



Great Missenden CofE Combined School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110427
Local Authority Buckinghamshire
Inspection number 278431
Inspection date 14 November 2006
Reporting inspector Hugh Protherough

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church Street
School category	Voluntary controlled		Great Missenden
Age range of pupils	4-11		HP16 0AZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01494 862310
Number on roll (school)	369	Fax number	01494 868300
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Alex Eaden
		Headteacher	Mrs Rozalyn Thomson
Date of previous school inspection	11 September 2000		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This large primary school serves the village of Great Missenden and surrounding area and offers extended provision to pupils and the wider communities. The vast majority of pupils come from homes that are well favoured socially and economically, with families that are supportive of the school and the education it provides. Almost all are of White British ethnicity and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) is broadly average. However, the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN) is above average. This is because the school has a well established track record in providing for pupils with obstacles to learning including a Hearing Impaired Department (HI). Most pupils in the school's immediate vicinity start school in the afternoon playgroup at age two and a half and enter the nursery classes at age 4. The school also welcomes between 30-45 pupils to Year 3 each September who transfer from the three local infant schools that form part of the school's wider catchment area. 'Flagship Healthy School Status' was awarded to the school in July 2006. There are close links with the local secondary school which has specialist status in the arts and technology.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Great Missenden Combined is an outstanding school whose pupils demonstrate a zest and enthusiasm for all that their teachers and local communities offer them. By the time they leave school at the end of Year 6 standards are, and have been for some time, exceptionally high. The school's commitment to pupils' all round development underpins this success and enables them, regardless of background or ability, to achieve extremely well. The strong leadership of the headteacher has encouraged staff and governors to accurately assess all aspects of the school as excellent. Even so, there is no complacency and pupils' performance continues to be analysed in great detail. For example, although overall results in English are excellent, those for writing have been comparatively weaker. A well judged programme of training and assessment led by the subject co-ordinator have seen results in writing improve. However, there is scope for further development, especially in ensuring that older pupils in Years 3 to 6 use their excellent literacy skills to write at greater length in other subjects.

The pace of learning is rapid. In the Foundation Stage the talented staff team provide a wealth of outstanding experiences for the children. Daily assessments are sharp and accurate and ensure that children move speedily towards the learning goals expected of five-year-olds. Throughout the school pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, and lessons in Years 1 to 6 move at a brisk pace. Cordial relationships between teachers and their pupils further support the strong work ethic evident in those classes visited during the inspection. The school's commitment to inclusion is reflected in the excellent support provided for those pupils with SEN, LD and HI.

The school council works successfully on behalf of all pupils; 'We get a lot of stuff done that way, like improving the playground'. Council members do excellent work in collecting and representing the views of their classmates. However, meetings are led and managed by teachers. Pupils are not provided with opportunities to accept even greater levels of responsibility such as learning how to chair meetings and record minutes.

The staff and governors are always seeking ways to improve the school. Two years ago they acquired funding to make 'extended provision' for the community. As a result there are thriving pre- and post-school care clubs along with a wealth of sporting and cultural activities. 'We're never bored!' said one Year 6 pupil and the excellent attendance at so many of these clubs is further evidence of just how much pupils enjoy their time at school. There is an excellent focus on pupils' health and fitness. Initiatives such as the 'Tutti Frutti' fruit bar receive immense support from the children who, almost without exception, eat at least two portions of fruit and vegetables each morning break. Pupils receive a minimum of two hours physical education each week and most attend other sporting activities, including swimming in the school's heated indoor pool. The recent drive to build a kitchen to provide cooked meals at lunchtime will be realised by Christmas.

Since the last inspection the school has raised standards and radically improved its communication with parents and carers. The high levels of parental satisfaction that

emerged from the school's recent survey are closely mirrored by that of the inspection. Parental involvement in their children's education is welcomed and many volunteer to assist in school on a regular basis. The school is very well placed to sustain its outstanding performance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on pupils' excellent literacy skills by ensuring that pupils in Year 3 to 6 write more extensively across all subjects of the National Curriculum
- Assist pupils to assume responsibility for the management and administration of the school council

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are high. Throughout their time at school pupils work hard and achieve very well in both their academic and all round development. The vast majority of those entering the Foundation Stage arrive with levels of knowledge and skills that are in advance of most three and four year olds. Their social and physical skills, linguistic competence and general knowledge and understanding of the world are particularly good. The excellent provision in the different Foundation Stage settings ensures that by the end of their reception year most pupils are already working comfortably within the early stages of the National Curriculum. By the end of Year 2 standards are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school is extremely successful in ensuring that those pupils who arrive from local infant schools in Year 3 settle quickly and achieve well. Throughout Years 3 to 6 pupils continue to make brisk progress. By the age of eleven standards in English, mathematics and science are high with results that show significant value added to pupils' starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' personal development and well being are outstanding. Not only are pupils aware of the need to stay fit and healthy, most appear to make life choices that support this. Sports clubs are popular and each week almost a hundred children go cross-country running led by the headteacher, staff and parents. The pupils' menu suggestions for the new school kitchen show a good understanding of diet as well as an indication of their cosmopolitan tastes. This is also reflected in last year's Healthy School's week when Year 6 pupils designed and tasted healthy menus and fruit smoothies. The popular school gardening club provides a good supply of fruit and vegetables. Year 6 pupils are also involved in an annual enterprise project where they are involved in creating a small business.

