



Gardners Lane Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131249
Local Authority Gloucestershire
Inspection number 293730
Inspection dates 13–14 February 2007
Reporting inspector Lorna Brackstone

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Gardners Lane
School category	Community		Cheltenham
Age range of pupils	4–11		GL51 9JW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01242 515761
Number on roll (school)	188	Fax number	01242 522724
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Janet Macpherson
		Headteacher	Charles Welsh
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is of average size. A very high proportion of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. When children start school, standards are very much lower than those expected for children of a similar age.

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 which pupils wish could be 'open even on Saturdays and Sundays'. Leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher is passionate about all the children in his care and has made an excellent job of creating a dedicated team who work hard to make sure that each individual thrives in school. This view is shared by the parents and is summarised by one who explained that 'the headteacher and his staff do a brilliant job and the children benefit'.

Most children enter Reception with exceptionally low standards, but they achieve well in their first year of school because provision is of good quality. This good progress continues through Years 1 to 6 so that by the time pupils leave, standards are average. Pupils achieve very well in English, with most attaining average standards and above. English standards have improved at a faster rate than those in mathematics and science because the school has focused on reading and writing. The school is now concentrating on teaching specific vocabulary in mathematics and science to help pupils use their knowledge and skills to gain attain higher standards. Most pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well but it is difficult to assess the progress of a small number because they do not have clear targets in their individual education plans.

The very high standards of pastoral care and the good academic guidance and support contribute well to pupils' good personal development. This includes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision, which is also good. Pupils are justifiably proud of the very high standards of their singing and the praise they are given. They enjoy 'hard work' and concentrate well in all their learning. For example, when pupils visited the local university for a dance and drama session, it was reported back to the school that they 'rose to the occasion and sparkled... and their conduct throughout was exemplary'. Behaviour in and around school is good and pupils fully understand the implications of their actions upon others.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers explain things well and make sure that the pupils know what they are doing. Partnerships with other schools and organisations are excellent. These are used exceptionally well to enrich the good curriculum and develop pupils' personal skills, particularly their confidence and their knowledge of keeping healthy and fit. Their involvement in the life of the school contributes significantly to the good progress they make and helps to prepare them well for the future.

The school has made a good improvement since the last inspection. No one in school is complacent and staff have a good understanding of the strengths and areas in need of further development. As a consequence, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the rate of improvement in mathematics and science to bring it in line with that in English.

- Ensure that all pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have clear and measurable targets in their individual education plans.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children enter Reception, standards are extremely low in communication, language and literacy skills. The children make good progress in Reception and in Years 1 and 2 but, despite good teaching, standards remain well below average at the end of Year 2. Since the last inspection the school has successfully adopted strategies for greater pupil engagement in developing reading and writing skills. Combined with some very skilful and focused teaching, attainment in English is now in line with national averages at the end of Year 6. A significant minority of pupils attain the higher levels and this represents very good achievement from their starting points in Reception. Whilst pupils speak with increasing confidence as they get older, their limited ability to use Standard English and their limited vocabulary prevent a small group of pupils from reaching higher than the expected standards in mathematics and science. The school is working hard to rectify this through extending the pupils' vocabulary and developing their use of subject-specific language. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) exceed expectations, with pupils using computers very well to learn about history and geography. Singing and drama standards are very high. The high levels of self-esteem that these give pupils make a significant contribution to pupils' good personal development. The school has accurately identified that girls do not achieve as well as boys and has responded successfully to this by planning activities that appeal more to them. For example, girls are given opportunities to write about specific subjects that interest them such as fashion, pets and imaginary stories. Most pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities achieve as well as their classmates because they are given good support in lessons by teaching assistants. However, it is difficult to assess the progress made by a small number of pupils because the targets in their individual education plans are too general.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good because of the effective care and support they are given. This enables pupils to feel safe and confident about approaching staff with a problem or concern. Pupils love coming to school and staff do all they can to ensure that attendance is satisfactory. Behaviour is good because there is a shared code of conduct, with clear sanctions if the agreed rules are broken. Pupils actively involve themselves in sporting activities to keep fit and have a good understanding of the need to eat a balanced diet. They work and play together very well, with older pupils being particularly patient and respectful of the youngest children. With the school council, and the use of pupils to sort out problems in the playground, the contribution pupils make to their own community is good. In preparation for the future, pupils

