

Great Gaddesden Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117433
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	302144
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Colin Henderson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael Connell
Headteacher	Mrs K Johnston-Grant
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2000
School address	Church Meadow Great Gaddesden Hemel Hempstead Herts HP1 3BT
Telephone number	01442 255734
Fax number	01442 255107

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Great Gaddesden admits some children from the local village but most travel in from the surrounding area. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is greater than in many other schools of this size. The majority of children start in the Foundation Stage class with skills above average for their age, although many have weaknesses in their language and communication skills.

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 serves its community well and gives good value for money. It provides an outstanding, caring Christian ethos which supports pupils and helps them to enjoy school and achieve well. The school is valued highly by pupils and parents - 'a very good school that cares for every individual child', although a very small number of parents think that communication between the school and home could be better. The school recognises the need to keep parents fully informed, particularly when introducing curriculum changes. The headteacher provides good and purposeful leadership. After a period of significant staff change and budget difficulties she is establishing an effective team of staff and governors. They work closely together to check carefully on how well they are doing, although their self-evaluations are sometimes rather cautious and do not always recognise school's success. The school is well placed to improve further.

The school provides a calm, happy learning atmosphere and excellent support, care and guidance. Consequently, pupils enjoy school, attend regularly and work hard to succeed. Their achievement is good. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage as a result of good teaching and a well-planned, carefully organised programme. They make good progress overall, although restricted access to outdoor facilities limits opportunities for outdoor play. Pupils continue to make good progress, helped by the good teaching and their enthusiastic approach to work. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve particularly well as a result of the teacher's consistently high expectations. Although attainment varies from year to year due to the small numbers of pupils in each year group, it is above average overall at Year 2 and Year 6. Considerable improvements in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) have resulted in increased staff and pupil confidence and higher standards of work.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They speak enthusiastically about their school, particularly the interesting themed weeks and special events, as well as the enjoyable clubs, visits and visitors. Their behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent. Older pupils enjoy taking responsibility, for example when acting as house captains. The school council and its suggestion box provide good opportunities for pupils to express their views. Councillors talked proudly about their work and would welcome more opportunities to help improve their school. The school's strong focus on each individual pupil is reflected clearly in the way staff work hard to ensure that every pupil is happy, secure and ready to learn. The headteacher has developed good systems for tracking pupils' progress carefully, identifying what needs improving and who needs extra support. Teachers use this information to guide their teaching and use individual targets successfully to improve pupils' work. This is raising standards.

Leadership and management are good. The clear direction given by the headteacher has enabled the school to continue to provide a good education through a difficult period of change and financial constraint. Teamwork is becoming more effective, although the contribution of some co-ordinators in evaluating their subjects is not fully established. The partnership with an increasingly knowledgeable and influential governing body enables the school to check carefully how well it is doing and how well pupils are achieving. They identify areas for improvement, take effective action and, as a result, continue to provide a good education and promote good achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve facilities in the Foundation Stage to provide children with good opportunities in all areas of learning.
- Extend the good practice so that all co-ordinators have a clear understanding of the standards of teaching and learning in their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage class make good progress and most exceed the nationally expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. Some have weaknesses in their early language skills and these limit their achievement in aspects of communication, language and literacy. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 continue to achieve well as a result of good teaching and of the teachers' good knowledge of how well each pupil is doing and what they need to improve. This has led to an improvement in the standards at the end of Year 2 to above average, with a significantly increased proportion of pupils attaining above nationally expected levels - for example, in mathematics and writing. Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is also good. It is often outstanding in Years 5 and 6 for more able pupils and those with particular gifts and talents, and they attain high standards. Detailed teacher assessments and test results confirm that Year 6 pupils respond well to the teacher's high expectations and attain above average standards. Pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities benefit from early identification of their needs. They receive good support and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is given a high priority. This helps them to enjoy school, get on very well with each other and contribute very effectively to the school and wider communities. Their attendance is good. Behaviour is excellent and this is evident in the high quality relationships throughout the school. Pupils know how to keep safe and healthy. They participate with enthusiasm in sporting activities that have increased in number as a result of links with a local secondary school and other local sporting organisations. Pupils elected to the school council take pride in their roles. They enjoy organising fund-raising events to support various charities and would welcome more opportunities to help improve the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding; the use of a multicultural themed week was particularly successful in promoting cultural understanding.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good and occasionally outstanding teaching helps pupils to achieve well. Lessons are planned in detail and matched closely to the range of pupils' different learning needs in mixed age and mixed ability classes. Teachers often use interesting methods to capture pupils' interest, for example, through the use of interactive whiteboards. They manage their classes effectively to ensure that all pupils stay focused on their learning. Some teachers, in Years 5 and 6, for instance, have high expectations of how pupils present their work and the amount and quality of its content. Pupils enjoy trying to meet this expectation and this results in good achievement.

