



Great Easton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115177
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290156
Inspection dates 7–8 February 2007
Reporting inspector Cheryl Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Snow Hill
School category	Voluntary aided		Great Easton, Dunmow
Age range of pupils	4–11		Essex CM6 2DR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01371870219
Number on roll (school)	137	Fax number	01371870063
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Robert Pickford
		Headteacher	Mrs Gill Hopkins
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves five villages but a considerable number of pupils also come from the Great Dunmow area. It has five classes. Almost all pupils are White British with a very small number of minority ethnic pupils. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The number with learning difficulties or disabilities is average although the proportion of pupils with significant levels of difficulty is well above average. This affects attainment on entry which is very wide ranging but average overall. The economic growth in the Dunmow area means that there is a high number of pupils joining and leaving the school outside of normal times.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school is correct in judging itself to be outstanding. The key to the school's success and pupils' outstanding achievement is the principled and determined leadership by the headteacher and governors. The school's mission statement 'personal excellence within a happy and secure Christian environment' shines through all its work. Pupils receive a first class education which combines achieving consistently high standards with the enjoyment of an exceptional range of learning opportunities. Excellent provision in the Reception class gives children a flying start to school. Regardless of their starting points, pupils continue to make excellent progress throughout the school although the school has correctly identified that a very small number of average attaining pupils could do even better in writing. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and demonstrate this with their good attendance, excellent behaviour and enthusiasm for learning. They say they feel safe and happy in school and are totally confident that a member of staff will help them should they have any worries.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and have many good things to say about it. As one parent wrote 'Great Easton is not just about test results, but about developing individuals.' Pupils' personal development is outstanding. It is underpinned by the excellent care, guidance and support the school provides and developed by outstanding teaching. Within a framework of excellent relationships, teachers encourage initiative and independence. The impact of this encouragement is evident, for example, in Reception when children quickly choose their start of the day activity and when Year 5 and 6 check their work conscientiously to see if they have met their targets in 'improvement time'. Pupils gain a very good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and how to keep themselves fit and safe. Through membership of the school council, class councils and being playleaders, as well as raising substantial amounts for national charities, pupils make an outstanding contribution to their own and the wider community. Older pupils take on responsibility thoughtfully and develop good leadership skills. These qualities together with particularly good literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, prepare them very effectively for their future.

The outstanding curriculum is innovative and meets pupils' interests extremely well. It is enriched with an exceptional range of visits and visitors. Teachers are extremely successful in making learning relevant by weaving subjects together so that key skills in subjects such as ICT and literacy are practised in meaningful situations. As a result, standards are well above average in most subjects and exceptionally high in some. These include not only English, mathematics and science but ICT, art and design, history and geography. Pupils say their favourite part of school is the 'enrichment afternoon' and it is easy to see why. Through exceptional links with the community and parents, a good number of talented volunteers and teaching assistants lead small group activities ranging from Tai Chi to carpentry. Leadership and management are outstanding. The school's evaluation of its work is astute so that planning for further improvement is clearly focused. There is no complacency. The capacity for further

improvement and maintaining high standards in all the school's work is outstanding. The school provides excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards even further for average attaining pupils, especially in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. On entry to Reception, the school's data show that the intake usually has above average proportions of children with significant learning difficulties or disabilities and some whose attainment is well above that typical for the age group. The school is very successful in ensuring that, regardless of their starting points, pupils make exceptionally good progress in a wide range of subjects as they move through the school. However, in the past year it has noted that a very small number of average attaining pupils are not making the progress they should in writing and has put strategies in place to remedy this. An important feature of the school's success is that pupils make exceptional progress in all subjects. Older pupils apply their good literacy, numeracy and ICT skills competently in their research.

