

Gravenhurst Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109453
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	309988
Inspection date	9 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Helen Ranger

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	38
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Howe
Headteacher	Mrs Lyn Rouse
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2004
School address	High Street Gravenhurst Bedford MK45 4HY
Telephone number	01462711257
Fax number	01462711257

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

In this very small school, about two thirds of the pupils come from Gravenhurst village with the remainder from further afield. Almost all come from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties or disabilities varies widely from year to year but currently represents a lower proportion than the national average. When they start school, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the levels expected nationally for four-year-olds.

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. It has some outstanding features, and a clear view of its current effectiveness. It has improved since the last inspection, principally as a result of high quality leadership from the headteacher who, in the four terms since her appointment, has built well on the school's previous successes. One parent commented, 'It's a school with a vision. A school on the move.....exciting to be part of as a parent'. There is a very productive partnership with families so that school and home work well together.

Pupils achieve well in all classes. Standards in Year 2 and Year 4 in reading and writing have been exceptionally high for the past few years. Performance in mathematics has been good overall, but more uneven, and the school is acting effectively to make pupils' progress consistently good in this subject too. Initiatives have already resulted in very high mathematics standards in Key Stage 1 and a rapidly improving picture in Key Stage 2. Teachers are right to continue their efforts to ensure that pupils do as well in this key skill as they do in English. Pupils' overall personal development is outstanding and they develop very good attitudes to learning. Good support from parents and pupils' great enjoyment of school mean that attendance levels are much higher than the national average. Pupils' behaviour is generally very good. They have a good awareness of personal safety and healthy lifestyles. They contribute very willingly to the school and local neighbourhood and are happy to take responsibility for projects that benefit their school and the wider community. The combination of their good social and academic skills means they are well prepared for middle school

Underpinning pupils' achievements are the good teaching, good curriculum and high quality pastoral care in all three classes. Close relationships exist between adults and children and lessons are well planned and interesting. There has been significant development in recent years of teachers' use of assessment to track pupils' progress and to plan lessons that match their diverse needs. Teachers are starting to use individual and class targets to improve progress further. These procedures are not yet established well enough to ensure that pupils are as clear as they can be about how they are doing and what they should do to improve next.

Leadership and management, including by the governors, are good. From the moment she joined the school, the headteacher established her high expectations of what staff and pupils can do. Staff feel valued and are being trained to play a full part in decision-making. Subject leadership has improved. Systems for self-evaluation and the setting and monitoring of whole-school targets are wide-ranging and thorough. Consequently, staff and governors are clear about the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. This is a school that gives good value for money and shows a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get a good start in Reception. They make good progress in all areas of learning so that, by the time they are ready to start Year 1, attainment is above the levels expected nationally. They settle quickly to school routines and are confident and happy in their work. Their teacher organises quite a small classroom very well to provide a good range of activities. She achieves a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated tasks. She works closely with the headteacher and the Key Stage 1 teacher to ensure that the provision for this age group is managed well. Children's individual progress is checked regularly and accurately. The