achieve well in their work, particularly in English, and have a good awareness of cultural diversity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff establish excellent constructive relationships with the pupils and this contributes to the effective learning. Pupils like their teachers, and the teaching assistants, and feel that they are helpful, friendly and do a good job of making learning fun. This was evident in a Reception lesson where the children had to find hidden treasure. They had great fun and worked hard to earn the reward of a much-coveted gold coin! Teachers plan work very carefully to precisely match pupil needs. This was very evident in the emphasis given to extending vocabulary, for example, bringing the use of formal letter writing skills to life. Learning was made very visual through a role-play situation where pupils were asked to respond in writing to poor customer service in a café. Computers and interactive boards are used well to maximise pupils' understanding and accelerate their progress. Vibrant displays celebrate pupils' work and support learning. Explanations are clear and pupils know exactly what they are going to learn. Very occasionally, there is a lack of urgency to lessons where pupils are working independently, resulting in insufficient pace and challenge.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a purposeful curriculum by adapting national requirements to meet the needs of the pupils. For example, literacy and numeracy sessions are shortened to maintain the interest of the pupils. Making links between subjects also helps the pupils to apply and extend their literacy skills. This is evident in geography lessons where pupils use their writing skills to present their point of view and in ICT where the improved resources help them prepare for future life by using spreadsheets and electronic presentations. However, mathematical links across the curriculum are at an earlier stage of development and have yet to positively influence the progress made in this subject. The curriculum is enriched extremely well by sporting and musical activities and visits out of school to places of interest. For example, Year 6 pupils enjoyed meeting and taking part in challenging team games with jockeys from the Cheltenham racecourse. Parents are particularly appreciative of the many opportunities given to their children, including the opportunity to learn French. Personal, social and health education encourages pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a safe haven where all pupils receive very good quality personal care and guidance. This is because staff have a very good knowledge of individual

pupils and their families. Well-established induction procedures with the adjoining Nursery provision and good links with secondary schools ensure smooth transfers at the end of Year 6. Academic support is good. Pupils have clear targets which help them understand what they need to do to improve their work. Formal assessments of pupils' work are carried out regularly and this helps the teachers gauge their progress. Marking is of high quality in English, with lots of help and guidance to pupils about what to do to improve. However, this good practice is not consistently used in other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive effective classroom support but not all of their individual education plans have clear and measurable steps to help them develop specific skills.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

All aspects of the school have improved since the last inspection because of the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. His commitment and determination ensures that pupils receive the best possible preparation for their future life through the development of key skills for living and learning. This is successfully achieved in a very positive ethos which is based on mutual care and respect. Everyone involved in the school is consulted and they all want to do their best for the pupils. Good involvement in the well-organised systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work ensures that the senior leadership team are well informed about its strengths and areas for development. The enthusiastic subject leaders have a good understanding of how to improve standards. This is particularly effective in English and ICT, where good leadership has helped to improve standards. The drive and determination in the leadership of mathematics and science are steadily raising standards but this is yet to be reflected in the national test results. Governors are knowledgeable and well informed. They give generously of their time and expertise to support all aspects of the school's work.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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	3
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	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	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.

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	2
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

Thank you very much for making us so welcome at your school, and a special thanks to the pupil council who told us all about life at Gardners Lane School.

You go to a good school which takes great care of you. You feel safe and secure because you all have someone to turn to if you have a problem. You love school and we were impressed with how well you behaved and the polite way in which you spoke to us. You make a good contribution to school life and this prepares you well for your adult life.

You make good progress through the school and this is because all the teachers do a good job. Achievement in English is very good because lessons are interesting and teachers help you to understand what you are learning and use more interesting words. They are now starting to do this in mathematics and science and this will help you to improve in these subjects. Teachers give you targets to improve your work but these are not always clear enough for those of you who find learning difficult.

You enjoy the activities and lessons planned and are very enthusiastic about the extra opportunities and clubs you take part in. Particular favourites are the football and cross-country clubs.

The adults in charge of the school are leading and managing the school well.

Once again, thank you for your help. Keep doing your best and working with the adults to make sure that Gardners Lane remains a good school.