

Great Malvern Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116709
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	290608
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Alison Grainger

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	393
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	James Crabbe
Headteacher	John McMillan
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2002
School address	Pickersleigh Road Malvern WR14 2BY
Telephone number	01684 574219
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most pupils are of White British Heritage and a few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties. The school has a specialist unit for pupils with speech and language disorders. Pupils who attend the unit have specialist support in the mornings and are taught in classes in the main school during the afternoons. Taking the intake as a whole, children's attainment on entry to the Nursery is a little below average and is lower now than a few years ago.

The headteacher has been in post since January 2007. From September to December 2006, the deputy headteacher took responsibility for the school as acting head.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' progress and standards, and the quality of teaching and the curriculum.

The school is not effective because there are too many pupils whose learning needs are not met and who underachieve as a result. Even though standards are only a little below average in Year 6, they are a lot lower than this in some years. Children in the Nursery get off to a slow start because the provision for them is unsatisfactory. The activities in the Nursery do not sufficiently develop children's knowledge, understanding and skills. Although children make satisfactory progress in the Reception Year, many fall behind badly in Years 1 and 2. The result is that standards are significantly below average at the end of Year 2. While the gains pupils make from the start of Year 3 to the end of Year 6 are satisfactory overall, and are rapid in Year 6, there are pockets of underachievement in some classes in Years 3 to 5. Pupils in the language unit develop speaking skills well in sessions in which they have specialist support. However, their achievement is inadequate overall because the weaknesses in provision in the main school adversely affect their learning.

Pupils' progress is patchy because teaching and the curriculum are inconsistently matched to their needs and are unsatisfactory overall. In the classes in which pupils do not do well enough, teachers' expectations of the standards pupils are capable of attaining are too low. The care, guidance and support for pupils are also unsatisfactory. Although there are some positive features, such as the good relationships staff have with pupils, the guidance given to pupils about how to improve their performance is too variable. There are examples of good and clear guidance that supports learning but in some classes academic guidance is minimal.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils form positive relationships with others and help to make the school a calm and safe place. Most pupils enjoy school and particularly appreciate activities additional to lessons, such as the film club and the residential visit in Year 6. Attendance is well below the national average and frequent absences contribute to some pupils' slow progress and low standards.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Even though there is a lot to be done to move the school forward, improvements are already being made. These are evident, for example, in developments in provision in the Reception Year and in signs of improvements in some classes in which teaching was weak. In one year group, the impact of support to improve teaching has already been significant. The recently appointed headteacher is providing outstanding leadership. He has an exceptionally good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and is strongly focused on pupils' needs. The capacity of most other key staff and governors in taking the school forward is developing steadily. This said, not all teachers sufficiently recognise the extent to which they are accountable for the quality of pupils' learning in their classes and across the school in the subjects for which they are responsible.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils progress as well as they should from their start in the Nursery to the end of Year 6 and reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Raise teachers' expectations of the standards pupils are capable of attaining and ensure that they match teaching and the curriculum to pupils' needs.
- Provide all pupils with clear guidance on how they can improve their performance.
- Work closely with parents to improve attendance.
- Increase the accountability of all teachers for the quality of pupils' learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards are a little below average when pupils leave the school. However, across the school, standards vary and pupils' achievement is inadequate overall.

Children move forward slowly in the Nursery and their progress is inadequate. As a result, standards in Reception are below average, even though progress picks up here as a result of changes made this year and is satisfactory. Progress is particularly weak in Year 1 and this is also the case for many pupils in Year 2. Pupils move on more steadily in most classes in Years 3 to 5 than lower down the school. Their progress is better in some classes now in these years than it was earlier in the school year. Nevertheless, there remain some pockets of underachievement in Years 3 to 5. A lot of catching up takes place in Year 6.

Pupils with learning difficulties make inconsistent progress. Those in the language unit underachieve across the range of their work because of weaknesses in provision in the main school. This is even though some good gains are made in spoken language during specialist sessions.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Children make a secure start in their personal, social and emotional development in the Nursery and Reception Year. Across the school, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The relatively stronger areas are moral and social development and this is reflected in pupils' good behaviour and positive relationships. Pupils are pleasant, friendly and courteous. The weakest aspect is pupils' understanding of the diversity of modern multi-ethnic society.

Most pupils enjoy being at school and appreciate the range of activities that the school provides in addition to daily lessons. Not all pupils are enthusiastic about their lessons when teaching is not matched to their learning needs. Pupils respond well to opportunities to take responsibility and make a reasonable contribution to both the school and wider communities. They have the expected understanding of how to stay safe and how to keep fit and healthy. They know, for example, that it is important to eat healthily and take regular exercise.

