

Great Bardfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114835
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	290050
Inspection dates	23–24 April 2007
Reporting inspector	John Godwood

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	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Dyson
Headteacher	Mrs A Barney
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2001
School address	Braintree Road Great Bardfield Near Braintree Essex CM7 4RN
Telephone number	01371 810252
Fax number	01371 810583

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average, is oversubscribed and serves a rural area that is socially relatively advantaged. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The proportion that have learning difficulties or disabilities is below average, but the proportion who have a statement of special educational needs is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils' enjoyment of learning is outstanding because the school is particularly effective in making learning interesting, both within lessons and in the many additional activities. The good curriculum is planned creatively to encourage pupils to think for themselves and make connections in their learning. As a result of this approach and the good care, guidance and support, pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The school has a mutually supportive ethos among the children and the adults. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They grow into confident young people who are caring towards each other. They take on responsibilities and make a good contribution to the school and wider community. They are well prepared for their future lives by the academic and social skills they gain.

The school's strengths are the result of good leadership and management. The headteacher provides clear direction in promoting a creative approach to learning and good personal development. Staff work well together and are mutually supportive. Self-evaluation is good and the school is accurate in assessing its own strengths and weaknesses. It is effective in planning new developments, although it does not use the outcomes of evaluations sufficiently when setting whole school priorities and targets. It has improved well on the issues identified in the last inspection and has good capacity for further improvement.

Pupils' achievement is good, when they join the school, their knowledge and skills are in line with national expectations. In the Foundation Stage they make sound progress as a result of provision that is satisfactory with good features. Through Years 1 to 6, pupils make good progress and by Year 6, standards are above average. There is an improving trend over recent years, although standards are not entirely consistent, partly because the school has had many staff changes. The school has met its targets, but these are not as challenging as they should be.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers establish good relationships and pupils respond very well. Lessons are well planned to provide interesting activities at the right level. The school tracks pupils' progress well and teachers use this information in planning lessons. There is good provision for pupils' with specific learning difficulties. However, the additional support for other pupils who are falling a little behind is not planned systematically enough. Teachers generally mark pupils' work well, giving points for improvement, although the guidance doesn't ensure pupils are entirely clear how well they are doing and what their next steps are.

Governors make a good contribution in guiding the school and checking on its work, as well as providing strong links with the local community. Resources are used well to provide good value for money. The building constrains the school's growth and activities, but is attractively maintained to promote pupils' enjoyment of learning. The great majority of parents are very positive about the school, although a few are frustrated by the limitations on the school's size.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils clearer information on their attainment levels and next steps.
- Be more systematic in planning the additional support for pupils whose progress is below expectations.
- Ensure that school development planning is well informed by the outcomes of evaluations and includes challenging targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. In the Foundation Stage, progress is satisfactory and standards are in line with national expectations. Through Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, progress is good. Year 2 results are a little above average and improved strongly in 2006. Writing was less strong than reading or mathematics.

By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are above average. There has been some variation in Year 6 test results, partly because numbers are small and partly because staff changes have had an impact on pupils' progress. However, there has been an improving trend since 2003. English is not as strong as mathematics or science. The school is aware of this and is taking steps to improve pupils' writing. The school has met its targets, although the target for the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 or above is not especially challenging. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Pupils with learning difficulties and high attaining pupils also make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good with some outstanding features. Teachers work hard to create a happy environment and promote pupils' awareness of the importance of learning. Pupils' enjoyment of school is exceptional and is reflected in good attendance. They say that lessons are fun. From their lessons, sports and other activities, pupils make good progress in developing healthy minds and healthy bodies.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, particularly their moral and social awareness. As a result, behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. Pupils listen attentively, follow instructions and understand the needs of others. They are considerate to each other, as 'buddies', for example, or on the friendship bench in the playground. Pupils take part confidently in class and school council discussions. This helps them to develop their roles as members of the school and wider communities. Links with the parish council, for example, prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan well for pupils' differing ages and abilities. Lessons are well structured and include interesting, challenging activities. Teachers give clear explanations and use questions well to involve pupils and encourage them to think. They inform pupils of their learning objectives, but don't always review these sufficiently.