Standards are well above average at Year 2 and Year 6 in most subjects and exceptionally high in some. Great Easton is particularly successful in helping pupils who start the school at below average levels to attain good standards by Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils love coming to school and involve themselves enthusiastically in all it has to offer. Regardless of age, pupils work hard and take pride in completing their work to a high standard. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They flourish through the care, respect and consideration shown to them by adults and as a result they show outstanding levels of respect and care towards each other. By the time pupils leave Great Easton, they are considerate and confident young people. Pupils and their families who join the school during a school year are warmly welcomed, consequently they settle in very happily and soon develop friendships.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The school's judgement that the quality of teaching is always at least good and often outstanding is confirmed by the inspection. Pupils' all-round achievement would not be so high unless this was the case. Throughout the school, there is a very positive learning atmosphere, especially in the 'enrichment afternoon' activities. A short visit

to classrooms shows competent and skilful teachers who enjoy their work. Relationships are excellent between adults and pupils. Key features of teaching are the very high expectations for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, and lively lesson content. Planning is very thorough and details challenging targets for more able pupils. Teaching for pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is carefully targeted to make sure they learn key skills and develop good self-esteem. Teachers soon assess the capabilities of pupils new to the school and provide them with work to ensure they build on what they already know. As one parent wrote 'Our child has thrived, both educationally and emotionally since joining the school.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It offers a much wider range of interesting and exciting activities than is usually found. There are three key features that have a significant impact on pupils' learning and personal development. First, teachers have worked extremely hard to link subjects so that learning is relevant and there are frequent opportunities to practise literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful situations. Second, is the exceptional range of visitors and visits, including two residential visits. For example, the younger pupils visited Saint Paul's Cathedral and could compare the features of Great Easton Church with those of Saint Paul's. Third, the enrichment afternoons allow pupils to work alongside experts to develop their skills and talents and widen their interests.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and underpin the work of the school and pupils' success. All pupils and their families are known very well. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and comply with government requirements. The school's system for tracking pupils' progress is used extremely well to make sure they achieve as well as they should in relation to their starting point. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and they are given points for improvement which they are expected to address in 'improvement time'. They are encouraged to be self-critical and to appraise the work of others and do this very well. Very good links with parents means that they are well informed about school events, how their child is getting on and what they can do to help at home. Parents of children new to the school speak warmly of how their child has been helped to settle in happily.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. All staff and governors share the uncompromising aim of putting the individual child and their achievement at the centre of everything the school does. Through professional development courses, the headteacher has encouraged and enabled a very effective senior team. They monitor

teaching and data, as well as making regular checks on pupils' books. Pupils' progress is tracked assiduously so that trends or lack of sufficient progress are quickly noted and prompt action taken. As a result, the headteacher and senior team have an excellent understanding of the quality of education the school provides. They make perceptive use of all this information when planning for short and long term improvements. Governors give the headteacher and staff exceptional support, and challenge them to strive for further improvements.

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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?	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	2
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	1
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?	1
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

9 February 2007

Dear Children

Great Easton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Snow Hill, Great Eason, Dunmow, Essex, CM6 2DR.

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. I really enjoyed my visit as there are so many good things going on in your school. I was very impressed with your excellent behaviour and the way you work so hard in lessons. I thought the play leaders were doing a great job playing with the younger children at break time.

I think your school is outstanding and I think you agree with me. The Headteacher and all the staff work very hard to make sure you all do as well as possible and have lots of interesting lessons and visits. You told me you love the enrichment afternoons and I was amazed by the number of parents and helpers who come into school on these afternoons. You are very lucky to have so many talented people to help you. I noticed that your teachers organise really interesting lessons and help you with your excellent topic books and wonderful art work around the school. You all make such good progress as you move through the school but I felt that just a few of you could do even better in writing. Your teachers know about this already and are making sure that those of you who need it are getting a little extra help.

I saw that the staff know you all very well and take really good care of you. You told me that someone will always listen to your ideas and will help you if you are worried. The school council is very well organised and it gets a good mention in your newspaper.

I hope you continue to work hard and enjoy all the good things going on in your school.

Thank you again,

All good wishes

Cheryl Thompson

Lead Inspector