



Great Bowden Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120145
Local Authority Leicestershire
Inspection number 291646
Inspection date 18 October 2006
Reporting inspector Julia Coop

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Gunnsbrook Close off Main Street, Great Bowden Market Harborough LE16 7HZ
School category	Voluntary controlled		
Age range of pupils	4-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01858 463216
Number on roll (school)	77	Fax number	01858 463216
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Pat Baker
		Headteacher	Stefanie Edwards
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small school serves the village of Great Bowden. Nearly half of the pupils travel to the school from other areas. Most pupils are White British. A small number of pupils are from Gypsy/Roma families. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties is above average, and well above average in some year groups. Attainment on entry varies each year, although many children start with attainment at least at the level expected for their age. Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes. The headteacher joined the school in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Great Bowden is a satisfactory school. It is a warm Christian community that welcomes each individual pupil. Parents value the positive 'family' atmosphere and this is one reason that many choose the school for their children, even if it means travelling some distance. Close links with outside agencies are harnessed well so that Gypsy/Roma pupils and those with learning difficulties are provided with good support.

The school provides a satisfactorily broad curriculum with an interesting and recently improved array of additional activities. This good range of additional activities, coupled with the friendly supportive atmosphere, helps pupils grow in confidence, enjoy learning and behave well. Pastoral care for pupils is good so that pupils feel safe and secure at school, saying that 'you never have to worry because there is always someone to turn to'. The guidance given to support pupils' academic progress is less effective and is inconsistent. The school is rightly planning to improve the way that staff mark pupils' work and how they use individual targets to help pupils understand their next steps in learning.

Standards are above average in Years 2 and 6, although in this small school they vary each year. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory and, from the time they start in Reception, pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Until recently, however, pupils across the school, and in particular the boys, were not making enough progress in writing. In 2006 at the end of Year 6, few more-able pupils reached the higher levels in all subjects. In mathematics, pupils' problem-solving skills let them down. The new headteacher has introduced better systems to assess and track pupils' progress. This has helped target support where it is most needed. As a result, pupils are starting to make better progress, particularly in writing, where gaps in learning are being plugged, although the school recognises that there is still more to be done.

The main reason that progress is satisfactory rather than good is because teachers do not always ensure that activities are matched carefully enough to the pupils' different abilities, and there is not always a high level of challenge in lessons, particularly for the most able. This is especially important because, in mixed-age classes, there is a very wide spread of ability. This lack of close matching of work to individual needs prevents standards from being even higher.

The new headteacher gives a good lead to the school and is the driving force behind recent improvements to the curriculum, teaching and learning. Staff and governors are a dedicated team and there is a shared commitment to help the headteacher move the school forward. Middle managers and governors are developing their skills in monitoring and evaluating the school's provision. They recognise that this area requires improvement to ensure that the headteacher is fully supported in taking the school forward and also so that the improvements already made are built on further. The recent improvements and the commitment of everyone to working together for the benefit of the pupils, as well as strong partnerships with outside agencies, show that the school has the necessary capacity to develop further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in writing, particularly for the boys, and improve pupils' problem-solving skills in mathematics.
- Ensure that teachers consistently match activities to the pupils' different abilities and challenge the most able pupils.
- Develop the monitoring and evaluation skills of governors and middle managers to support school improvement.
- Ensure marking and target setting provide pupils with more individual guidance about their next steps in learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The achievements of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and Gypsy/Roma learners, are satisfactory. Children make satisfactory progress in the Reception class, whatever their starting point. They make good gains in learning sounds and letters in preparation for reading because planning in this aspect of learning has improved. Pupils make steady progress across the school in relation to their capabilities and reach above-average standards in Years 2 and 6. The school has taken rigorous action to address underachievement in writing and to make learning more interesting for the boys. For example, the history topic of World War 2 used as a stimulus for writing newspaper articles has grabbed the boys' interest. This improved planning, coupled with additional well-targeted support, means that the rate of progress has improved and boys are catching up. The school is realistic and aware that there is still work to do to close the gap between reading and writing. It recognises that pupils are not confident in using a variety of strategies to solve problems in mathematics. As a result, many pupils are prevented from reaching higher standards in mathematics.