Pupils' skills for their future education are inadequate overall. Too many, particularly lower down the school, do not have adequate literacy and numeracy skills. The attendance rate is lower now than at the last inspection when it was identified as requiring improvement.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Even though improvements are starting to show in some classes, in too many the expectations of the standards pupils are capable of attaining are too low and work is not matched to pupils' learning needs. This is particularly the case in the Nursery and in most classes in Years 1 and 2. Sometimes pupils are given too long to work on an activity with the result that insufficient learning takes place. In whole-class sessions, teaching is often pitched at the same level for all, even though there is a wide spread of ability within the class. Often this means that the more able pupils and those of 'average' capability are not pushed on. At other times, the activities or topics discussed are too difficult for a significant number of lower-ability pupils and those with learning difficulties. Although teaching assistants are usually deployed appropriately to support particular groups when pupils work on tasks, they are not used sufficiently well in whole-class sessions.

In Year 6, pupils make rapid gains because teaching is closely matched to their needs. Expectations of the standards pupils are capable of attaining are a lot higher in Year 6 than in other years. In other classes in which teaching is effective, for example, in Year 4, where there have been good improvements this year, teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn and the timing of activities keeps the pupils involved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

In the Nursery, the range of indoor activities is severely restricted by shortcomings in the accommodation, although reasonable use is made of the outdoor area. However, activities are lacking in challenge and do not develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding adequately. In Reception, there is a sharper focus on the teaching of basics to support the development of early reading, writing and mathematics skills and this is a significant factor in their satisfactory progress.

Whilst the required subjects are taught in Years 1 to 6, there is too much variation in how effectively the curriculum is matched to pupils' needs. In this respect, the curriculum is poor in Years 1 and 2. Not only are the learning opportunities in English and mathematics inadequate in these years but there is also minimal development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through work across the subjects. Provision for science is another particularly weak area.

The picture is better overall in Years 3 to 5 than in Years 1 and 2, although there are weaknesses in a few classes. In Year 6, the match of the curriculum to pupils' needs is good. Activities are also matched closely to the needs of children in the language unit to support them in developing skills in spoken language. A good range of activities is provided in addition to lessons, such as clubs, visits and visitors.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Marking of pupils' work and advice to help them to improve their performance is very good in Year 6. There are also other examples of clear and effective guidance through the setting of targets and marking, for instance, in Year 4 and in one class in Year 2. In these specific years

and classes, teachers are implementing new initiatives well. However, this practice is not consistent across the school and in some classes there is almost no guidance at all. As a result, the overall quality of academic guidance is inadequate. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are new and not all teachers have a secure enough understanding of national curriculum levels to ensure that the information recorded is accurate and can be used effectively.

The attention to pupils' personal welfare is satisfactory. Pupils are sure that they have an adult to whom they can turn should they have any worries or concerns. They say that the school does not tolerate bullying. Arrangements for ensuring pupils' health and safety are properly in place and the building is kept clean. Poor attendance has started to be tackled rigorously and the school knows that even more needs to be done to bring about the necessary improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Prior to the arrival of the headteacher, the acting head and the local authority worked closely together to lay some important foundations to help the school to identify its weaknesses and begin to move forward. The headteacher has made real and tangible changes in a short time, swiftly taking the right action. Impact of this action is evident, for example, in improved teaching in some classes and also in better academic guidance for some pupils. The headteacher recognises that there is still much to be done and a new school development plan is giving sharp focus to the drive for improvement. Capacity to take the school forward is developing at other levels. The mathematics and science co-ordinators are clear about the effectiveness of provision in their subjects and are already working actively to achieve improvement. However, not all teachers fully recognise the extent to which they are accountable for improving the outcomes in pupils' learning both in their areas of responsibility and in their roles as class teachers.

Governors have a secure understanding of the school's effectiveness and support the headteacher in the action being taken. They are developing their skills in asking senior leaders critical questions to support improvement. They are keen to know, for example, not only what the problems are but also what the solutions are.

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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

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?	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 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	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

17 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Malvern Primary School, Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 2BY

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We found all of you that we talked with to be very polite and helpful. You behave well in lessons and around the school. You get on well with each other and with the adults in school.

We were pleased to find out that you feel well looked after at school. You told us that the adults are approachable and that you can tell them if you have any worries. Most of you enjoy school and appreciate the activities that you have in addition to lessons such as clubs and visits.

We found that you make really good progress when you are in Year 6. As you move up through the school your progress varies and not all of you make enough progress. This is because there are some important areas in which your school needs to improve the quality of education that you receive.

Your headteacher is determined that you should all do really well. He is making some important changes to ensure that the necessary improvements happen. Some of the other adults who help to run the school are doing a lot to help with this.

There are some things that we have asked the adults to do. They agree with us that these are important things and they have already started work on them.

We have asked the adults to make sure that all of you do as well as you can. To help with this, we have asked them to ensure that the work they ask you to do is always at just the right level for each of you. We want them to make sure too that you each have clear guidance about what you need to do to improve your work.

All the adults will be working together to make the school better. You can help too. The attendance rate in your school is lower than in most other primary schools. We would like you and your parents to make sure that you all have good attendance. You can also help by making sure that you always do your best.

Yours sincerely

Alison Grainger Lead Inspector