

Gravel Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	101407
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	376558
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	David Shepherd

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	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hazel Teale
Headteacher	Melanie Neale
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2008
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	22–23 February 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Shepherd

Additional inspector

Gill Walley

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 20 lessons led by eight different teachers for a total of eight hours. Meetings were held with the senior staff, five groups of pupils and two members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at safeguarding documentation and the school's analysis of its data. Questionnaires from 42 parents and carers, 24 staff and 96 pupils were received and analysed.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, as is the proportion for whom English is an additional language. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with very small minorities from Black African and Asian backgrounds. A higher-than-average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of one Nursery class and one Reception class. The proportion of pupils who join the school during the year is above average. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress.

The school has gained Healthy Schools status and holds the Investor in People 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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Good relationships successfully encourage pupils to accept each other's differences in a harmonious way. The learning environment of the school is attractive, colourful and reflective of the work carried out by pupils during the past year. Improvements in pupils' progress during the past two years are evident, but these are not consistent enough in all classes for the school to be judged as good. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Attainment in mathematics is higher than in other subjects because pupils are taught basic skills in number effectively, which enables them to solve mathematical problems. Progress in writing is improving faster than in reading because pupils are given good opportunities to write at length across the curriculum. Progress in reading is slower because some pupils do not have a secure understanding of the sounds made by individual letters and groups of letters.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall. Good teaching was observed, to which pupils responded enthusiastically. In these lessons, teachers regularly remind pupils what they are meant to be learning. However, this is not always the case as there is inconsistency between classes.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are good. Parents, carers, pupils and staff are positive about the way pupils behave. The school presents a safe and orderly environment where pupils are considerate to each other, staff and visitors. Pupils feel safe because they are looked after well.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the management of performance are carried out accurately. Following a period of instability in staffing, the headteacher, effectively supported by the deputy headteacher, is successfully bringing about improvements, particularly in pupils' writing, mathematics and attendance. Through their monitoring of teaching, subject leaders have improved provision in their subjects, but have not evaluated improved outcomes for pupils.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By September 2012, raise achievement in reading by teaching pupils throughout the school more effectively about the links between letters and sounds (phonics).
- By December 2012, improve the quality of teaching so that at least 75% of lessons are judged good or better, by ensuring that all teachers consistently:
 - explain clearly to pupils of different levels of ability what they are to learn in lessons and provide activities that are well matched to these levels
 - correct mistakes being made by pupils who are working independently during lessons.
- Ensure the impact of the work of subject leaders leads to improvements in pupils' achievement by:
 - providing effective training in monitoring and evaluation for subject leaders
 - ensuring points for development lead to improved outcomes for pupils.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, most children reach standards in all areas of learning that are broadly average. In 2011, the proportion of pupils making expected levels of progress in Key Stage 2 was above average in mathematics and broadly average in English. By the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average. Although fluctuating because of the different year groups, this has been the pattern over the past three years, as evidenced by test results and school data, as well as through work seen by inspectors in lessons and pupils' books.

The majority of pupils read well for their ages. However, not all pupils, especially some disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, have a secure understanding of how to work out and read unfamiliar words. Overall, through lack of opportunity, pupils do not practise these skills regularly enough. Pupils across the school were keen to read to inspectors and talk about the books and authors they like to read. As stated in discussions and in replies in their questionnaires, many pupils feel that the school helps them to develop their reading skills well. Most written work is presented neatly and is easy to read, but occasionally this is not the case. Most parents and carers think that the school helps their children to develop their skills in reading and writing well. As one parent wrote, 'I am very happy with my daughter's education.' This was a typical view.

Pupils are keen to respond to their teachers because they enjoy the majority of the

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activities that have been prepared for them. For example, pupils in Year 6 discussed how to make a candle come to life in a poem by describing its sounds, smells and appearance. They really enjoyed working both individually and, at the end of the lesson, as a class reading out their poems. They listened carefully to their teacher, who reminded them during their work what they should include in their writing. This helped to re-focus their learning and raise the standard of writing. Children in the Nursery relished the opportunity to carry out activities outside. One boy took on the role of a stallholder as he called out confidently, 'Who wants some veg?' This attracted some of his classmates to role play the purchase of carrots and sweet corn.

Boys and girls achieve at similar levels as those in other schools nationally and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make the same progress as such pupils nationally. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall, although some of these pupils make less progress in reading. Overall, the school quickly addresses any area of identified underachievement and provides appropriate additional support for those who need it.

Quality of teaching

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning and how they should behave, and this teaches pupils effectively how to act responsibly and work together in pairs and larger groups. Teachers make good use of information and communication technology to encourage pupils to learn. The outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage is particularly stimulating and well resourced, and this actively supports children's development across all areas of learning.

