

Great Gidding CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110813
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	395436
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2012
Lead inspector	Robert Greatrex

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Blundell
Headteacher	Alex Chambers
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2007
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Robert Greatrex

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed teaching and learning in eight lessons or parts of lessons taught by three different teachers. For all of these observations, the inspector was accompanied by the headteacher. The inspector listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work. Other discussions were held with members of the governing body, the headteacher and other staff. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line survey (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation, the school's own assessment data and reports from the local authority. The inspector analysed questionnaires from pupils and staff as well as those from the parents and carers of 27 pupils.

Information about the school

Great Gidding CofE Primary School is much smaller than the average primary school. The school has reduced from three to two classes: children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught in one class, and pupils in Years 3 to 6 in the other. The majority of pupils are White British. While many come from the immediate locality, more than half come from further away. A relatively high proportion of pupils join the school at times other than the start of Reception. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average. The school meets the current floor standard which sets the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

The school runs an after-school club each weekday. The school has Investors in People and Healthy Schools status and holds Basic Skills Awards and the Eco-Schools Bronze Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Great Gidding is a good school. Children make a good start in the youngest class and continue to make good progress because they have excellent attitudes to learning and make the most of the good teaching and curriculum. The school is not outstanding because older pupils are not taught enough about how to use and apply their numeracy skills, nor are pupils sufficiently prepared for life in a multicultural society.
- All pupils achieve well and attainment is generally above average by the time they leave the school. Reading is a particular strength. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs thrive because of the care they are given.
- Teaching is good. Activities are very closely matched to pupils' prior attainment, so they are neither too hard nor too easy. In the older class, teaching does not put enough emphasis on subject specific language in mathematics.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Social development is excellent: pupils genuinely care for and about one another, so the school has a real 'family feel'. Pupils look forward to coming to school because the activities they are given are interesting and link one subject to another well. Assemblies particularly give a real sense of 'togetherness' and spirituality to school life.
- Teamwork is at the heart of the school's success. Although the headteacher drives improvement, everyone connected with the school plays their full part. Her skills are complemented by those of the senior teacher and the governing body. Performance management is effective because the school's needs are carefully analysed and met through well-tailored training. Teaching is particularly well managed. All the staff are equally committed to school improvement. Although the curriculum is good overall, it lacks sufficient meaningful and relevant activities to prepare pupils for life in our multicultural society.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their numeracy skills in real-life and relevant problem-solving activities
 - routinely teaching subject specific language so that it is understood and used regularly and accurately by pupils.
- Better prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society by extending national and international links with contrasting locations, and incorporating more activities in the curriculum that promote this aspect of pupils' development.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Year groups in such a small school differ substantially in size and the results can vary greatly from year to year. Nevertheless, inspection findings show that the vast majority of pupils make good progress. Achievement is good because all staff know the pupils very well and they are, consequently, given activities at just the right level. Although pupils learn in one of two classes only, this accurate knowledge of pupils' prior attainment is used to group pupils. An able mathematician in Year 2, for example, will learn with Year 3, while a Year 1 pupil who would benefit from further practice in linking letters and sounds (phonics) does so with the younger year group. In both cases, learning is at the right level and, therefore, progress is good. Most parents and carers who respond to the questionnaire stated that they feel their children are making good progress.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with very varied levels of skills and knowledge. They settle quickly and thrive straight away in the very supportive and encouraging climate for learning. The youngest, for example, delight in running to where their teacher has marked on the playground the sounds she reads out. Their accuracy is testament to the good progress they make in learning phonics, which is a particular strength. This good progress continues through the school so that attainment in reading is consistently above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Guided reading is clearly planned to improve pupils' techniques and skills while enthusing them with a love of reading a wide range of genres. Purposeful links to the broader curriculum, including events such as 'world book day', are celebrated and used skilfully to promote books and reading. Parents and carers are fully involved in a partnership to support their children's acquisition of reading skills.

Careful and accurate tracking of pupils' progress helps to ensure all stay on course to reach their targets. Information is used well by teachers and teaching assistants,

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particularly to group pupils so that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with their classmates.

Quality of teaching

Children make good progress as soon as they join the youngest class and this continues throughout their time in the school. Teachers ensure that the range of interesting and relevant activities from which they can select is always carefully chosen so that their curiosity is aroused and their love of learning encouraged. These tasks reinforce the new learning in adult-led activities, which are very carefully planned to meet each pupil's specific needs. The good quality learning in the younger class carries on throughout the school. In a lesson in Years 3 to 6, pupils enjoyed a mini-debate about homework. They thought about their opinion, chose 'sides', argued their point of view and listened to one another. The teacher cleverly developed the debate and pointed out particularly persuasive arguments and skilful approaches. All pupils enjoy working together. The teamwork skills they learn and practise, such as collaboration and turn-taking, are of a high standard. Staff use this and every opportunity to foster pupils' outstanding social development.