Good questioning helps pupils to contribute their ideas confidently to class discussions, although in some lessons more able pupils could be stretched by being asked more complex questions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good throughout the school. It provides pupils with a good balance of basic skills and opportunities for creative and practical activities that make learning enjoyable. A restructured Foundation Stage has improved the curriculum for the youngest children, although opportunities for outdoor play are restricted by limited access to a safe, supervised play area. Improved resources provide pupils with good opportunities to use their ICT skills in many subjects. The curriculum is varied to meet the needs of pupils who have learning difficulties and links with local schools provide good opportunities for gifted and talented pupils, for example in mathematics, to extend their skills successfully. The school makes good use of visits and visitors and provides a good range of clubs for a school of this size.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff know their pupils very well and provide outstanding personal care and support. As a result they blossom as individuals and rapidly gain in self-confidence. Careful attention is given to ensuring that pupils are safe and well-protected. Staff work hard to help every pupil to be involved. This encourages them to try hard to succeed and helps them to achieve well. The guidance given to pupils to improve their work is good. Teachers use marking and pupil improvement targets effectively in literacy and numeracy. Where teachers have one-to-one discussions with individual pupils to review their progress towards these targets, this is valued highly by pupils and helps them to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership and management of the headteacher, supported well by staff and governors, have helped the school to maintain a very caring ethos and pupils' good achievement, despite significant staff changes and financial difficulties. This is valued by many parents, reflected in such comments as 'my child has flourished in such a fantastic, caring environment'. The school has developed good arrangements for checking on how well it is doing, including regular evaluation of teaching and learning. New staff have been supported well and teaching is good. The school is aware that, as result of recent staff changes, the roles of some subject co-ordinators are not firmly established. The school improvement plan has identified the need to improve this aspect of subject management. This detailed plan provides a clear direction for the work of the school.

The supportive and increasingly influential governing body has worked closely with the headteacher to manage the reduced budget efficiently and continue to improve the school. A more effective team of staff and governors uses good evaluation procedures to target areas for improvement, for example ICT, in order to raise standards. They are in a good position to improve further.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	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?	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?	2
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	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

Friday 22 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Great Gaddesden CoE Primary School, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 3BT

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you about what you do in school, looking at your work and watching you learn. You clearly enjoy school and, together with most of your parents, you think that it is a good school - and I agree.

I was pleased to see how well you get on together. Your behaviour is excellent and this means that teachers can get on with the job of helping you learn. It was interesting to talk to the school council about how they are helping to improve the school. They have some good ideas and enjoy being responsible. I hope that you will continue to have good ideas and more opportunities to put them into practice.

You told me that you learn a lot in school and enjoy your work, especially the many interesting activities and the different visits and visitors. I think that your learning is good. Your teachers make your lessons interesting and you try hard to do what your teachers ask. You have a good understanding of how to improve your work and are working hard to achieve your own learning targets. Mrs Johnston-Grant, the staff and governors are working hard to make your school even better. I have asked them to improve facilities for the youngest children to enjoy more opportunities for outdoor play. They are planning to help teachers who have particular responsibilities for subjects to look carefully at the quality of teaching and learning in lessons and see where they can help you achieve even better.

Thank you again for helping me to find out about your school and I hope that you will continue to be happy and to work hard.

Colin Henderson Lead Inspector