

Great Wakering Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114792
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	290032
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Florence Olajide

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	424
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jules Fowles
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Spratt
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2005
School address	High Street Great Wakering Southend-on-sea Essex SS3 0EJ
Telephone number	01702219435
Fax number	01702216068

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves a substantial rural community on the fringe of Southend-on-Sea. The vast majority of pupils come from a White British cultural background and less than 1% speak a first language other than English. The proportions of pupils who are entitled to free school meals and those with learning difficulties or disabilities are below average, the latter representing less than a sixth of the pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some good features. Good leadership and management have led to improvements in teaching and standards since the last inspection, although these have not yet impacted fully throughout the school. Standards have risen significantly in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Consequently, pupils' achievement by the end of Year 2 has been outstanding for the last two years. This is a reflection of the very good teaching pupils receive in this phase. Although standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have been significantly below average in recent years, current data and inspection evidence indicate that they are now beginning to rise.

Participation in the National Primary Leadership Programme has led to the significant strengthening of leadership systems and structures. Changes to staffing at senior and middle management level are already having a beneficial impact on standards. More robust, but newly introduced systems for tracking pupils' progress are enabling teachers to gain a better understanding of achievement throughout the school. This information is being used to raise standards in Key Stage 2. However, the use of data to check the school's steps towards meeting its targets is still in its infancy.

Teaching remains satisfactory overall, although much of it is now good. Year 6 pupils for instance report that this year they have had 'the best teaching ever'. The good teaching combined with the new systems for tracking pupils' progress are helping to improve standards and achievement, which are satisfactory overall. Nonetheless, some of the teaching is still only satisfactory, especially in Years 3 and 4, and the assessment and tracking systems are not yet fully embedded.

The Foundation Stage is well managed and the quality of provision and standards are good. Pupils make good progress because the curriculum is well planned and teaching and learning are good. Resources are used effectively to engage pupils in practical activities through play. As a result, they learn very well and by the end of the Reception year, nearly all of them reach expected goals, and many exceed them.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Effective provision has helped turn around a climate of low expectation and poor behaviour. Instead, the atmosphere around the school is lively, purposeful and much more conducive to learning. The school provides pupils with good care, guidance and support although the quality of marking is inconsistent across the school. Pupils are strongly motivated by the exciting curriculum. They are diligent and hard working, and their attendance is satisfactory.

The school's progress since the last inspection and the value for money it provides are both satisfactory. The significant improvements to standards and achievement at Key Stage 1, and rising standards at Key Stage 2 are an indication that its capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate progress in Key Stage 2 so that pupils can build on the good start in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, and achieve equally good standards by the end of Year 6.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 and 4, bringing it up to the standard of the rest.
- Further enhance and embed procedures for marking, assessing and tracking pupils' progress.
- Make better use of performance data to check the school's progress towards meeting its targets.

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

Pupils enter the school with average standards. They make good progress through the Foundation Stage and outstanding progress in Key Stage 1, such that by the end of Year 2 standards are significantly above average. However, in Key Stage 2, the school is only just beginning to see the impact of its improvement initiatives. While better teaching and leadership led to higher standards in English in 2006, standards in mathematics and science remained low.

The most recent data from teacher assessments indicates that, although pockets of underachievement remain in Years 3 and 4, most of the pupils are making satisfactory progress. Indeed, many of them, particularly those in Year 6, have made significant progress over the last year. Changes have already been made to strengthen leadership in Years 3 and 4. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are making good progress through the school. The achievement of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds mirrors that of other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Overall, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although their knowledge and awareness of the minority ethnic cultures in modern Britain is less strong than other aspects. Pupils work and play cooperatively. They know right from wrong and behave well. Nearly all of them enjoy school as reflected in parents' comments and by pupils' satisfactory attendance. This represents a significant turnaround from a few years ago. A girl in Year 5 summed it up when she heard pupils in Year 1 say what a good school it is. 'I wouldn't have said that when I was in Year 1, but I agree with them now,' she mused. Pupils are conscious of the need to keep safe and healthy, and the School Council has suggested some excellent ideas for improving school lunches. The school's prefects are confident, articulate young people, who undertake specific duties around the building, contributing much support to its smooth running. Other pupils make an effective contribution to the school and wider community through their fund-raising efforts. Pupils' basic skills are sufficient to support them in the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Although much of the teaching is good or better, systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are relatively new and are not used consistently well throughout the school. Pupils' good behaviour gives teachers the confidence to use a wider range of teaching styles and practical activities to engage pupils' interest and meet their needs. Consequently, pupils enjoy learning and increasingly take more responsibility for the quality of their work. Teaching assistants provide pupils with good support. Assessment data is being used more effectively to understand what pupils know and to plan appropriate learning experiences to move them on. In the weaker teaching, a combination of uninspiring teaching styles and inappropriate independent activities slow pupils' progress. The