Clear and thorough planning is at the heart of the well-organised lessons, which flow and build from one activity to the next. The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good and activities are also carefully planned to meet their particular needs. Questioning is often matched to each pupil's different levels of understanding, so all are challenged to think. Reading is taught well because pupils are given a very good understanding of the 'tools' of reading and are exposed to a wide range of texts. Through the close partnership with parents and carers, this is extended at home. Although marking often includes recommendations about how work could be improved, staff do not always subsequently check that pupils have followed their advice. Targets are used more effectively because all staff know each pupil's 'next steps' in learning. All pupils and nearly all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel that teaching is good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' attitudes are exemplary and they contribute much to the success of learning through their eagerness to learn and pleasure in working together. Behaviour is outstanding.

Throughout the school, pupils' enthusiasm for learning contributes greatly to their good progress because they work hard, persevere and take pride in their achievements. Whether working with a teacher, teaching assistant or on their own, pupils work extremely hard to achieve the goals set for them. They show excellent diligence and application whether working alone, in pairs or in groups, so that learning is of good depth and quality.

Pupils' excellent understanding of what it means to be safe includes a very thorough understanding of the potential dangers of the internet, including cyber-bullying.

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Integral to the caring ethos of the school is the excellent care pupils show towards one another. Pupils self-regulate their behaviour. Pupils new to the school quickly learn the expectations pupils have of themselves and each other, and willingly conform to pupils' excellent standards. Older pupils particularly have an excellent awareness of those younger than themselves, and take exceptional care of them. Older pupils set a very good example, and patiently explain to younger pupils what they should do, and why. Pupils are confident that staff will help them resolve any disagreements or incidents of bullying, although they state both are extremely rare.

Pupils enjoy school greatly. They are punctual to school and attendance is above average. Whenever a pupil's attendance causes a concern, the school moves quickly to meet parents and carers and rectify this situation.

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire stated that their children feel safe in school and pupils agree. The vast majority also feel equally positive about the standard of behaviour.

Leadership and management

The school is prospering because of the clear and coherent vision of the headteacher and other leaders. Major improvements since the last inspection have resolved previous weaknesses in provision for the youngest children. Long-term planning is realistic and ambitious. Members of the governing body possess many skills and use them effectively. They form a very good team. They are effectively raising the school's profile in the wider community. As a consequence, the school roll is increasing.

School leaders are not afraid to take tough decisions. The reduction in the number of classes from three to two has been managed well. Good performance management leads to carefully-tailored professional development for all staff. This, in turn, makes a major contribution to pupils' good progress and is helping to build teachers' leadership skills. Good management of staff results in everyone knowing their roles and responsibilities, and what they can expect from others. Staff use their skills and expertise well, which contributes to the effectiveness of teaching and good progress pupils make.

The good curriculum is relevant and interesting to pupils because it links new learning in one subject to previous learning in another. Skills previously learnt, therefore, can be practised and consolidated in new tasks. The main exception is mathematics where, in the class for pupils in Years 3 to 6, insufficient use is made of potential links to enable pupils to practise their skills through real-life examples. Effective activities often provide opportunities for pupils to develop teamwork and collaborative learning.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are very well promoted within the curriculum and through day-to-day activities of the school. Occasions such as celebration assembly give a real sense of joy at sharing one another's achievements,

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both at school and in the wider community. A strong spiritual dimension is created by the care expressed for one another and all living creatures. This is particularly true at the after-school club, when pupils behave like one big happy family. For example, older pupils delight in explaining to the younger ones what they are doing as they look after the guinea pigs. Pupils are given a good understanding of their own culture, but the school insufficiently prepares them for life in a multicultural society. They have very little knowledge of, or contact with, pupils from any other culture.

Partnerships are good. Close ties with neighbouring schools are effective on several levels: for sharing information, staff training and, more recently, for the development of governance. Partnership with parents and carers is equally positive. As one parent stated, typifying the views of others, 'All I want to say is how lucky I feel to have my child attend this school'.

The school runs very smoothly because efficient procedures are in place and closely followed by staff. All policies are thorough, comprehensive and closely adhered to, none more than for safeguarding which fully meets statutory requirements. Promoting equality is embedded in the everyday life of the school, particularly through the good use of tracking and subsequent support for individual pupils. All pupils and staff treat one another equally and show high regard for those who are struggling or need help and support.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



25 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Gidding CofE Primary School, Huntingdon, PE28 5NX

Thank you very much for the very warm welcome you gave me when I came to visit your school recently. I enjoyed every minute of my time in your school. A special 'thank you' to those who talked with me about your work and all the exciting things you do, and those who completed questionnaires. Here are some of the good things I found out about your school.

- You are like one big happy family because you get on with one another really well. I was particularly impressed with how well you work together and the way the eldest among you look after the youngest.
- Your behaviour is excellent. You enjoy school and always try very hard.
- Your staff take great care of you, and know each and every one of you really well.
- You make good progress all the way through school so that by the end of Year 6 most of you achieve above the level expected by that age.
- You clearly enjoy your lessons and often used the word 'fun' when talking about them.

Even though you attend a good school, your headteacher, staff and governors want your school to get better. I have asked them to make two changes:

- to give those of you in the eldest class more opportunities to practise using your good numeracy skills to solve real-life everyday problems, and to teach you the correct words to use
- to see that all of you have more opportunities to find out about our multicultural society and how people live in other parts of the world.

I am sure you will continue to do your best at school and I wish you every success in the future. This is a busy term with lots of interesting events planned. Enjoy them!

Yours sincerely

Robert Greatrex
Lead inspector

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