clearly identifies how the pupils can improve their work.

- Improve the rigour and purpose of the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that all activities have a sharp focus on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress
 - ensuring the information collected is used to full effect to improve teaching and learning to better inform improvement planning.

- Establish a strategy to drive improvement and reach ambitious targets that includes:
 - priorities that are based on a thorough and robust evaluation of the school's performance
 - a well-focused improvement plan with clear targets, demanding timescales, and precise criteria against which success can be measured
 - all staff working towards common goals
 - explicit responsibilities for implementation, monitoring progress towards the targets, and evaluating the impact of each priority.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Many children enter school with a range of skills and abilities that exceed those expected for their age. By the end of Year 6 attainment is above average, but not as high as it should be; this is because progress, although satisfactory, is inconsistent. The school's data show considerable variation in progress from year to year and between subjects. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, although it is slower in mathematics than in English. Mathematics has been the focus for improvement over the last two years, but the actions taken by the school have not resulted in improved progress being made by the pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress which is in line with other pupils. Other groups, such as the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language, also make progress in line with their peers.

Variations in progress are evident in lessons and in the pupils' work. In some of the lessons seen during the inspection, the pupils made good progress because the lessons built successfully on what they already knew. However, other lessons, although satisfactory, lacked the urgency essential for rapid progress. For example, in a lesson where pupils learning to use adverbs they acted out an adverb they had chosen. Initially this activity helped the pupils' understanding but it ran for much longer than was necessary and began to lose its impact. The school uses a range of extra support programmes, but analysis of their impact on pupils' progress suggests that they result in equally patchy outcomes. The most successful among them is the one-to-one initiative which helped all of the pupils involved to catch up with their peers last year.

The pupils' questionnaire responses indicated that a minority of pupils felt that behaviour was not as good as it should be. Discussions with the pupils indicated that most pupils behave well. This was evident in lessons, except when pupils were not challenged and hence became a little restless. The pupils are confident, and are very keen to contribute to discussions and answer their teachers' questions. They collaborate successfully and have good teamwork skills. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The pupils respect the views of others, but have few opportunities to engage with pupils from different backgrounds.

In conversation, it is clear that the pupils enjoy school. They say they feel safe at school, and almost all of their parents and carers agree that the school keeps them as safe as possible. They have positive attitudes to healthy lifestyles and enjoy physical educational lessons, swimming and after-school sports clubs.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

3

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

| | |
|---|----------|
| 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 | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attendance ¹ | 1 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |

How effective is the provision?

There are some good aspects to the teaching, but variation and inconsistency result in the pupils making satisfactory rather good progress. In some of the lessons seen there was skilful questioning by the teacher to ascertain the extent of the pupils' understanding. This was the case in a Year 1 mathematics lesson where pupils were measuring using cubes and paper clips. In this lesson the teacher moved the learning along at a good pace. However, there are occasions where teachers do not assess how quickly pupils are learning, and therefore do not move them on as quickly as they could.

The quality of marking varies considerably. Consequently, some pupils are not getting the guidance they need in order to improve their work. In particular, teachers' comments do not consistently extend the more-able pupils. Some pupils say they have targets to strive for, but others are not sure. Targets are not routinely referred to in lessons, or when the teachers mark the pupils' work.

The curriculum is satisfactory, but does not provide the pupils with sufficient opportunity to make good or better progress. The pupils are interested in what they do and are challenged by, for example, learning French or a brass instrument. Teachers are making more effective links between subjects to create more coherent learning opportunities for pupils. The pupils appreciate the good opportunities for clubs and extracurricular activities offered by the school.

The day-to-day care and support for pupils is good. The school works closely with

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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the family support worker to ensure that those who may be potentially vulnerable receive the support they need. Transition arrangements are good, and are aided by close links with the neighbouring secondary school. Relationships between adults and pupils are good. The deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator plan closely together to ensure that support staff are effectively deployed in the classroom to provide timely assistance for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school expects regular attendance and does not authorise holidays.

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 leadership of teaching and learning is weak and lacks the urgency to bring about rapid improvement. The time that the headteacher spends away from the school has resulted in a lack of clarity and direction. Less than half of those members of staff who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the school is well led and managed.

The quality of improvement planning is inadequate. The weaknesses in the school’s plan for improvement are compounded by the limited level of awareness about the plan, and its priorities, among some of the teachers. In addition, subject leaders do not use information about the pupils’ performance to analyse the strengths of the curriculum and make changes where they are needed.

The assessment leader analyses the progress and attainment of all pupils as they move through the school. The progress of groups, such as those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is also analysed. This reflects the school’s satisfactory commitment to equality of opportunity. However, the detailed analysis of pupils’ performance is not used effectively to identify where improvements are needed, or to establish an accurate picture of the school’s effectiveness.

The governing body has many strong aspects to its work, but it has not been able to impose a strategic direction to deliver increased progress and higher attainment for the pupils. While the governing body monitors safeguarding arrangements, and ensures they meet requirements, systems are not robust enough to ensure that all records are of the highest standard. The governing body does not meet requirements

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for ensuring that the school promotes community cohesion, and the school has not planned or analysed the impact of its work in this area.