Taken overall the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Attendance levels are high and behaviour is generally exemplary both in class and

around the school. The pupils are aware of others less fortunate than themselves and are involved regularly in charitable fund-raising. Pupils are provided with a good range of opportunities to exercise responsibility. Children feel safe, secure and take good care of each other. The school's comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education ensures proper attention is paid to subjects such as the dangers of drugs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The few parts of lessons observed during the inspections confirm that pupils' excellent progress is supported by some outstanding teaching. Lessons are thoroughly planned and cater successfully for the range of abilities in each class. Imaginative approaches such as the use of film clips, puppets and role play add further impetus to the excellent rate of pupils' learning. Throughout the school additional adults such as teaching assistants are extremely effective in their support of pupils' learning. Similarly the knowledge and expertise of those working with pupils with SEN, HI and LD enables these children to cope confidently in mainstream classes.

Approaches to marking pupils' work have been successfully reviewed and are far more consistent. The analysis of exercise books during the inspection shows that pupils now receive a detailed commentary identifying two positives and one area to improve. Pupils are responding positively to this approach.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an excellent curriculum that offers breadth and depth and is enriched by an exceptional range of extra-curricular activities. The Foundation Stage curriculum offers a successful synthesis of learning experiences across indoor and outdoor settings. In Years 1 to 6 a wide range of educational visits and visitors add new dimensions to pupils' studies. All pupils in Years 4 to 6 learn French and in Year 6 they spend a week near Paris, additional to the many other residential experiences provided. The current Year 6 are swift to recall the richness of their education to date; their excitement and anticipation of the last few months at the school are tangible.

Information and communications technology is being used to support many aspects of the school's curriculum. However, the recent improvements in pupils' writing are not yet being sufficiently exploited across the full breadth of the National Curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Arrangements for the care, guidance and support of pupils are outstanding. For instance, there are well considered arrangements to ensure the safe transfer of pupils to and from the clubs and settings associated with the extended provision.

Hearing loop technology supports the successful integration of pupils with HI in the classrooms and teachers have been thoroughly trained in meeting their needs. The specific needs of pupils with SEN are also catered for with considerable care and sensitivity. As one parent told the inspector 'I don't think I could have got my daughter back to school had it not been for the patience and flexibility of the staff'. Those with particular gifts and talents are provided with additional challenges and opportunities to work together such as the editing of the school newspaper.

The school tracks pupils' academic progress assiduously. This information is used effectively to provide individuals with short-term targets about how to improve their work as well as longer term goals.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and her deputy collaborate closely; together, they provide strong and effective leadership for the staff team. They have a clear vision for the school that is shared by staff, governors, pupils and the vast majority of stakeholders. The success of this mission is reflected in the pupils' enjoyment of school and the sustained high standards of recent years.

The school's evaluation of its own performance is honest, accurate and well-informed by thorough approaches to checking what is going on throughout the school. School governors do an excellent job, both in their support of the staff and in their constructive challenge. All governors hold a responsibility for a curriculum area and visit school regularly to watch lessons and talk to the teachers about their work. As a result they are knowledgeable and well informed. Parents and carers are regularly consulted. Inspection questionnaires and the inspector's informal conversations with parents during the inspection confirm that the vast majority hold the school in high regard.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for welcoming me to your school last week. I appreciated the friendly and helpful way that you spoke with me about the many things that make you so proud of your school.

I agree with you, your parents and your teachers: Great Missenden is an outstanding school. You work hard and make the most of the huge number of activities that are provided for you. As a result you produce some excellent work in the classrooms as well as developing a wide variety of other skills and interests. Most importantly you are learning how to stay healthy, fit and safe.

Like all inspectors (and teachers!) I am always thinking about how schools can make things even better and I've got two things for you to do.

- Your writing has improved in recent years but the pupils in Years 3 to 6 need to practise writing longer pieces of work, not just in English, but in other subjects like history and science
- I enjoyed my visit to the school council. You had lots of sensible ideas and suggestions about menus for the new school cooks to think about. I also heard how your ideas have successfully improved lunchtime play equipment. However, I was flabbergasted to discover that you don't manage you own meetings and agenda, but leave it to your poor teachers to arrange things. You're a talented bunch, so I've asked the teachers to help you to begin to learn these skills. Don't let me down!

With best wishes for the remainder of the school year and all the exciting things you have planned between now and July.

Yours sincerely

Hugh Protherough

Additional Inspector