

# Gravel Hill Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101407
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bexley
<b>Inspection number</b>	307673
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jane Chesterfield

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	174
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	34
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs H Teale
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss J Kemp
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 September 2004
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Watling Street Bexleyheath DA6 7QJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01322 521343
<b>Fax number</b>	01322 529932

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 October 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school serves a residential community of social, privately rented housing and owner-occupied housing. More than a quarter of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. A similar proportion are from minority ethnic groups, which is just above average. The number learning English as an additional language is below average. About a third of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities, and this is higher than the national picture. The majority of these have moderate learning difficulties. An above average number of pupils have statements of special educational need. The school offers Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision in its Nursery and Reception classes. An acting headteacher and an acting deputy currently lead the school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Gravel Hill Primary is a satisfactory school which has the support of parents and pupils. One parent commented, 'There is always laughter in the playground, and respect.' Pupils say they are happy at school because 'teachers are very supportive' and that 'teachers make lessons fun'. The acting headteacher, capably supported by the acting deputy, has made a good start to her role and has carried the staff and parents with her.

Senior staff have recognised that raising pupils' achievement and standards is their most pressing priority. Pupils' achievement is currently satisfactory and they reach standards which are generally below average in English, mathematics and science across the school. Most enter the school with levels of skills and knowledge which are below expectations for their age, so this represents satisfactory progress by the time they leave. They generally perform better in mathematics and science than in English. The school has identified weaknesses in pupils' early literacy skills when they arrive, particularly boys' writing. These weaknesses continue to be apparent across the school, but the school is working hard to address them. Strategies to interest boys and focus on writing skills have been introduced, although it is too soon for these to have had an impact.

Teaching and learning in the school are satisfactory. Improvements in systems for tracking pupils' progress are helping teachers to meet the different needs of their pupils, but not consistently. Higher and middle attaining pupils do not always have the right level of challenge in their work. Lower attaining pupils and those with moderate learning difficulties are well supported so that they make good progress in class. Feedback to pupils through teachers' marking does not always make it clear how pupils should improve their work and so pupils do not always know how they can make progress.

Most pupils enjoy coming to school and behave well in class and around the site. Thanks to the good work of the school, they have good social skills and a clear understanding of how to be healthy and stay safe. However, a number of families do not always ensure that their children attend regularly and on time, and as a result attendance levels are low compared with the national average. This affects the continuity of some pupils' learning. The school has improved attendance since the last inspection, but its actions have not been sufficiently robust to tackle the problems of repeated absence.

There is a strong sense of teamwork and determination to improve within the school. The acting headteacher and her deputy have had good support from the local authority in establishing priorities and beginning to take action. Systems for tracking pupils' progress and monitoring teaching and learning are now in operation, so that areas for development can be identified and tackled. Subject leaders are not yet sufficiently accountable for standards and achievement in their area of responsibility. However, they are keen to play a full part in this process. Despite uncertainties over the future leadership of the school, about which parents are understandably concerned, the good start made by the current leaders and the support they are receiving means it has a satisfactory capacity for future improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Children get a satisfactory start to their education in the EYFS. When they enter, many have levels of skills and knowledge which are below expectations for their age. However, an increasing

number have skills which are well below those usually found, or have specific learning difficulties. Children make satisfactory progress, but their skills are still below expectations when they enter Year 1, though there are some encouraging signs of improvement in their early literacy skills. The Nursery and Reception classes provide children with a safe and secure environment where they settle quickly and feel at home. Their personal development and well-being are well promoted by staff. There are close links with parents and good attention is given to health and safety.

Provision for children's learning and development is satisfactory overall, and is better in Reception than in Nursery. There is a good range of stimulating activities, resources and an appropriate focus on developing literacy skills in both classes. In the Reception class, for example, good use was made of puppets and tape recorders to tell stories, which particularly interested boys, while in Nursery, work with a box full of different sounds captured children's attention and helped develop their vocabulary. In Nursery, however, staff do not always make the best use of time and resources, and the role of the key person to support children's learning has not been developed. Leadership of the EYFS is satisfactory. There are good systems for observation, assessment and recording, and well planned transition into Year 1, and good efforts are being made to ensure consistent practice across the Nursery and Reception classes.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise achievement and standards in English by improving writing, particularly for boys, at all stages of the school.
- Improve the levels of attendance by taking robust action to reduce absence.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers plan to meet the needs of all pupils in their classes, and making sure that pupils know how to improve their work.
- Increase the effectiveness of subject leaders by making sure they have the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the strategies used to raise achievement and standards in their areas.

