

Grappenhall Heys Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132768
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	294020
Inspection date	5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Thompson

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	244
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Henry
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Woods
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2002
School address	Stansfield Drive Grappenhall Heys Warrington Cheshire WA4 3EA
Telephone number	01925 212540
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This average size school has grown rapidly over recent years. It serves an area of relative social and economic advantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a small proportion from a number of minority ethnic groups. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and the proportion with a statement of special educational need is well below average. The school holds the Healthy Schools, Activemark, Artsmark Gold and the BECTA and NAACE information and communication technology (ICT) awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which provides excellent value for money. A visitor is immediately struck by the cheerful atmosphere of a school that buzzes with activity. Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for in the school but most of all they say that teachers make learning fun. This is an important factor in their well above average attendance which, in turn, contributes to their exceptional achievement as they move through the school. Standards are rising and well above average in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. High standards are also reached in other subjects, for example, art and ICT.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding because of exceptionally good teaching of an innovative curriculum. The school gives its pupils a 'Guarantee of Life Enhancing Experiences' and lives up to its promise while maintaining a focus on the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Teachers plan work in curriculum teams which include teaching assistants. This enables them to make full use of available expertise to plan work that fully engages and keeps pupils' interest.

A key feature of the school is teachers' determination to discover and build upon what pupils are interested in and what they are good at. As a result, pupils are unanimous in saying that they enjoy their work, and show it by their involvement. One of the many ways in which the school develops pupils' confidence is in making sure that they know what is expected of them and providing the carefully targeted support that enables them to do it. Achievement in all aspects of school life is celebrated through assemblies and commendations. The social skills that parents comment so favourably on, together with the progress made in developing basic skills, prepare pupils very well for their future lives.

Personal development is outstanding, as is pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Work around the school shows how well teachers develop pupils' understanding of their own and other cultures. Discussion with pupils shows that they are very well aware of the principles of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe. They clearly know the difference between right and wrong; behaviour both in and out of lessons is exemplary. In lessons across the school, pupils build well on the excellent development of social and communication skills that begins in the Foundation Stage. They work well together and show respect for the views of others. They are aware of the needs of others and, for example, are able to explain why they raise money for particular charities.

The school provides excellent care, guidance and support for its pupils. The needs of the most vulnerable are met with great sensitivity. Pupils know how well they are doing, how well they should be doing and what they need to do to improve as a result of the school's well-developed system of target setting and review. The school involves parents closely in this process and has gained the support of the overwhelming majority. 'A wonderful school' and 'children are happy, confident and secure' are typical comments. The school has plans to give attention to the concerns of a few parents concerning homework.

Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels in the school. There is no complacency but a continual striving for improvement shown in all aspects of the school's work and planning. Well-informed governors play a full part in the school's evaluation of its effectiveness and hold it to account. Consequently, the school's leadership has an accurate understanding of its performance and a clear view of trends and areas for development. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection and the school has an excellent capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas for improvement. The school's well-developed systems for evaluating its performance mean that all matters for improvement are already clearly identified in planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills which are above average. However, a higher than average proportion enter the school at other than the usual time. Many of these pupils often require considerable support to integrate and to raise their levels of attainment. Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage and, by the time they enter Key Stage 1, the great majority have reached and many have exceeded the standards expected for their age. To promote achievement further, the school provides extension work in literacy and numeracy for those who learn fastest. Pupils continue to make rapid progress through the school so that by the end of Year 6 standards are well above average and rising. Results in the 2006 national tests at the end of Year 6 were well above average in English, mathematics and science, with much higher than usual proportions of pupils achieving the higher grades in English and mathematics. These results showed an improvement over 2005 when there was a dip in English results. The improvement demonstrates the positive impact of the measures taken by the school's management to deal with the causes of lower than expected standards. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades in science in 2006 was lower than in English and mathematics. The school staff identified the need for a greater focus on investigations and, consequently, modified the approach to science teaching through revised programmes. Provisional results for the 2007 national tests show that this has been successful in raising standards further. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils because of the very effective way that the school promotes the progress of all pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Parents are rightly impressed by the self-confidence that their children develop in this school. This confidence makes a significant contribution to their progress as they enjoy learning. Citizenship skills are very well developed. The school council readily and diligently takes on responsibility and contributes to the community. Pupils know that they have a voice in the school that is heard, and are able to point to improvements they have suggested. They are able to express their ideas and views confidently. All, including the youngest members, are listened to with respect. Pupils show care for each other and get on very well together. This helps their progress as they bounce ideas off one another in lessons and learn from each other. In lessons, pupils show a lively spirit of enquiry and are confident to offer views and opinions, knowing they will be listened to. Pupils develop a very secure understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle through their participation in a wide range of physical activities, including residential visits to outdoor activity centres. They say that incidents of bullying are very rare, and are sure that any incidents would be dealt with promptly. Excellent social and teamwork skills, and high standards of literacy and numeracy, prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

