



Gorse Hill Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116752
LEA Worcestershire
Inspection number 279891
Inspection dates 21 March 2006 to 22 March 2006
Reporting inspector Doris Bell AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hollymount Road
School category	Community		Worcester
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Worcestershire WR4 9SG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01905 23159
Number on roll	301	Fax number	01905 23158
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Phil Clayton
Date of previous inspection	3 July 2000	Headteacher	Mr Lawrence Buck

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school serves an area that has many social and economic disadvantages. Children start school with considerably under-developed skills and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, which includes a small number who are at the early stages of learning English, is broadly average. There have been several changes of staff and a great deal of disruption in leadership and management since the last inspection. Further change is imminent as the present headteacher prepares to leave after fifteen months in post.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school judges itself to be satisfactory because of recent improvements in writing and in pupils' behaviour and attitudes, which are good. Although pupils make good progress in science, their overall achievement is inadequate in English and mathematics. Standards in these subjects were exceptionally low in the national tests for 11-year-olds in 2005. This is because the quality of teaching is inadequate. Weaknesses in assessment mean that pupils' progress is not tracked well enough. The exception is writing, where pupils' learning is now securely built on what has gone before. Standards and the quality of provision are satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. Pupils in all age groups receive high quality personal care and support and they make good progress in most aspects of their personal development.

The headteacher has successfully led a series of initiatives that have established a good climate for learning. However, the overall quality of leadership and management is inadequate because senior and middle managers are not effective enough. Checks on teaching and learning are still not rigorous enough and they are not tightly focused on improving pupils' achievement. Recent guidance from the local authority is helping the school to address these issues. The lack of improvement since the previous inspection means the school is facing the same issues now as it did six years ago. The slow rate of change demonstrates that it does not have the capacity to improve matters with sufficient urgency. It does not provide adequate value for money. The instability in senior leadership and management has contributed to this situation.

What the school should do to improve further

Improve achievement and raise standards in English and mathematics by accelerating the rate of pupils' progress in both subjects. Improve the quality of teaching by requiring all teachers to use assessment information properly to assist their planning and target setting. Improve the quality of leadership and management by establishing greater rigour in the checks made on teaching and learning to ensure that they are always strongly focused on raising standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Weaknesses in planning and assessment mean that pupils make inadequate progress, and standards in Year 6 are very low in English and mathematics.

From a low starting point, children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress but few reach the standards expected for the end of the Reception year, except in

personal, social and emotional development. In 2005, standards rose significantly in Year 2. They came close to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, and pupils' progress was satisfactory. However, standards in Year 6 declined to significantly below average in English and mathematics. Pupils' achievement was particularly poor in English. Their progress in science was good and standards in that subject were average. Girls achieved less well than boys in 2005 but this gap has now closed.

Pupils in Years 2 to 6 are now making better progress in writing because of the school's involvement in the 'Big Writing' project with other schools. The good practice evident in setting targets based on pupils' prior learning in this project is not yet in place in other aspects of English or in mathematics. Too often, targets are based on the requirements of a scheme of work instead of what individual pupils need to do to improve. This limits their usefulness in improving learning. The improvement in writing and the good achievement in science demonstrate that pupils are capable of achieving much more.

Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall. They receive good support from well-briefed support staff when they are withdrawn from lessons, as do the small number of pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. However, the progress of these groups is not always good enough in lessons. Insufficient attention is given to helping them to reach their targets through other subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' good behaviour and attitudes are founded upon well-ordered, very supportive systems that result in good personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils develop well from the earliest age and learn to deal effectively with different emotions as they grow older.