Teachers manage pupils well and establish good relationships, so that pupils are confident to have a go. Pupils express their ideas well and work well in pairs and groups. Teaching assistants provide good support to pupils with learning difficulties.

The school is well resourced with interactive whiteboards and laptop computers. In some lessons this technology is used well to engage pupils and support their learning. The best lessons are particularly creative and pupils respond well to the opportunity to learn independently. In a few lessons, however, there are some lost opportunities to involve pupils actively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, with a strong emphasis on basic skills and personal, social and health education. The Foundation Stage provision is much improved since the last inspection. Recent exciting initiatives have been planned well to develop learning and study skills, including the 'Mantle of the Expert' approach, for example, and intelligent use of information and communication technology. The school is aware that it needs to monitor these changes carefully as they become more firmly established.

Pupils say that the rich range of experiences makes learning interesting. These include French, swimming and a good variety of extra-curricular activities. Good provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties, those who are in the early stages of learning English and more able pupils. Teachers use assessment records appropriately in planning lessons to meet pupils' needs, but the interventions for pupils whose progress is below expectations are not planned systematically enough.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, support and guidance are good. The school provides a warm, friendly environment in which pupils are happy and feel secure. Procedures for child protection, safeguarding pupils and health and safety are well established and conscientiously carried out. However, the school does not provide enough space for more active games at playtimes on the front playground, leading to the risk of minor accidents.

Pupils with learning difficulties have clear educational plans that include helpful advice for parents. The school works well with other agencies to give pupils and their families any additional help they need. There are good strategies for tracking pupils' progress in English and mathematics and teachers set class and individual targets to guide pupils' efforts. Assessment in other subjects is satisfactory. However, pupils are not given a clear enough picture of where they stand at the moment and precisely how to move forward in order to make even better progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is well supported by good staff teamwork. Frequent staff changes have been managed effectively. Subject leaders play a full role in planning and monitoring the quality of provision.

The school evaluates its work carefully, taking good account of pupils' and parents' views. It plans appropriate priorities, such as the recent focus on writing skills and the development of pupils' independent learning skills. Arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' standards are satisfactory. However, there are not sufficiently clear links between the outcomes of evaluations and the whole school development plan in order to ensure that this is well focused on meeting challenging targets.

Governance is good. Governors know the school well through regular visits and are involved in planning and monitoring provision. They fulfil their statutory duties, although they have yet to monitor the impact of their race equality policy.

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Annex A

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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

25 April 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Great Bardfield Primary School, Great Bardfield, CM7 4RN

We enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for your friendly welcome and for sharing your thoughts with us. Many of you told us that you enjoy school very much because you have fun things to do. We agree that it is a good school. It is particularly good at making learning interesting, both in lessons and in the many extra activities.

The school helps you to grow into responsible young people. Your teachers are fair and listen to what you have to say. They take good care of you. Your behaviour is excellent. We were pleased to see how well you care for each other and are helpful in school - as buddies or on the school council, for example.

You learn well because teachers explain clearly and set work at the right level. They ask you questions that make you think for yourselves and this helps you to learn. We were pleased to see that you work hard and discuss things sensibly with each other. Teachers track your progress well and give you extra help if you need it. We have asked the school to make sure the extra help is planned carefully to meet your needs.

You make good progress and do well in Year 6 tests, though a few of you could do even better. For some of you, writing is not quite as good as other subjects. Teachers mark your work well, but we have asked them to tell you even more clearly how well you are doing and what you need to improve.

The headteacher and all the staff work very hard to make learning enjoyable and help you to do well. They have good ideas for how to make the school even better. They check how well things are going and we have asked them to use what they find even more when they plan new things.

We think that the school will continue to improve. You can help by working with your teachers to meet your targets, particularly in writing. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Godwood

Lead inspector