

# The Grove Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117258
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE
<b>Inspection number</b>	290773
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Benstock

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	242
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Wheeler
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Deirdre Walker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 May 2002
<b>School address</b>	Dark Lane Harpenden Hertfordshire AL5 1QB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 760031
<b>Fax number</b>	01582 766334

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<b>Age group</b>	7–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is broadly average in size and serves the local community in the small town of Harpenden. Pupils have a mixed range of social backgrounds. Pupils are predominantly White British. The percentage whose first language is not English is below average. The percentages of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities or who have statements of special educational need are higher than in most schools. The school has been awarded 'Investor in People' status and accredited under the 'Healthy Schools' initiative.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The Grove Junior School provides a satisfactory standard of education and has good and outstanding features. Pupils highlight the warm and friendly relationships saying: 'everyone works together'.

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils enter the school with above average attainment in English, mathematics and science. They make steady progress to maintain above average results at the end of Year 6. Progress overall has been broadly average for the past three years. However, in 2006, the progress made by girls of average ability was slower than that expected nationally and less than that made by boys. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress and achieve well due to the good individual support they receive.

Good care, guidance and support contribute to pupils' good personal development and well-being and this is reflected, for example, in positive attitudes to learning and outstanding rates of attendance. Most pupils behave well and readily take responsibility. Pupils say that they feel safe, enjoy school and are adamant that behaviour has improved since the introduction of the new behaviour code. They mention instances of bullying but confirm the school deals with these well. The school's focus on developing safe and healthy lifestyles has excellent results. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers are committed and develop good, caring relationships with pupils. Teaching assistants give good support to individual pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Teachers' planning is detailed but there is not a consistent implementation of strategies to ensure that pupils have work that is closely matched to their abilities. This is having a negative impact on their progress. The good curriculum is broad and enhanced by many additional enrichment activities, especially in music and extra-curricular sport.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has demonstrated good leadership in extending the responsibilities of subject leaders and improving the use of information and communication technology (ICT), both key issues at the last inspection. Good liaison is established with partner schools, local authority services and the community. The school makes a satisfactory evaluation of its own performance. Teaching is regularly monitored and evaluated. However, the analysis of assessment data is not rigorous enough to evaluate pupils' progress in detail. Consequently, targets and the guidance that pupils receive have not been sufficient to move achievement beyond satisfactory in recent years. Governors provide good support and expertise. Finances are well managed and the school gives satisfactory value for money. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of all pupils, paying particular attention to girls and especially to those of average ability.
- Ensure that work is matched more closely to the full range of learners' needs.
- Ensure that assessment data are analysed rigorously, so that the targets and guidance given to pupils are more effective in improving the progress that they make.

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

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

In 2006, pupils attained above average standards in English, mathematics and science in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6. Standards have been above average over the past three years. However, attainment in English fell in 2006 from the previous year and results were not as good as in mathematics or science. The school did not meet its targets in any of the core subjects, although these were extremely challenging, especially at Level 5. Assessment records suggest that the number of pupils reaching target levels is expected to improve this year.

Achievement in English, mathematics and science over the past three years has been satisfactory. It was slightly less than expected in 2004 and 2006, and slightly better than expected in 2005. However in 2006, girls of average ability made less progress than boys. School tracking records and analysis of the current Year 6 pupils' work confirm that achievement continues to be satisfactory. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress due to the particularly good level of support they receive.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' attendance is exceptionally good because they enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils behave well in lessons and most behave well in the playground. A few pupils and parents report incidents of bullying, but these are much reduced since a new behaviour code has been implemented. Pupils are extremely well aware of the need to keep safe and praise the good level of care. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the need to stay healthy, which they demonstrate through really sensible eating and by taking full advantage of the many good opportunities they have for sport and physical exercise, both in normal lessons and as extra-curricular activities. Pupils are developing effectively the skills they need for later life, especially through teamwork and residential trips.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy assemblies, especially those for 'sharing' their work with others. They readily take responsibility, for example as members of the school council or acting as buddies to pupils who are new to the school. They also contribute to the wider community, for example by enthusiastically raising money for local charities. Cultural development is particularly effective. Pupils understand and celebrate diverse cultures. They learn much by participating in activities such as cultural arts week. Music is popular because there is an active choir and regular musical productions.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teachers demonstrate a high level of commitment in their work. They form very good relationships with pupils. Behaviour in lessons is managed well overall, with the new behaviour code proving effective in reducing the unacceptable behaviour of a small minority of pupils and enabling most pupils to make at least satisfactory progress.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is often good, but is not consistent in quality. In good lessons, a variety of teaching styles and range of activities engages the learners. The use of computers to enhance learning has improved and is now good. However, teachers are not yet using assessment data well enough to identify variations in pupils' achievement or to ensure that the tasks and levels of challenge match individual pupils' needs. This is not usually the case for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities because support from teaching assistants is good.