Pupils' attendance is satisfactory and they know how to keep safe. They say that incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with effectively, and they always have someone to turn to for help. They enjoy school, show good levels of care and respect for others and throw themselves wholeheartedly into new challenges and situations. Pupils have a good understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle. Through the school council, they contribute well to the school and the wider community, confident that their views are valued. In many respects, pupils are well prepared for life beyond school. However, their underdeveloped literacy and numeracy skills leave them less well prepared for their future economic well-being than they might be.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The inadequate quality of the teaching explains the poor progress of the pupils. Some good teaching was observed during the inspection but too often pupils' learning is not well enough matched to their different ages and stages of development. The school has a wealth of assessment information about each pupil. However, this is limited in its usefulness. While the data enables pupils' progress to be tracked from year to year, the back-up systems to ensure that pupils remain on track throughout the year are not generally in place. This is, however, being tackled successfully in literacy lessons through good marking of the pupils' writing. It acknowledges what pupils do well in each piece of writing, and sets targets that give them effective guidance as to what they need to do to improve. Pupils greatly appreciate this, saying that it helps them to understand how 'to get higher levels quicker'. They were much less positive about the usefulness of marking in other subjects which varies considerably.

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour consistently well in all classes. They are supported effectively by competent teaching assistants who help pupils that find it difficult to concentrate on their learning. Despite the acknowledged weaknesses in language skills when children start school, there is insufficient emphasis on developing these skills throughout the school in different subjects. This further limits the pupils' progress in English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory in all age groups and due emphasis is given to the teaching of English and mathematics. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use and extend their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Special weeks, such as those on healthy eating, make learning exciting and more meaningful for the pupils. A good range of extra-curricular activities, including visits and visitors, promotes pupils' learning and personal development well. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is satisfactory. The very good personal, social and health education programme has had a very positive effect on pupils' behaviour and attitudes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, support and guidance given to pupils are satisfactory overall. The high quality personal care and support help them to deal successfully with potentially difficult situations. As a result, the school is a harmonious community in which pupils work and play very well together. Procedures for child protection, health and safety are good. The school's good links with outside agencies, including the local community centre,

support pupils' learning and help to foster good relationships with parents. The majority of parents are very positive about the school. Good links with local secondary schools prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education. Vulnerable children and those newly arrived in school receive good support from staff and from their fellow pupils. Within this very positive picture, however, pupils do not receive effective enough academic support and guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Despite recent improvements, the quality of leadership and management is inadequate. On his appointment, the headteacher recognised the issues facing the school and acted quickly to improve pupils' behaviour, attitudes and attendance. This work has been very successful. However, too many pupils still do not achieve well enough. This is because planning, assessment and the checks made on teaching and learning are not sharp enough, and teaching is inadequate. The school's leaders and managers are not consistent in the way they are tackling these weaknesses. Therefore the effectiveness of their monitoring is limited. The issues the school is facing are virtually the same as at the previous inspection nearly six years ago. The school has not improved as it should have done in that time. As a result, it does not demonstrate that it has the capacity to improve matters with sufficient urgency.

Following guidance from the local authority, the leaders and managers sensibly refined the school development plan to help the school deal with the most important things first. In the past year, the school has regularly sought and fully considered the views of parents, pupils and staff as part of this process. It knows what it needs to do next but, having based its self-evaluation only on recent improvements, has graded its work too generously. Governors are supportive and very keen to see the school succeed. However, they have not challenged the school about why it has not made enough progress since the last inspection, or about the low standards and unsatisfactory progress.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	No	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school and sharing with us your views of it and of how you learn. We found that there are some good things about your school but that it has some important areas to improve, and will need extra help to enable it to do this as quickly as possible.

We liked these things most of all: Your behaviour is good. You are eager to learn and you want to do well. You want to make the school better and are eager to become involved in doing this, for example, as school councillors. You are very well cared for and you care and respect others. You know that staff listen to you and want to help you, and you are willing to help each other.

These are the things we have asked your school to work on now: Help all of you to do much better in reading, writing and mathematics. Make sure that, when teachers are planning what you are going to do, they always think carefully about what you have already learned so that you always make as much progress as possible. To become better at checking how well you are taught so that your progress will improve and you will reach higher standards in all of your work.

We hope you will all achieve much more as a result of the school making these improvements and that you will enjoy learning throughout your lives. Inspectors will visit your school regularly to see how you are getting along.