Most pupils are positive about the good teaching at the school, as indicated in their questionnaire and through conversations with inspectors. Parents and carers are equally positive about the quality of teaching. Inspection findings show that there is evidence of good teaching, but that it is not consistently good in all classes. This is because, although teachers' planning indicates the main focus of lessons, it does not always show what pupils at different levels of ability are expected to learn. As a result, activities are not always tailored to meet individual needs and this slows progress, particularly of high- and low-attaining pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together and provide good guidance to pupils in their groups. However, on occasions, not enough support is given to pupils working independently and their mistakes are sometimes not corrected quickly enough to show them how to make faster progress. Marking is encouraging and consistently provides good guidance about how to improve, but occasionally not enough opportunities are given for pupils to respond to suggestions made.

The teaching of different cultures, beliefs and ways of life is good and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about the major world religions. Teaching also includes studies of faraway places, such as Chembakoli in India and the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Greece. The teaching of science provides pupils with good opportunities to think like scientists.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils have positive attitudes to their work and to their teachers, and they get on well with one another. This is evident throughout the school from Nursery to Year 6, and is also evidenced by the rapid improvement in attendance during the past two years. Attendance has risen from below average to high and this indicates pupils' positive attitudes to school.

Older pupils mentor younger pupils as buddies, playground friends and young leaders, and this helps to promote positive relationships between pupils. Pupils, including those who find behaving well difficult, consider the ways the school manages behaviour to be fair and proportionate to any incident of misbehaviour.

The large majority of parents, carers, pupils and staff who returned questionnaires were very positive about behaviour and bullying. Although a small minority of pupils and parents and carers commented that behaviour is not always good, inspection evidence gained from pupils and discussions with staff confirmed that any inappropriate behaviour and all types of bullying, including very occasional name-calling and cyber-bullying, are dealt with quickly and effectively by the school.

A large proportion of pupils indicate they feel safe, and their parents and carers agreed with them. They have been effectively taught about road, rail, water and fire safety, and how to minimise risks in their daily lives. Older pupils in particular have a good understanding of internet safety. The Healthy School award is a testament to pupils' awareness of how to stay fit and well.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and subject leaders, is relentless in her pursuit of improvement and has successfully instilled a sense of ambition and drive to improve the work of the school. The headteacher, supported by senior staff, has developed plans to improve achievement and provision at the school. Monitoring and evaluation by senior staff are leading to improvements in teaching and achievement, especially in writing, mathematics and attendance. However, these improvements have not impacted fully on test results at the end of Year 6 and on outcomes in different subjects. An extensive programme of professional development of staff has contributed effectively to the improvements that are evident. However, further training for subject leaders is required to help them more effectively identify areas for improvement in pupils' outcomes during observations of lessons. All these factors, together with the support of the governing body, contribute satisfactorily to the school's capacity to improve.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It includes all the required subjects. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory, and that to promote pupils' cultural development is good. Themed weeks such as science week and anti-bullying week, in addition to an extensive range of visits to places of interest and

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visitors to school, enrich the curriculum. Out-of-school clubs are popular with pupils and they also enrich the curriculum. The curriculum provides pupils with good opportunities to consolidate and extend their writing skills and computer skills, but not enough guidance about how to tackle unfamiliar words.

The governing body is keen and enthusiastic and shows high levels of commitment to the school. It provides a satisfactory level of challenge and contribution. Safeguarding procedures are effective and meet requirements. The school provides pupils with a safe environment for learning, promotes equality of opportunity for the different groups and tackles discrimination appropriately. This enables all groups of pupils to achieve satisfactorily.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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.
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.



24 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gravel Hill Primary School, Bexleyheath DA6 7QJ

We were delighted to meet you and talk to a number of you during our recent visit. We thank you for being so helpful. We found the responses to the questionnaire that was filled in by Years 3 to 6 pupils very helpful. You go to a satisfactory school where adults work hard to prepare you for the future. Here are some of the best things we found.

- You enjoy school and get on well with each other.
- You feel safe and learn in an attractive, well-ordered and interesting environment.
- You get on well with the adults in school and work hard for them.
- You are well behaved and respectful towards one another, your teachers and teaching assistants.
- You really enjoy school with its different activities, including visits to places of interest and those provided at the end of the school day.
- You like reading and talking about books and stories you have read.

We have asked your headteacher, teachers and the governing body to do three things to improve your school.

- Give you more help with reading, especially how to tackle unfamiliar words.
- Let you know more clearly what it is you are supposed to be learning, set you challenging activities and check on how well all of you are getting on with your work during lessons.
- Make sure that those teachers responsible for subjects know how to keep a check on how well things are going and how improvements can be made.

All of you can help by continuing to work very hard.

Yours sincerely

David Shepherd
Lead inspector

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