



Inspection report

# Great Wakering Primary School

**Better  
education  
and care**

Unique Reference Number 114792  
LEA Essex

Inspection number 274957  
Inspection dates 17 and 18 May 2005  
Reporting inspector Mr M E Madden, Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of School	Primary	School address	High Street
School category	Community		Great Wakering
Age range of pupils	4 to 11 years		Southend-on-Sea
			Essex
			SS3 0EJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01702 219435
Number on roll	474	Fax number	01702 216068
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs B Wilkins
Date of previous inspection	February 2003	Headteacher	Mrs B Spratt

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Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 11 years	15 June 2005	274957

## Introduction

When Great Wakering Primary School was inspected in February 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) and Additional Inspectors subsequently visited the school on five occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in May 2005.

### Description of the school

The school serves a village and rural community in Essex and on the north-eastern fringe of Southend-on-Sea. It is much larger than average, having 474 pupils. Its roll has fallen steadily for a number of years, a trend similar to that in other local schools and one that is likely to continue for a further two or three years. The pupils come in the main from white British family backgrounds. Their attainment on entry spans a normal range and is, overall, average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly comparable to the national figure. A broadly average proportion of the pupils are identified as having special educational needs.

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## Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

Fresh, steady and determined leadership has enabled the school to overcome a legacy of deficiencies in its curriculum and management. Standards are sound in the Foundation Stage and in the main in Key Stage 1. They are too low in Key Stage 2 but are beginning to rise as a result of recent changes. The school provides strong support for the pupils' personal development. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are good in lessons and about the school. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory though some weaknesses remain, including in the day-to-day use of assessment. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the school provides a good range of additional activities to engage the pupils' interest. Leadership and management are satisfactory, though school self-evaluation still draws significantly on the work of local education authority (LEA) personnel. The governing body is not, however, fulfilling its proper role in monitoring of the school.

### Improvement since the last inspection

The previous inspection identified the need for improved monitoring, evaluation and review by managers, further training for the staff and more effective teaching, in order to raise pupils' attainment. Although standards are not yet high enough at the end of Key Stage 2, reasonable progress has been made with the strengthening of leadership, management, training and teaching.

### Capacity to improve

The school is well placed to improve further and reverse the recent downward trend in pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. The headteacher and staff work well as a team, recognise the scope for higher attainment among the pupils and have a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching. School development and financial plans are based on a generally accurate analysis of the school's circumstances, strengths and weaknesses. There is a sound and developing programme for monitoring the pupils' attainment and tracking their progress.

### What the school should do to improve further

The key priorities for the school's development plan are to:

- continue to raise attainment, particularly in Key Stage 2;
- improve the consistency and quality of teaching;

- strengthen the day-to-day use of assessment to promote learning;
- extend school self-evaluation;
- improve governance.

## Achievement and standards

The pupils make a good start in the school's Foundation Stage and most of them make steady progress towards the nationally set Early Learning Goals. Recent tests of reading show that a substantial majority of them have achieved a reading age above their chronological age. In Key Stage 1, sound progress continues for most of the pupils. Although the results of national tests fell in 2004, the overall attainment of the pupils remains as it has been for some years, broadly comparable to that in primary schools in similar contexts.

The pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has fluctuated from year to year and has been too low. In 2004, the proportions of pupils who achieved the target Level 4 and the higher Level 5 in English and in mathematics were, overall, well below those in other schools where the pupils had similar prior attainment. A sound proportion of the pupils achieved the target Level 4 in science, but relatively few achieved the higher Level 5.

Clear indications are emerging of rising standards in Key Stage 2. The school's assessments, including the results of non-statutory tests, show that more of the pupils are making the expected progress from year to year. Appropriate grouping of the pupils and stimulating teaching have lifted the attainment of older pupils in mathematics. The school anticipates that more of those in Year 6 will achieve Level 5 in 2005 than did so in 2004. Suitable steps are being taken to boost the attainment of the same pupils in English and science. In these subjects, however, gaps in the pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are likely to restrict their attainment in the 2005 national tests. The school's records suggest, however, that its results in the national tests will rise significantly in 2006.

The school recognises that standards remain too low in Key Stage 2. The progress made by the pupils in lessons was, overall, satisfactory though in some classes it was hampered by residual weaknesses in the teaching. The staff are implementing plans for further improvement in the quality of teaching and in the pupils' progress and attainment.

## Personal development

The school supports the pupils' personal development well. When the school became subject to special measures in 2003, it was not uncommon for unsatisfactory behaviour to disrupt lessons. Behaviour has improved and in the lessons seen it was always at least satisfactory. Behaviour around the school and at break times is good. The pupils have responded well to the school's clear expectations and routines, and to the many activities

and resources available such as the breakfast club, the healthy-eating programme and the wide range of team games.

Mostly, pupils have good attitudes to learning. They respond well to lively and interesting teaching and engage enthusiastically with tasks. Many are able to work well in groups, co-operating sensibly with each other. The school has tackled the causes of poor relationships energetically and it successfully enhances pupils' enthusiasm through a broad range of projects, including outdoor leadership activities. There have been no recent permanent exclusions and the rate of fixed-term exclusions has declined to a low level. Pupils' attendance matches that of primary schools nationally and few pupils are late for school.