The school exceeded the targets it set in 2006, but these were not challenging enough. More-challenging targets are now being set as the school recognises that the most able pupils have the potential to do even better.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are polite, friendly and confident. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and the attendance rate is above the national average, but punctuality for a few pupils in the morning is lax, impacting on learning at the start of the day. Pupils happily work and play together, because 'no one is made to feel different'. They have a good understanding of the need to keep active and eat lots of fruit and vegetables to keep healthy, although some still bring in too many unhealthy snacks in their lunchboxes. They know how to keep safe and comment that 'bullying doesn't happen,' but if they are unhappy, staff 'sort it out'. As a result there is a happy, family atmosphere around the school and a good community spirit. Consequently, pupils'

spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a mature concern for others less fortunate than themselves and respond sensitively to talks and prayers in assemblies. Their sound understanding of other faiths and cultures is strengthened by visits and visitors. By Year 6, pupils have developed into well- rounded individuals who have developed appropriate skills to help them in later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers have good relationships with pupils, who try hard to do well as a result. Astute and rigorous monitoring by the headteacher has ensured that activities planned for lessons are making learning more interesting and enjoyable. Activities include some good 'hands-on' learning. For example, in Reception, children delight in exploring different materials to help a toy postman get a letter across the water without getting wet, while pupils in Years 1 and 2 proudly practise their estimation and measuring skills around the school. Teachers carefully model new skills and teaching assistants support learning well, particularly when leading small groups or supporting individual pupils who find concentrating on learning more difficult. Teachers' expectations are generally satisfactory, although not enough is always expected of the most able pupils. In addition, opportunities for pupils to use different strategies to tackle problems in mathematics are not always fully developed in lessons. Lesson plans do not always make it clear what pupils of different abilities are expected to learn. Because the activities are not always sharply matched to pupils' differing needs, there are missed opportunities to spur on learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and the recently introduced carousel of activities each Wednesday morning, undertaken in family groups, is a big hit with the pupils, who are proud of their newly acquired Spanish and cooking skills. The school has begun to make interesting links between subjects to ensure that pupils can develop their basic skills, particularly writing, in meaningful ways. But it recognises that more opportunities still need to be developed to ensure that pupils make good progress in writing. It also knows that more use needs to be made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning in all subjects, and plans are in hand to do so. The school is justly proud of the award for its work in the creative arts. There are many additional musical activities and many clubs, including drama, Karate and engineering which together with good support for personal, social and health education contribute well to pupils' positive learning attitudes and help pupils make sensible, safe choices.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Adults provide pupils with good pastoral care and ensure that the school is a safe and secure environment. Pupils are taught about the importance of healthy living and are regularly reminded about the need to take care, for instance, when talking to strangers. The school works closely with outside agencies to ensure that it is doing all it can to support Gypsy/Roma pupils and those with learning difficulties.

The academic guidance provided for pupils is less secure. Pupils are given helpful guidance in lessons and this helps them to make sound progress. However, marking, although done regularly, praises without giving pupils enough guidance on the next steps to improve their work. Pupils have some targets for improving their work but these are not fully understood by the pupils who are not sure about 'how they could get better'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher has hit the leadership ground running because she worked closely with the school prior to her appointment. Consequently, she has a good awareness of what needs to be tackled in order to improve pupils' rate of learning. Her determined leadership, in partnership with external consultants, has pointed the school in the right direction and has already led to many improvements. Teachers now have the necessary assessment tools to ensure that curriculum planning progressively develops pupils' subject skills. Improved monitoring of pupils' learning means that support can be targeted where it is most needed and pupils are making better progress.

Staff say that the new headteacher is 'shining a spotlight on the way forward'. They are keen to bring about change and to do their best for the pupils. They are already benefiting from well-tailored professional support and development to help them identify, share and develop good practice in teaching and learning. Middle managers and governors are developing their monitoring roles and are very supportive, but there is more to do to ensure that everyone has the necessary skills to help accelerate the rate of learning and support the headteacher in driving forward school improvement.

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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?	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	3
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

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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	3

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	2
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	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	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	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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you so much for the friendly way you chatted to us when we visited. We really enjoyed seeing your smiling faces around the school. We were particularly impressed with your ability to speak Spanish. We know your families think Great Bowden is a friendly school and we agree. It is providing you with a satisfactory education. These are the good things that we found

- You are confident, sensible and behave well.
- You play well together and look after each other.
- You work hard in lessons; want to do well, but also like to have fun.
- You have a really good time in all the clubs and in the carousel of activities on Wednesday mornings.
- Everyone takes good care of you.

Your teachers and governors are working hard to make the school even better. To help them we have asked them to especially work on these four things

- Help you to improve your writing, especially the boys, and help you get better at solving problems in mathematics.
- Give some of you more challenging work.
- Make sure that everyone keeps a check on how well the school is doing so that they can help the school improve further.
- Give you some individual targets to work towards and give you more help and advice when they mark your work so you are really sure about what you need to do to improve.

We hope you go on working hard and enjoying all of the exciting activities which help you learn and play.