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

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement across the school is satisfactory, and pupils reach standards which are below average. Pupils enter Year 1 below average and are generally still below average when they leave Year 6. Although progress is satisfactory, the school has recognised the need to accelerate this and boost pupils' achievement. There was good improvement in the end of Year 2 assessments last summer, except in writing. This class made good progress from a low starting point. At the end of Year 6 in 2008 there was a dip in the provisional test results for English and mathematics, though this represented satisfactory progress for a low attaining class. Improvement in the quality of tracking means the school now has reliable information showing that pupils are making generally better progress in reading and mathematics than in writing. The school has been successful in improving pupils' performance in science, where provisional results have matched national outcomes this year.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Pupils behave well in class and around the school, and have a good understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles and stay safe. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have positive relationships with their teachers and one another, and are polite and helpful to visitors. Bullying is minimal, and pupils feel confident that it is firmly handled. Pupils from different backgrounds mix well and enjoy many opportunities to learn about different cultures.

For too many pupils, however, their learning and development is marred by their unsatisfactory attendance. Some pupils also come to school late and miss out on valuable learning time, which affects their progress. Older pupils make a positive contribution to the school community, though opportunities for younger pupils to do this are limited. However, school council members play an important role in the school, for example in their successful bid for funding a smoothie bar, and were proud to represent the school on the borough's children's parliament. Pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage in their education. Their literacy, numeracy and computer skills are satisfactory, and their social skills are good.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

There are common strengths in teaching across the school, but some inconsistencies that mean that pupils' achievement is no better than satisfactory. Teachers have positive relationships with their classes and establish a purposeful working environment in their classrooms. They teach with energy and enthusiasm, and make their learning intentions clear. In the best lessons, good attention is given to capturing boys' interest and to matching tasks carefully to the needs of all the pupils, but this does not always happen. Sometimes higher attaining pupils are given work which is too easy for them, or middle attaining pupils are given work which is too easy or too hard, so that they are not making the progress that they could.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The school now meets the legal requirements for teaching religious education. Staff are developing a flexible approach to teaching numeracy and literacy skills through other subjects and linking different aspects of the curriculum. This is leading to increased enjoyment for pupils, but has not yet had time to have an impact on their achievement.

The curriculum is enriched by special weeks related to particular topics, such as those recently focused on humanities. These give pupils a chance to study in greater depth than usual and broaden their knowledge. There is a good range of clubs, and good links with local schools, businesses and community groups all give pupils memorable additional experiences.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Staff are committed to the well-being of pupils, and procedures to ensure pupils' safety are securely in place. The school acknowledges that it has not done enough to improve attendance and punctuality, and that its action needs to be more rigorous. Systems for identifying and supporting pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities are strong, and as a result these pupils make good progress.

Tracking is used well to highlight pupils who need extra support, but because pupils do not have individual targets, they are often unclear about their own learning priorities. In addition, teachers' marking is inconsistent and frequently does not tell pupils what they must do to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Senior staff and subject leaders give the school clear direction, and the impact of their effort is becoming apparent on the school's provision though not yet on pupils' outcomes. There are good new systems for tracking and monitoring, and school development planning has the right priorities to speed up change. Targets are now more challenging but realisable. Subject leaders understand that their monitoring roles need to develop and what needs to be done, and they are eager to make a difference to achievement. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. It is beginning to develop links with harder to reach groups to ensure equality of achievement for all pupils. Governors fulfil their role satisfactorily. They support the school and recognise the need for challenge to help the school move forward.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

22 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gravel Hill Primary School, Bexleyheath, DA6 7QJ

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. We found that your school is giving you a satisfactory education at the moment, and that the staff are working hard to improve it by trying to be sure that in future you all do as well as you possibly can.

We know that you like going to school because everyone gets on well together. Some of you are away from school too often though, and this means that you miss important work. We think that you behave well in lessons, around the school and in the playground. The staff look after you well, and those of you who need extra help are well supported.

Your school is led and managed satisfactorily, and the acting headteacher and her staff know what needs to be done to improve it. We have agreed that your teachers are going to make sure that you all do as well as you can in your writing this year. They are also going to make sure that the work in all your lessons is right for you. All of you should be getting work that challenges and interests you without making you struggle to understand it. The school will be working with your families to make sure that you all come to school regularly and on time. Finally, some teachers are going to be given extra responsibilities in the school.

You can do your bit by letting your teachers know if the work they give you is too hard or too easy, and by telling them if there is anything you don't understand in your English lessons. You can also help by making sure you come to school every day unless you are ill, and by asking your parents not to take you on holiday during termtime.

Well done to you all and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jane Chesterfield

Lead Inspector