Partnerships with parents and carers are satisfactory. The school has responded to parents’ concerns about communication by improving newsletters and setting up a parent council. While some parents appreciate the improvements, others still feel that communication could be improved. Wider partnerships contribute satisfactorily to the well-being and the satisfactory outcomes for pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 4 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 4 |
| 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 | 3 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

The children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with a broader and better-developed range of skills than usual. The progress of the pupils who left the Reception classes last year varied considerably across the areas of learning. More of the children reached the expected level than the national average in the key areas of writing and number. They also had good attitudes to learning, which are clearly evident now they have moved into Year 1. In other areas they did not progress quite as well.

This year children in the Nursery are already identifying rhyming words. When they were involved in making an apple crumble, many confidently offered reasons why it was important that they washed their hands before they started. The teaching is lively in adult-led activities in the classroom, and develops the children’s communication and language well. In the Reception class the linking of letters and sounds was well taught through a carefully structured session. The children do not make as much progress in outdoor learning because there are not enough

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opportunities to use writing tools or explore a variety of media outside. Nevertheless, the curriculum covers all areas of learning and the children are making secure gains, for example in their physical development. The teachers provide appropriate opportunities for the children to explore the world around them, develop their number skills, and extend their personal development. As a result, children enjoy learning. The children are cared for with sensitivity. The adults observe and note the children’s progress. These notes are routinely added to their learning journey folders.

Although there are many good features to the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage the absence of an established assessment system does not allow the Early Years Foundation Stage team to ensure the children make consistently good progress in all areas of learning. Newly implemented assessment arrangements have recently added greater structure and more opportunities for them to analyse the effectiveness of the provision on outcomes for the children.

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

Many parents added written comments to their questionnaire responses. Although some wrote in praise of the school, most expressed a degree of concern. The concerns covered a range of issues. The three most common themes of parents’ comments related to the profile of the headteacher and his presence in school; the extent to which pupils are stretched; and the effectiveness of communication between home and school. Inspectors gathered evidence on all these matters and found weaknesses in the leadership of the school, particularly linked to its capacity to bring rapid improvement. They also found that some lessons were not challenging enough to ensure that the pupils made good progress. Inspectors found communication with parents to be satisfactory. The introduction of the parents’ forum, newsletters and a good range of information on the school website provide an adequate range of information for parents. The number of opportunities that the school provides for parents to talk to the teachers about each pupil’s progress follows a similar pattern to that in most schools.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Grove Road 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 131 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 449 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 71 | 54 | 57 | 44 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 54 | 41 | 74 | 56 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child’s progress | 26 | 20 | 70 | 53 | 29 | 22 | 2 | 2 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 33 | 25 | 78 | 60 | 11 | 8 | 2 | 2 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 38 | 29 | 80 | 61 | 7 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child’s learning | 30 | 23 | 74 | 56 | 17 | 13 | 4 | 3 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 39 | 30 | 89 | 68 | 1 | 1 | 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) | 45 | 34 | 70 | 53 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child’s particular needs | 33 | 25 | 80 | 61 | 12 | 9 | 4 | 3 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 17 | 13 | 83 | 63 | 16 | 12 | 3 | 2 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 18 | 14 | 82 | 63 | 16 | 12 | 2 | 2 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 27 | 21 | 78 | 60 | 12 | 9 | 7 | 5 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school | 48 | 37 | 71 | 54 | 7 | 5 | 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 | 43 | 47 | 10 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 6 | 46 | 42 | 6 |
| Secondary schools | 14 | 36 | 41 | 9 |
| Sixth forms | 15 | 42 | 41 | 3 |
| Special schools | 30 | 48 | 19 | 3 |
| Pupil referral units | 14 | 50 | 31 | 5 |
| All schools | 10 | 44 | 39 | 6 |

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 08 April 2011 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.



20 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grove Road Primary School, Tring, HP23 5PD

This letter is to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection, and to thank you for completing the questionnaire and taking the time to talk to the inspectors about your school. The school is providing you with a satisfactory education, but it is not helping you to make as much progress as you could. I have asked that a number of improvements be made so that you can make faster progress and reach higher standards, particularly in mathematics. I have also asked the headteacher and senior leaders to be more thorough in the way that they check to see how well the school is performing, and to develop plans that will lead to rapid improvements. I have given the school a 'notice to improve', which means that inspectors will visit the school again to see how well progress is being made.

You told the inspectors that you are happy and feel safe at school. You behaved well in the lessons we visited, and on the playground. You said that you like the clubs that the school offers. The pupils in Year 5 were particularly enjoying their French, music and sports lessons that I visited. You make a good contribution to your school community, although some of you would like more opportunities to take responsibility. You can help by suggesting to your school council the extra responsibilities you would like to take on.

Your thoughtful, sensible and clear answers to our questions have helped the inspectors a lot. I hope the steps that I have asked the school to take will result in you enjoying school even more, finding learning challenging, and making progress as well as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker
Lead inspector

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