

Great Horwood Church of England Combined School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 110441 |
| Local Authority | Buckinghamshire |
| Inspection number | 288674 |
| Inspection dates | 22–23 January 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Paula Protherough |

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

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|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 147 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Norman Ellison |
| Headteacher | Mrs Lesley Whittaker |
| Date of previous school inspection | 13 January 2003 |
| School address | School End Great Horwood Milton Keynes MK17 0RG |
| Telephone number | 01296 712622 |
| Fax number | 01296 713968 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This village school is of below average size. The overwhelming majority of pupils are of white British background. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs and learning disabilities and difficulties is well below the national average. These include autism, speech and language and emotional and behavioural needs. The local organisation of schools means that pupils enter the school either in Reception, Year 3, or Year 4. Most transfer from the village pre-school and two infant schools. There have been significant changes to the staff team over the past two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The headteacher and governors have correctly evaluated the areas for development and the staff team is enthusiastic and committed to raising pupils' achievements. The recent enhancements to provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and their positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement is just one example of the good potential for future improvement.

Children entering the Reception class arrive with levels of knowledge and skills that are broadly in line with what is normally expected of four year-olds. They thrive in the lively and well-organised environment and make good progress. Between Year 1 and Year 6 pupils of all backgrounds and abilities achieve soundly and make steady progress. By the end of Year 6 standards in English, mathematics and science are above the national average. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. There have been many changes to the teaching arrangements in the school in recent years but there is now a settled staff team, which is developing a more consistent approach to work in the classroom. Teachers plan and mark thoroughly and make good use of interactive whiteboards. A calm and ordered learning environment throughout the school ensures that pupils are able to learn together and behaviour is good. The staff make regular, thorough assessments of the pupils. However, teachers' approaches to using this information are inconsistent. Although in many lessons there is a good match between pupils' abilities and the work they are set, this is not always the case. Similarly, teachers' expectations about the quantity and presentation of pupils' work vary from class to class. The curriculum is good with many extra activities planned to make the work interesting. However, opportunities for pupils to link their learning across subjects, for instance by developing their writing skills outside the English curriculum, are limited.

Pupils say they feel happy and safe in this caring school community. Good relationships between adults and pupils are a positive feature and pupils behave well in the classroom and on the playground. The school has productive links with other schools and organisations and makes good use of other agencies to support pupils, such as those with autism or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The majority of parents are pleased with the school and are pleased to receive the informative monthly newsletters. They are happy that their children are flourishing.

Leadership and management are on a sound footing. The leadership team has gained in effectiveness, as evident in its thorough response to the issues raised by the previous inspection. Many subject leaders are new to their roles. They are hard working and enthusiastic, but have yet to develop a full oversight of their areas of responsibility.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children have a happy and safe start to their education and enjoy the range of opportunities provided. They make good use of both indoor and outdoor areas of learning. The outdoor space is fenced and effectively used, although there is still no cover for adverse weather. The majority of children start school in line with expectations, although some are ahead in early mathematical, reading and writing skills. The teaching builds effectively on this start so that by the time they enter Year 1 most are achieving the goals expected of five-year-olds in all areas of learning and a significant number are exceeding them. The recent focus on creative skills and knowledge

and understanding of the world means that pupils are achieving particularly well in these areas. Children work and play together and enjoy taking responsibility for their own learning. The more mature Reception children benefit from their work with the Year 1 pupils in the class and this helps them to make good progress with their early literacy and mathematical skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement by making sure that teachers become more consistent in matching the work set to the different abilities of their pupils.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Develop the roles of middle managers and subject leaders.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The standard of pupils' work is above average and their progress satisfactory. Pupils move in to Year 1 with above average skills in reading, writing and mathematics and they maintain these throughout their time in school. Pupils make good progress in reading but there has been a dip in performance in writing, especially amongst the boys. School leaders are aware of this and introducing appropriate strategies to improve performance.