In the Foundation Stage, a great variety of indoor and outdoor activities is used well to promote rapid progress in social and communication skills through play. It is here that the enjoyment of learning evident throughout the school is established. Pupils' outstanding achievement is the result of excellent teaching. Teachers have consistently high expectations of work and behaviour, to which pupils respond so that time in lessons is used to the full. In lessons, teachers typically use a variety of activities to help maintain pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning. Consequently, lessons throughout the school have a buzz of creative activity. Teachers use ICT exceptionally well to promote understanding. Role play is used frequently and works well in helping pupils to explore ideas and to learn. Planning identifies opportunities to promote basic skills and links between subjects to help pupils make sense of their learning. Because teaching assistants are involved in planning, they are able to provide sensitive support which enables pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make the same excellent progress as their classmates.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's focus is on extending the variety of ways through which it promotes pupils' personal development. For example, pupils are given time to reflect daily on what they have done to be proud of. The curriculum provides a rich variety of experiences which supports pupils' personal development and achievement exceptionally well. The school identifies pupils' individual needs and meets them by tailoring learning to match them. The curriculum is adjusted well to meet the needs of those who find learning difficult; this, together with the support they receive, leads to excellent progress. Similarly, extension activities for gifted and talented pupils ensure that they are stretched appropriately to reach the standards they are capable of. The school's planning to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development shows a very wide variety of activities which make use of an exceptional number of links with outside agencies, visitors and visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's outstanding care for all its pupils is shown nowhere more clearly than in the Foundation Stage. It is inspirational to see the sensitivity with which staff include children new to the school in activities. Because staff know pupils well and relationships are strong, any difficulties that pupils may be facing are picked up quickly. Prompt action is taken to provide appropriate support. The flow of information among a close-knit staff helps ensure continuity of care. First-rate academic guidance is a major factor in supporting pupils' achievement because pupils are very clear about what they need to do to raise the standard of their work. The school's very good transition arrangements between years and its strong links with the local high school mean that pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Appropriate arrangements are in place for risk assessment and safeguarding pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school's evaluation of its performance matches inspection findings except in a few cases where it is too modest because of the view that improvement is always possible. This reflects the outlook established among the staff by the headteacher's vision for the school's development. The headteacher is ably supported in translating the vision into practice by staff at all levels in the school but particularly by the senior management team. All staff and governors have a role and voice in school improvement through membership of the curriculum and 'change' teams. The high quality of the school's curricular provision is maintained through systematic review and modification. The maintenance of high standards of care, high achievement and a family atmosphere throughout a period of rapid growth is illustrative of a thoughtful approach to managing change. Expertise is also shown in astute appointments by the school's leadership and governors to maintain the high quality of teaching. Through rigorous monitoring and analysis, the school's leaders and governors understand the school's needs very well. They are skilled at identifying trends and challenges and allocating resources to meet them. Consequently, the school continues to improve its performance.

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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?	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	1
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.

Annex A

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

Inspection of Grappenhall Heys Community Primary School, Warrington WA4 3EA

Thank you very much for the way that you welcomed me into your school. I enjoyed talking to so many of you and hearing how proud you are of your school and how much you enjoy learning there. You will be pleased to know that I agree with you that yours is an excellent school.

All the staff in the school care for you very well so that you feel safe. You do exceptionally well and reach high standards because your teachers are so good at making learning interesting and, as many of you told me, fun. I was impressed by how well you take on responsibilities. The school council convinced me that you know how to stay healthy. It was good to see that you get on with each other very well - and that your behaviour is excellent. You are a credit to your school, your parents and yourselves in the way you show care for others.

Usually at the end of an inspection, a school is asked to work on making further improvements. However, because your school is so well run and doing so well I have not singled out any areas that need more development. Your headteacher and the staff already have ideas and are working to make the school an even better place to learn.

I wish you well for the future and hope that you will continue to have fun learning.