



Great Barford Lower School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 109454
Local Authority BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 288379
Inspection date 22 January 2007
Reporting inspector Paul Cosway

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Silver Street
School category	Community		Great Barford
Age range of pupils	4–9		Bedford MK44 3JU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01234870342
Number on roll (school)	134	Fax number	01234870341
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs C Ellis
		Headteacher	Ms A E Snelling
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Great Barford Lower School is a small primary school in a village near Bedford. The local population served by the school represents a wide mix of social backgrounds. Attainment on entry is close to average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Pupils are almost all of White British heritage. There is none at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with statements, is close to the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Almost all parents are extremely pleased with the education that it gives their children: 'We are very lucky. It is lovely to see not only how well-behaved the children are but also how happy, well-mannered and attentive.'

Pupils enjoy their lessons because of excellent teaching. They achieve highly because each child is given opportunities to develop her or his skills to the full. Children achieve very well in the Foundation Stage because of the excellent provision. Almost all children reach the standards expected by the time they begin Year 1. At the end of Year 2 standards are well above the national average. As pupils' confidence in literacy and numeracy grows, excellent teaching helps them to build on the good foundations laid in the early years. Their attainment is well above that expected for their age by the end of Year 4. Through the whole school, their achievement is outstanding.

Excellent provision for their welfare ensures that all pupils fully understand how to lead healthy lives and feel safe. They are prepared very well indeed for their lives beyond school by the excellent teaching of literacy and numeracy, the very good opportunities to work collaboratively and the significant contributions they make to the school community. The school council is very effective and the pupils learn to care for each other, partly through the excellent examples set by all adults in the school. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked as they move through the school and support is given if they ever fall behind. Their personal development is excellent. They are very well behaved and have very positive attitudes to learning: 'Our lessons are fun...and everyone helps us!' Because they love school and their parents understand the value of regular schooling, attendance rates are well above average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They learn in an ethos in which all pupils, no matter what their backgrounds or abilities, are valued. The concern for their safety, health and welfare is exemplary. The pupils learn to be responsible and tolerant and benefit from a good range of educational visits and after-school clubs that extend and enrich their education.

The curriculum is good and enables all to make excellent progress, supported by outstanding care and guidance. Pupils' progress in information and communication technology (ICT) is good, but is restricted by the shortage of resources. The school is considering introducing a modern foreign language and indications are that this would help to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education even more effectively.

There is excellent leadership and management from the headteacher, the senior team and the governors. The school has great capacity to develop further, demonstrated by excellent improvement since the last inspection, including rising standards and significant developments in the buildings and grounds, which now provide a high quality environment for learning. It gives outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the curriculum by further improving the ICT resources for pupils and the introduction of the teaching of a modern foreign language.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils start school with standards that are close to average for their age. Their achievement is outstanding and almost all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and the gifted and talented, meet their challenging targets.

Over the last three years, standards in the national tests at the end of Year 2 have been well above the national average. They have increased year by year and in 2006 almost half the pupils reached level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of Year 4, standards, measured by results in optional tests as well as teacher assessment, have been consistently high in English, mathematics and science. Between Years 2 and 4, pupils make particularly good progress in writing.

The school sets itself high targets and generally meets or exceeds them. Standards are also high in a number of other subjects, including physical education, music and history.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils love coming to school. All adults are very good role models and treat pupils with great respect. Consequently, almost all pupils behave extremely well. They feel safe in school and have great confidence in the help and support of the staff.

Attendance is well above average. The pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is enhanced by the many visits and after-school clubs. They are confident, polite and considerate. Pupils are very keen to face new challenges. They work hard and demonstrate mature attitudes. Pupils respond exceptionally well to opportunities to make decisions and know their views are taken seriously and are acted upon. They develop the skills they will need in later life through excellent teaching of literacy and numeracy. Pupils work well independently and also work exceptionally well in small groups. They make excellent contributions to the school community and good contributions to the wider community, through charity contributions and invaluable support for local functions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers plan lessons skilfully and there are clear targets for pupils to reach. Pupils concentrate and work hard because the lessons are interesting and enjoyable. Teachers' high expectations and the pace of their lessons mean that pupils learn quickly and make excellent progress. The management of pupils is excellent and relationships are very good indeed. Teachers set work at the different levels to match the spread of abilities in a class so that all pupils are both challenged and supported in their learning.

They track their progress very well indeed and set meaningful targets for all their pupils.

Despite some shortages in ICT resources, teachers use ICT very well as a teaching aid to make lessons exciting. The amount of homework set is adequate for this age group.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum gives excellent opportunities for pupils to use their skills in reading, writing and number in different subjects. Hence pupils make exceptional progress. There is a particular focus on physical activities to ensure that pupils are healthy and fit. Very good provision for teaching physical education and music deepens and broadens pupils' knowledge. The school provides a good range of enrichment and extra curricular activities. Teachers have begun to find ways to link subjects to give greater relevance to the curriculum. There is a limited range of equipment for pupils to develop their ICT skills and more up-to-date computers are needed. The school is considering introducing French, but has not done so yet.

There is an excellent emphasis on the high quality teaching of the basic skills in English and mathematics. The strong focus on personal, social and health education promotes outstanding personal development. Children who need extra help are provided for very well. Visitors who come in to school, for example to help the children understand how to stay safe, further enhance the children's learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding care, guidance and support lead to pupils feeling happy and safe, and they are confident that there is no bullying or racial discrimination. They know that any incidents will be dealt with firmly. Close attention is given to health and safety issues. Child protection and child safety arrangements fully meet requirements. Teachers and support staff are sensitive to the needs of all individuals. Adults provide pupils with much thoughtful help and guidance in lessons and pupils know their targets well and how they can improve. Parents were almost unanimous in their praise for the school and the care it gives their children.

The care and support for pupils with learning difficulties is outstanding.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Excellent leadership and management have brought about very significant improvements in the effectiveness of the school. The school's analysis of its own performance is detailed and thorough. All teachers take a full part in the process of school improvement planning and review. The procedures for professional development

and performance management are excellent. The school has flourishing partnerships with other organisations that help to meet the needs of all pupils.

The governing body's support and monitoring of the school are excellent. They have been responsible for major improvements in accommodation. The grounds and buildings are exceptionally well cared-for and provide a learning environment of high quality. The care that is taken reflects the school's desire to provide the best possible education for its pupils. In its self-evaluation, the school rated itself only as good: an indication of its determination not to be complacent, but to continue to improve further still.

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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
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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	2
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?	2
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

23 January 2007

Dear Pupils

The School Council, Great Barford Lower School, Great Barford, Bedford, MK44 3JU

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful to me when I visited your school. I enjoyed sharing your lessons and talking with you. You all told me how much you love your school and I agree with you that it is an outstanding school. There are many excellent things about it. I was impressed with the confidence you show and how helpful you are to each other. I enjoyed the morning assembly. You were very well behaved and there was a real sense of a very special occasion, as you applauded those who had done well. Other good things about your school include:

- You work hard in lessons and most of your behaviour is excellent.
- You do very well in the tests that you take, reaching high standards in your reading, writing, mathematics and science by the time you leave.
- Your headteacher and senior teachers have excellent ideas about ways to improve the school.
- You are given clear targets and are helped to achieve them.
- Teachers make lessons enjoyable.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and all adults care for you very well indeed.
- You are helped to be healthy and safe.

I have asked your school to try to make things even better. The most important point is to:

- Improve the range of computers available to you so that you have more opportunities to learn and practise your ICT skills.

Keep working hard and make the most of your time at this very special school.

Paul Cosway

Lead Inspector