

Great Bentley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114736
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311686
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Missin

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Wright
Headteacher	Mrs Diana Cleaver
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	Plough Road Great Bentley Colchester Essex CO7 8LD
Telephone number	01206 250331
Fax number	01206 251744

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is about the same size as most other primary schools. The number on roll has grown each year recently and the school is now over-subscribed. Children's attainment on admission varies from year to year and is slightly below national expectations overall. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with statements of educational need is above average. A well below average proportion is eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and none is at an early stage of learning English.

A high number of teachers have taken statutory leave in the last two years and there has been a recent bereavement in the school community. The school, with local authority (LA) support, is challenging the accuracy of the marking of the Year 6 writing tests in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Great Bentley Primary School is a caring school that provides a satisfactory standard of education. The school's drive to improve, which is evident in many aspects of its work, has been limited recently by changes of staff. Although leadership and management are satisfactory, the headteacher's contribution is good. She has drive, determination and vision and gives the school clear and effective direction. Several important aspects of leadership, such as improvement planning, are established but they have not yet had a full impact on the consistency of pupils' progress.

Self-evaluation procedures are increasing in effectiveness and all leaders share in the process of monitoring the school's work. Senior leader roles are now re-established and the school has become part of a LA 'Improving Success' programme. This initiative is helping the school to focus on school improvement issues, such as improving pupils' progress. Governors use their expertise well to support the school and are more challenging in their questions about pupils' standards and progress. These growing strengths mean that the school is well placed to improve further.

Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well and reach the standards expected. A significant proportion reaches standards that are above those expected for their age. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are broadly average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily from their starting points. Teaching is satisfactory and where it is strongest, teachers manage pupils confidently, use questioning effectively and support and encourage pupils' learning well. In a minority of lessons, teaching is too leisurely and the pace of pupils' learning drops. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are sometimes too low and information about pupils' progress is not used consistently to plan work.

The curriculum is good, as is pupils' personal development. Visits and visitors are planned well to promote and encourage pupils' interest in and commitment to their work. Care and welfare procedures are also good. Parents are pleased with the school's caring ethos. One said, 'this school not only cares for the pupils but also about their families as well.' All adults in the school community share the concern to meet the needs of the vulnerable pupils in the school. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. The headteacher ensures that the school has a high profile in the local community and promotes the partnership between home and school very well. Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance is very good. They are appreciative of all that the school offers and they have a good understanding of healthy lifestyle issues and the importance of keeping safe.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good teaching and a rich and varied curriculum help children to make good progress in all aspects of their work. There is a strong focus on literacy and numeracy and children achieve well with their reading, writing and counting. Children quickly become familiar with the day-to-day routines. They behave well and enjoy their time at school. The teaching provides a good balance between encouraging children to make choices and teacher directed activity. The care and support for all pupils is good because the Foundation Stage is well managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English and mathematics and accelerate the progress which pupils make.
- Raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve by using assessment data more consistently in lessons and ensuring that work is more closely matched to pupils' different abilities.
- Ensure that the new leadership team focuses on improving pupils' achievement and the standards they reach.

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

Pupils make steady progress in Years 1 and 2 to reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards are also broadly average by the time pupils leave the school. In 2007, standards were average in mathematics, above average in science but well below average in English. The low English result was caused by an unexpectedly low proportion of pupils reaching higher than average standards in the end of year test, which the school has challenged. Overall, the achievement of pupils, including those who find learning difficult, is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance is above average. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they are well prepared for life within a multi-cultural society. They behave well and show positive attitudes to their work. Pupils understand the importance of a good diet and appreciate, for instance, that milk helps them to have healthy teeth and bones. Pupils enjoy taking regular exercise and know what they need to do if they are to remain safe and healthy. Opportunities, such as being members of the school council, 'The Bentley Stars' and helping at senior citizens' tea and bingo afternoons, help them to make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. Pupils' sound basic skills and their impressive personal qualities together prepare them well for the next stage of their education and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features. In the best lessons, teachers' planning is clear and detailed. Teachers generally manage pupils effectively and their calm, measured approach settles and encourages pupils. Teachers lead class discussions well and focus pupils' attention with carefully directed questioning. Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils in their learning. Good reference is made to pupils' learning targets. However, in some lessons, the pace of learning is allowed to drop and expectations of what pupils can achieve and the speed which they can work are not sufficiently challenging. Some marking of pupils' work helpfully shows pupils how to improve, but this is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school places appropriate emphasis on the development of pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills. There is also an effective social and health education programme which makes a positive contribution to pupils' good personal development. Parents give strong support and there are close links with the local community and other schools. The school provides several innovative and interesting enhancements. These include opportunities for all pupils to learn how to play instruments such as the trumpet, clarinet and flute. Many pupils take part in after-school clubs that include Drum Rock School, cheerleading and street dance. 'Fabulous Friday' is a good opportunity for additional skills to be developed in an interesting and enjoyable way. Pupils in Year 6 undertake a residential trip to an outdoor activity centre and all classes visit local places of interest. The school acknowledges the need to strengthen cross-subject links and to give pupils more openings to improve their writing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils. Risk assessments and child protection procedures are in place, as are procedures for the safe recruitment of staff. There are close links with specialist community and health agencies, and looked-after children and those in particular need receive good support to help them join in school life. A wide range of support procedures are provided for pupils with learning difficulties and those with emotional needs. A system whereby pupils of similar ability within each class have targets for improvement in literacy and numeracy has recently been introduced. While pupils are becoming increasingly familiar with this system, there has been insufficient time for it to have had a positive impact on their achievements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher's leadership is good. She promotes the school's caring ethos and places pupils' needs at the centre of its work. She knows pupils and their families well and she has secured the confidence of most parents. The school has a clear view of its strengths and its development is promoted through a very comprehensive development plan. The impact of other leaders and governance is satisfactory, leading to satisfactory leadership and management overall. The headteacher has led the school well through the recent difficulties caused by the dispute over test marking, staff changes and the death of a school colleague, although these events did cause a temporary slowing down of the drive for improvement. The leadership team is developing a clear focus on standards and pupils' achievement. The secure management processes, the enthusiasm of the senior teachers and the skill and energy of the headteacher place the school in a good position for further improvements to be secured.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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 disabilities make progress	3

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Bentley Primary School, Colchester CO7 8LD

Thank you for making my colleague and I so welcome when we came to the school recently to see how well you were doing.

Here are the things that we think are best about your school.

- Children in the Reception class settle quickly and you make a good start to your time at school.
- You all enjoy what the school provides and come to school regularly.
- Your behaviour is good and the school takes good care of you.
- The responsibility some of you take in school and the way you take part in village activities are very good indeed.
- The school provides many interesting things for you to do, such as 'Fabulous Friday'.

There are a few things that we thought could be better.

- School leaders now need to focus more clearly on helping you all to make even better than average progress in English and mathematics.
- The teaching needs to ensure that your work is better matched to what you can do and to use information about your progress to help you do even better.

Thank you again for your welcome.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Missin

Lead inspector