Pupils have good opportunities to make a positive contribution to the school community. Older pupils, for example, act as playground activity leaders at break and lunchtimes. All but the very youngest classes contribute views regularly to the school council. The school makes good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development and for many elements of their cultural awareness. The pupils' efforts at fund-raising for charities, for example, are displayed prominently. However, despite work in literacy and religious education, there is insufficient emphasis on preparing pupils to live in a multicultural society.

The school's provision for the pupils' welfare is good. There is sensitive management of day-to-day illness and other personal issues. Teachers know the pupils well. The staff's careful consideration of a wide range of pupils' needs and interests maintains a strong and constructive ethos across the school.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved since the inspection of 2003 and is satisfactory overall. It was at least satisfactory in nine out of ten of the lessons observed, and good or better in half of them. Good teaching was observed in the reception classes and in some classes in Key Stage 1. In the oldest year groups, teaching was good in mathematics and in some lessons in English, science and music. However, there were significant weaknesses in some of the teaching in Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4.

Effective teaching was underpinned by positive relationships and well-considered management of pupils' behaviour. Mostly, learning objectives and activities were planned to match appropriate targets for the pupils and to revisit and consolidate previous learning. Teachers and learning assistants encouraged pupils with praise when it was merited and they provided constructive advice sensitively. Learning was particularly enhanced in those lessons where there were high expectations, as in a mathematics lessons for an able group of Year 5 and 6 pupils on applying measurement skills to a practical problem.

In less successful lessons, the teachers' planning did not consider fully enough how to assess the pupils' learning, particularly in classes where pupils worked for much of the time in mixed-attainment and mixed-age groups. Teachers' classroom assessment practice is not yet effective enough in ensuring that pupils of all levels of attainment make at least satisfactory progress. Other aspects of teaching that require further improvement include:

teachers' unsatisfactory modelling of the presentation of work; the use of inappropriate resources for pupils' tasks, arising in part from teachers' weak knowledge of the subject; and unduly limited attention to groups not directly supported by a learning assistant.

The school's assessment arrangements build securely on good practice that is established in the Foundation Stage. They include a sound system for tracking the pupils' longer-term progress. Appropriate targets are set for the pupils' later attainment, and staff monitor pupils' progress at regular intervals. Marking has improved and many of the teachers, though not all, offer pupils helpful advice on how to improve their work. However, between the school's more formal termly progress reviews, assessment practice is not consistent, particularly in the older year groups. There are often lengthy gaps in which the pupils' day-to-day learning is not assessed thoroughly enough.

The school has made good progress in reviewing its curriculum. This meets statutory requirements and follows a carefully considered two-year programme that reflects the needs of the school's mixed-age classes, supports pupils' progression and ensures appropriate breadth of experience. Sufficient time is devoted to the pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy, though national guidelines and other supporting schemes for literacy are not yet fully and consistently embedded. Helpful links are being formed between some subjects and information and communication technology, to further broaden and deepen the pupils' learning. Medium-term and short-term planning are conducted conscientiously in year teams, but this does not always secure an appropriate balance across the full range of subjects.

The school seeks to include all pupils from the community it serves. Provision for those with special or complex needs is good. The school looks after its pupils well and pays due regard to their safety. Arrangements for playtime supervision are sound and the pupils are confident to turn to adults for help when needed. The school's programme of personal, social and health education helps pupils to build links with relevant community safeguarding agencies, including the police.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Since she joined the school in 2003, the headteacher has provided calm, thoughtful and focused leadership that has set an appropriate tone for the school and is effecting steady improvement, most notably in financial management, the curriculum, the quality of teaching and the behaviour and attitudes of the pupils.

The headteacher is well supported by a deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher. She has exploited a considerable number of changes of personnel to secure a sound teaching and support staff; further significant changes of personnel are planned for next term. Communication has been strengthened by frequent and purposeful meetings for training and planning. Teamwork is good and the school operates smoothly from day to day.

Responsibilities for much of the school's day-to-day work are clearly delegated. Well-informed personnel provide appropriate direction and good momentum for assessment, special educational needs, most subjects of the National Curriculum and the teams of teachers in each key stage. Suitable temporary arrangements exist for a small number of subjects, with clear plans for the induction of staff to lead work in mathematics, art and personal, social and health education.

The work of the staff is monitored and evaluated by the senior staff and increasingly by subject leaders. These arrangements are becoming confident and effective, but school self-evaluation still draws significantly on the work of the LEA's officers. The school's strategic priorities are appropriate. Improvement plans include suitably detailed attention to the work required and to responsibilities for leadership and for the monitoring of progress.

The school's unit cost is higher than average. This is, however, justified by the range of recent improvements. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Governors' spending plans recognise the constraints set by a further period in which the number of pupils is likely to fall. Governors are engaging increasingly in training provided by the LEA and some of them make visits to the school under agreed arrangements. However, the governing body is not effective in fulfilling its role because governance is not sufficiently focused on priorities for the improvement of the school.

The LEA has provided steady and helpful support for the school's improvement. Advice and coaching have been focused on governors, subject leaders and on classes where planning or teaching have caused particular concern. This work is planned to continue, with an appropriate reduction in scale as the school inducts further new personnel and consolidates its recent improvement.

## Appendix – Information about the inspection

Great Wakering Primary School was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in February 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in September 2003 and in January and May 2004 and by Additional Inspectors and HMI in November 2004 and in February 2005 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of February 2003.

In May 2005, two Additional Inspectors returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Twenty two part lessons, two registration sessions and one assembly were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior and other staff nominated with regard to the key issues, the chair of governors and a representative from the LEA, and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of February 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.



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