Teachers encourage pupils to assess their own learning. Marking is good and teachers often give clear indications of what pupils need to do to improve their work. However, teachers do not always evaluate sufficiently what pupils have learned in the lesson and use this in planning the next lesson.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. All learn French on a weekly basis from a part-time teacher, and music is a strong feature. All pupils have personal, social and health education (PSHE) timetabled and, with a good emphasis on physical education, a healthy lifestyle is encouraged well. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities, especially in sport. The community is used well to enhance learning, with good use made of visitors and regular residential trips contributing greatly to pupils' personal development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pastoral care is good. Pupils are helped to settle quickly when they join the school. Transition arrangements for pupils moving from the infant school are very good and include the adoption of a new pupil by an older 'buddy'. Many parents praise the high level of care demonstrated by the teachers and other staff. Safeguarding arrangements are good. The school carries out thoroughly the required checks on those who work with children and all staff receive child protection training. Detailed risk assessments are carried out on activities both on and off the school site. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Assessment data is used well to identify and support pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. However, the systems in place for the majority are not sufficiently robust for teachers to track pupils' progress well enough and set specific and detailed individual pupil targets.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

The leadership of the headteacher is good. Many parents praise her professional commitment and sensitive style. She has a clear vision in moving the school forward and is well supported by her two deputies. The school ensures all pupils have equality of opportunity irrespective of their needs or background. Key issues from the last inspection have been addressed satisfactorily. The quality and use of ICT resources have greatly expanded and the range of people involved in school improvement is much wider. The school's record since the last inspection demonstrates that it has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Pupils' views are collected well through

school council but a significant proportion of parents in the inspection survey say that the school does not take account of their views.

The overall quality of management is satisfactory. The school has a satisfactory system for self-evaluation leading to sound development planning. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching are satisfactory. Subject leaders are much more accountable and involved in monitoring than they were, but are not involved enough in lesson observation. Analysis of assessment information is currently limited in its rigour but attention is being paid to training teachers to improve their understanding and the use of data. Consequently, management strategies have not yet made enough impact on raising achievement.

Governors are supportive and challenging. They offer a great deal of expertise. Governors are actively involved in self-evaluation. They have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school from staff reports, but visits to school during the day are limited.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
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**

24 May 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of The Grove Junior School, Harpenden, AL5 1QB

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you learn and hearing about your experiences.

We think your school is very friendly and caring. Teachers give you interesting things to do in lessons and many extra activities are arranged to make your time at school enjoyable. You attend well, make the progress that you should and do well in tests. Unfortunately, in 2006, some girls did not make as much progress as boys. We are pleased to hear you praise the teachers and other adults for their help and support. Most of you behave well and like to take responsibility. The headteacher leads the school well, with care and consideration for all of you. There are some things we have asked the headteacher and staff to do to make the school even better.

- We have asked the teachers to expect all of you to make more progress with your work and pay particular attention to making sure girls move on at least as fast as the boys.
- We have asked teachers to make sure the work in lessons is at the right level for all of you.
- We have asked that assessments be checked in more detail and used more thoroughly to measure your progress, to set targets and to provide advice that helps you to improve.

We hope you carry on enjoying your time at the school and do well in the future.

David Benstock

Lead Inspector