At Key Stage 2, pupils have been reaching levels in national tests which are higher than average in English, mathematics and science for many years. Mathematics has been an area for focus in the school improvement plan and the actions taken have successfully improved pupils' achievements. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels at Key Stage 1 and 2 across all subjects is higher than the national picture because of the greater proportion of more able pupils in the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal and social development is good from the time they enter the Reception class through to Year 6. Pupils are respectful and supportive of each other. They work and play together happily. Pupils are particularly successful when given opportunity for collaborative and self-initiated activities. Year 6 pupils lead the School Council confidently and are proud of their involvement in decision-making in the school, for example in the provision of additional games equipment for the playground. Pupils enjoy school, and their attendance is above average. Assemblies successfully contribute to pupils' well-developed spiritual, moral and cultural awareness. Pupils understand the importance of healthy living and say that they feel safe and well looked after. They are involved in their own learning in lessons and know their targets; this contributes to their satisfactory progress. Pupils have good literacy, numeracy and ICT skills by the time they leave school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory. Examples of good lessons were observed during the inspection, but the key features that contribute to more rapid learning are not yet consistent across the school. Pupils show good self-control, especially when engaged in exciting activities such as science experiments to identify the nature of air or collaborative map work. Teachers plan and mark work thoroughly and make effective use of interactive whiteboards to promote pupils' learning. However, not all teachers are making full use of the school's assessment information to ensure that the tasks set for pupils are matched closely to their abilities. Whereas some lessons have a good balance of discussion, practical activities and opportunities for pupils to record their work, too often there are insufficient opportunities for the types of more extended, self-determined tasks of which they are capable.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum which ensures that all subjects are taught in good depth. Pupils describe enthusiastically what they have learnt from their visits to places of interest such as the National Gallery and the Roman Verulamium or from their days in school spent as Victorians. The pupils in Years 4 and 6 enjoy their residential visits that contribute strongly to their personal development. A good range of clubs and additional activities encourages pupils to exercise and be healthy. French is well taught in Key Stage 2 and pupils report that they particularly enjoy sport and physical education (PE). ICT is used effectively across the curriculum. When using their writing skills in other subjects pupils are motivated to produce more imaginative work, for example when describing how it feels to be involved in the Battle of Marathon. However, this is not yet a common feature across the school because these links are not yet planned for in sufficient detail.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares for its pupils well. Initiatives such as the 'buddy' system in Year 5 and 'worry boxes' to share anxieties mean that pupils look after each other with consideration. Pairing up new pupils with experienced older pupils ensures that new entrants to the school settle in well. The school actively promotes good citizenship, and pupils respond well to opportunities to take initiative. The school meets the statutory requirements for safeguarding children. Senior leaders use assessment data to evaluate the progress of pupils and set challenging annual targets. This is helping teachers to identify those pupils who are at risk of underachievement. They also provide encouraging feedback to pupils about how to improve their work. Provision for special educational needs is satisfactory and these pupils receive good support in the classroom.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

After a period of significant change there is a new senior management team which is experienced, proactive and enthusiastic. Together, with the governing body and the school improvement

partner they have made accurate assessment of the school's strengths and diagnosed those areas that should be better. The school improvement plan is focussed clearly on raising achievement. However, improvements to teaching are not yet sufficiently embedded to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can.

The governors have played a substantial role in supporting the school and have great confidence in the new staff team. The reorganisation of this relatively new governing body means that governors are actively involved in monitoring all areas of the school. This has included a review of middle management. All staff now have a role to play as leaders and managers. However, many are new to their role and are still getting to grips with their new responsibilities.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 |

Personal development and well-being

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 |
| 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? | 2 |

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| 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

05 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Horwood Church of England Combined School, Milton Keynes, MK17 0RG

As you know, I recently visited your school and I am grateful for the help you gave me in finding out how well you are getting on. You are very friendly and well-behaved and I enjoyed talking to you and seeing how well you learn.

Your school is satisfactory because the adults who run it know how to help you learn and they look after you well. You reach good levels in all of your subjects but I think that some of you could do even better. You work hard in lessons and are kind and caring. You are particularly good at looking after each other and working in groups. Your School Council is very well organised. Your teachers work hard and plan lessons carefully, but sometimes the work is either too easy or too hard. I saw that you are interested and enthusiastic about different subjects such as science and geography. I noticed that you make especially good progress when you are allowed to develop and plan your own work. You told me that you enjoyed school, especially PE, as well as the visits and visitors which teachers arrange for you. Your attendance is good.

I have asked the teachers to do three things to make your school even better.

- Check more closely that you understand the work you are set in lessons and make sure that it makes you think hard!
- Give you many more opportunities to practice your writing in other subjects.
- Help each other by sharing what they know about each subject to make all your lessons exciting and challenging.

Good luck in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paula Protherough

Lead Inspector