outdoor area for this class is satisfactory but lacks adequate cover in wet weather and this constrains activities that can be undertaken outside. The school is aware of this and plans for improvement are in hand.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils do as consistently well in mathematics as they do in English.
- Improve the arrangements for communicating to pupils how well they are doing and how they can reach the next stage in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From starting points that are broadly in line with nationally expected levels for four-year-olds, pupils build systematically on their knowledge, understanding and skills across the school. They use their abilities in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) well to support their learning. A much greater proportion of pupils than nationally reach the higher levels in the Year 2 assessments. Pupils in Year 4 also do much better than the nationally expected level for the age group. The small number of pupils who have learning difficulties achieve well. Challenging targets are set for all pupils, and met by most.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is demonstrated by their well-mannered and considerate behaviour and care for others. Pupils learn to understand their feelings well. Their developing understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles is exemplified by their impressive vegetable garden. They recently included the results of their labours in harvest gifts for local residents. Pupils thoroughly enjoy opportunities such as the 'Welly Club' for gardening and the activities provided by a local sports partnership. They speak proudly of their roles as school councillors, house captains, prefects and playleaders and appreciate the many channels through which adults listen to their views. Last year, for example, this led to pupils planning improvements to playtime equipment, raising money for this and having the satisfaction of seeing their plans realised. Attendance is very good. Pupils feel safe and demonstrate good behaviour as they move around the school and in class.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants ensures that pupils learn well. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and plan activities that cater well for their individual needs. This is a key factor in ensuring that each one flourishes in the two mixed-age classes. Pupils say that the level of work they are given is usually just about right for them. The small class sizes mean that the staff know each pupil's abilities and personality very well. Behaviour is managed well. Pupils are beginning to assess their own learning. This is a current initiative that the school has correctly identified as an area in which it can improve further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good programme of activities ensures that the required curriculum is covered well. Links between subjects are being increasingly forged to make learning more interesting for pupils. These enable them to practise their basic skills in a wide range of subjects that now includes French. Excellent use is made of the outdoor space for lessons and recreation. This area has been developed with flair and imagination and is praised and highly valued by pupils and parents. Activities to support pupils' personal development include a good 'Living Values' programme. In this, pupils have regular opportunities to discuss important topics, such as freedom, responsibility and respect, in class and in assembly. The school copes well with the limitations of its small hall. Good use is also made of the nearby village hall, though neither space is ideal for the full range of physical activities that staff would like to offer pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect of the school is good overall. The day-to-day personal care of pupils is good. Pupils express confidence in the staff to help with any problems and they feel safe in school. Attention to procedures to ensure health and safety is very good. Arrangements to safeguard pupils, such as those for checking the suitability of staff, meet current requirements. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well through the implementation of focused individual learning plans and close contacts with parents. The academic guidance offered to pupils is mostly good and is improving as a result of a current initiative. Individual target-setting is being established but some aspects of this lack rigour. For example, there are variations in how far teachers' marking tells pupils how well they are meeting their targets and what they could do next to improve their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Staff and governors work well under the good leadership of the headteacher. Development plans demonstrate that the school is not complacent about improving further. Staff and governors express a shared vision for how the school can continue to improve. Governors are led well by their chair of governors and maintain close links with the school. The headteacher checks very closely how well the school is working. Other staff and the governors have increased the amount of monitoring they do and are developing their skills well in this direction. However, the governors' monitoring is not well linked to current initiatives. Management systems are supported well by an efficient business manager who ensures that teachers' time is not unduly taken up by routine administration. The school has established an excellent range of local partnerships, including with parents, other schools and local authority services, that help it to offer its pupils such a good quality of education.

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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
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	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.

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

10 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Gravenhurst Lower School, Gravenhurst, Bedford, MK45 4HY

I am writing to say a big thank you for your help during my visit to your school. I enjoyed meeting you all. A special thank you goes to the children from Class 2 who took time to tell me more about your school. I was very impressed when they answered some of my questions in French!

Many of your parents wrote to tell me that they think your school is really good and I agree with them. Your teachers care for you well and make sure you have lots of interesting things to do each day. You obviously enjoy these activities and your attendance is much better than in most schools. You do extremely well in your reading and writing and this helps your work in all subjects. I think your teachers have made some good changes to some of the ways they teach mathematics and I have asked them to carry on checking that these are helping you. Your mathematics work is nearly as good as your literacy now, so keep trying hard with it.

It was good to see how well you all get on together. You told me about lots of ways that you keep healthy and safe. I thought your vegetable garden was great and was impressed with the food you had picked for your harvest collection.

Mrs Rouse helps the rest of your teachers and the governors to make sure that your school keeps on getting better. One of the ways this happens is that the staff check your progress regularly. I have asked them to make sure that they let you know how well you have done when they mark your books, and what you need to do next. You can help with this by listening really carefully when an adult talks to you about your targets and by trying to do what is suggested.

It was a real pleasure to visit your school.

Best wishes for the future

Mrs Helen Ranger

Inspector