

Great Totham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115244
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311884
Inspection date	19 October 2007
Reporting inspector	John Paull

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	433
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Ward
Headteacher	Mr Keith Bannister
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2004
School address	Walden House Road Great Totham Maldon Essex CM9 8PN
Telephone number	01621 891091
Fax number	01621 893334

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	19 October 2007
Inspection number	311884

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspection focused on three main areas. First, whether senior leaders managed a smooth induction for the headteacher, who took up his post at the beginning of this term, thereby ensuring that standards remain high and good progress is achieved. Second, the quality of teaching and learning, and how far its monitoring and evaluation are accurate; and, third, provision in the Reception class, which was an issue in the last inspection report. Some observations and discussions were made to check the quality of other aspects of the school's work, but not in detail. No evidence was found to suggest that the school's own evaluations are substantially incorrect. Where appropriate these evaluations are included in this report.

Description of the school

Great Totham Primary School is much larger than average and in a semi-rural location. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds, and very few speak English as an additional language. The percentage with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special need, is below average. The proportion who are known to qualify for a free school meal is also below average. Attainment on entry is a little better than average.

The school is seeking a 'Healthy Schools' award and in 2005 received an Investors in People award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Great Totham provides a good education for its pupils, including for children in the Reception class. Parents are overwhelmingly pleased with what the school offers and nearly all of them believe that their partnership with its staff is strong. Procedures to induct the new headteacher, who took up his post this term, are good. Effective senior staff and a strong governing body have ensured availability of all necessary information and support. These, allied with the headteacher's own experience and knowledge, have produced an excellent start.

In Years 2 and 6, standards are generally above average, with able pupils attaining standards above those normally expected for their age. This represents good achievement. However, in 2007, while the results of Year 6 national tests were again above average overall, achievement was only satisfactory compared with pupils' starting points. One of the main reasons was an unexpected drop, compared with most recent years, in the number of pupils who reached above expected levels in science, even though what is provided in the subject is sound. Other than this one anomaly, the school's record of achievement has been good in recent years and inspection evidence indicates that the progress of current pupils is good throughout the school. Improvements in how staff use information on pupils' progress, introduced since the arrival of the headteacher, are proving popular. They are contributing much to pupils' learning and achievement by improving teaching methods and what is taught.

Teaching is good. It is adapted to meet the needs of all pupils, with different tasks for different abilities, including those with learning difficulties. Teaching assistants are involved well in this process. A Year 6 lesson on journalistic writing provided a telling example. Able pupils used information and communication technology (ICT) to write and organise their work. They made their own decisions about how to tackle the task and achieved a high standard. Other pupils, including those with learning difficulties, also worked on appropriate tasks, resulting in good progress at all levels. The point of lessons is becoming more explicit in teachers' planning. Furthermore, objectives and aims are shared well with pupils. As one teacher explained, 'This helps you to focus properly on the skills that you want the children to learn'. Pupils too are noticing a difference and know that the quality of their learning is good. In another lesson, for example, a pupil remarked, 'I know what I am supposed to learn because the objective tells me. Then we're asked to hold up red, amber or green to say how well we've learnt it.' That said, this approach is partly new. While teachers appreciate that it is improving their teaching, they accept it is not yet routine. Senior leaders have identified that not all teachers are sufficiently adept in judging the level of pupils' work quickly enough, which restricts the speed at which adaptations in teaching and the curriculum occur. They are planning further training to iron out such inconsistencies.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding and includes good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Knowledge of right and wrong is very well developed and behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils' attendance is excellent. It is consistently well above average, which reflects their willingness to say how greatly they enjoy school and how much they trust the staff. All this is outstanding. Pupils are receptive to other cultures through their enjoyment of many types of music, art, dance and drama, and they express a dislike of any kind of racist attitude. However, their awareness of the presence, extent and importance of ethnic diversity in modern Britain is restricted. Pupils understand the need to exercise. They take advantage of opportunities provided by a good range of sports and other extra-curricular activities in the school's good curriculum, although indoor space for physical

education is a little limited for the size of school. Well-planned visits, expert visitors and residential trips in Years 5 and 6 offer further enhancement. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is also covered well and all nationally required subjects are planned effectively. Pupils work together well. Their good sense contributes much to safe practice. Pupils' contributions to the community are good. They are willingly involved in a range of fund-raising activities and the choir sings for elderly people and sometimes at the local church. In school, older pupils demonstrate excellent skills as playleaders, helping younger ones to organise games and to play amicably. Good social skills, allied to good standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT, mean that pupils' are prepared well for the future. Care, guidance and support are good. The staff are very supportive of pupils and look after them well. Arrangements for first aid, safeguarding and child protection meet requirements. However, academic guidance in terms of providing individualised targets is recent and therefore not yet consistently applied across the school.

As a result of good leadership and management, evaluation of the school's performance is largely accurate. The headteacher has very quickly established his vision and direction for future improvement and begun a process of well-judged change. Morale amongst staff is high and their teamwork is strong. In the light of past good performance, the school's capacity to improve remains strong, as it was in the last inspection. Good value for money is achieved.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Planning in the Reception classes is now firmly rooted in the nationally required areas of learning, and progress is good. By the time children move on to Year 1, nearly all of them reach the expected goals for their age and many exceed them. Adults look after the children well, so they feel secure and settle quickly each day. Pupils' personal, social and emotional development is good. As a result, behaviour is outstanding. Resources are good, although space is tight for a full Reception class of 60 children. Nevertheless, the children use resources sensibly and effectively. The staff are working towards the provision of activities that permit greater independence and choice for children, while still ensuring that they progress in all areas of learning. Provision in the Reception classes has developed considerably since the last inspection when it was identified as in need of development, so the capacity to achieve this next improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure, as quickly as possible, that the new ways of using assessment information to adapt teaching and the curriculum are consistently and routinely applied through the school.
- Provide opportunities that will help pupils to understand more fully the multicultural richness of modern Britain.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	2
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	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?	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

20 October 2007

Dear Children,

Inspection of Great Totham Primary School, Great Totham, CM9 8PN

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school recently. You helped me such a lot, telling me your views and ideas, and showing me your work. It is great that so many of you are enjoying what you do. I am delighted that you think your school is a good place to be and that your teachers care about you. I agree with you - I too think that Great Totham Primary is a good school. I also enjoyed my working lunch with the School Councillors and talking to the playleaders from Year 6 about what they do. I believe that both groups do a very good job in helping the staff to make things run smoothly. I hope that all of you will continue to support them strongly.

Here are some things that I especially like about your school.

- Your work is better than in most schools and you are making good progress because your teachers teach you well.
- You are developing excellent personal qualities. Your behaviour, attendance and enjoyment of school are outstandingly good.
- Your teachers take good care of you when you are in school.
- Your new headteacher and the senior staff work well together with all other staff and have good ideas for improving your school even further.

What I am asking your headteacher, staff and the school's governors to do next.

- Make sure that all your teachers are able to apply the new ways of adapting teaching and the curriculum to meet your individual learning needs.
- Help you to understand better that our own country has people with roots from all over the world, and that this makes it a place that is very rich with music, art and ideas of many different types.

I hope that you will always continue to be proud of your school and enjoy what it provides for you.

John W. Paull

Lead inspector