progress of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is tracked very carefully. The strong partnership and good communication between the special educational needs coordinator, teachers and teaching assistants are helping these pupils to make rapid progress. Pupils say, 'some teachers' marking is better than others, especially when a comment tells you how to improve'. This is a clear reflection of the inconsistencies in marking practices across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. It is adapted appropriately for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and it provides effective opportunities for pupils to explore their creativity in art, music and drama. School productions such as 'The Lion King' develop pupils' confidence as young actors. Themed days such as the 'French day' challenge pupils' thinking and develop their problem solving skills and teamwork. There is an appropriate emphasis on teaching basic skills, and information and communication technology is used effectively to develop pupils' research and analysis skills. Action books for literacy, science investigations and practical activities in mathematics are helping to increase boys' motivation and improve their achievement. There has been a strong focus this year on improving pupils' problem solving skills in mathematics in order to address the low standards in the subject. To develop their awareness of economic matters, Year 5 pupils have participated in an 'enterprise day' at the local secondary school. A wide range of trips and activities enable pupils to explore the world beyond their immediate community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Improved procedures enable staff to provide pupils with effective personal care and academic guidance. Systems to check pupils' progress are extensive and used conscientiously, although they are not yet fully effective owing to their newness. Pupils are set targets aimed at improving specific weaknesses in their knowledge or skills. Pupils know their targets well and work diligently towards them. Background checks of all adults who work or help in the school are carried out efficiently. Arrangements for ensuring child protection, and assessing risks and levels of safety meet statutory requirements. Most pupils feel safe and secure in school, and are ready to concentrate on learning. Much care is taken to help pupils settle in when they enter the Reception class. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is particularly effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior leadership team provide good leadership. The headteacher has put a lot of effort into strengthening the staff team and improving the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, throughout her recent absence due to ill-health, the team continued to move forward on leading the necessary improvements. There are good systems for monitoring how well pupils are doing. This information is used effectively to identify pupils who are underachieving and to target resources at improving their performance. The school sets challenging annual performance targets for each year group from Years 2 to 6.

The school uses its data to form an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. However, it is at an early stage of using data to monitor its progress towards meeting its targets. As a result, self-evaluation is satisfactory. There has been a strong focus on developing the capacity of other leaders within the school. Consequently, subject and phase leaders are effective and now take responsibility for standards across the school. The teaching is monitored regularly and rigorously, and teachers' performance targets are linked to outcomes for pupils.

Governance is good and there are robust systems for ensuring that governors are well informed about the school's work. They are therefore able to support and challenge the school effectively.

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Annex A

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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	2

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 behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	3

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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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

15 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Wakering Primary School, Great Wakering, SS3 0EJ

Thank you for taking the time to talk to us during our recent visit to your school. We all enjoyed listening to what you had to say and, as we promised, this letter is to tell you what we thought of your school.

Your school is satisfactory and it has some good features. Your headteacher and the other staff have been working hard to improve your school. We were impressed with how well-behaved you are. This, you told us, is a big change from how things used to be. You all work and play together in a friendly manner. You enjoy lessons where the teachers involve you in practical activities although some of you would like more helpful comments about how to improve your work. You also get good opportunities to be involved in drama, art, music and other 'fun' activities and we saw how well you participated in the 'French' day during our visit. Some of you, especially the younger ones do really well in your work, but some of you need to do much better. The staff look after you well and they set you targets to improve your work.

To make your school even better we have asked the staff to:

- improve the teaching and learning, so that those of you in Years 3 to 6 can do much better work
- give you better feedback, and make sure that the systems they use to check how well you are doing stronger
- use the information they collect on how well you are doing to set appropriate targets for you and to check how well the school is doing overall.

We hope you will all continue to work hard to support your teachers' efforts. We wish you all the best in the future.

Florence Olajide

Lead Inspector