

# The Grove Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117281
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	312554
<b>Inspection date</b>	10 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Florence Olajide

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	221
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Amanda Hutson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sandra Bird
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 October 2003
<b>School address</b>	Dark Lane Harpenden Hertfordshire AL5 1QD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 761849
<b>Fax number</b>	01582 760165

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and explored the following issues: whether children from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make as much progress as other groups, whether the curriculum meet the needs of all children and whether children's personal development and well being and overall curriculum provision are outstanding. With the exception of the Foundation Stage, all other aspects of the school's work were also investigated in detail. The inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessment of the Foundation Stage as given in its self-evaluation was not justified and this has been included where appropriate in the report.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, senior staff, teachers, governor representatives and children. In addition, there were observations of parts of lessons and a school assembly. The inspector scrutinised a range of school documents including information on standards and children's progress, its self-evaluation, and parent questionnaires.

## Description of the school

This average sized school serves the Southdown area of Harpenden, which is relatively affluent but with some areas of social disadvantage. A few children travel to the school from further afield. While most of the children come from White British backgrounds some are from minority ethnic and European backgrounds. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals, those who speak English as an additional language, and those with learning difficulties or disabilities are all below average. Some of the latter have complex needs.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The school's view that its overall effectiveness is good is too modest. The inspector agrees with the view of parents that this is an outstanding school. Partnership between all members of the school community is at the heart of the school's success. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the dedication of staff, parents and governors have helped to create an extremely positive climate in which children flourish. As aptly put by a parent, 'This is a school which approaches everything with the child's interests and education as its foremost concern'.

Achievement and standards are outstanding. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage and continue to improve so that by the end of Year 2 the school's high aspirations for them translate into standards that are exceptionally high, year on year. All children, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make at least good progress. Indeed, the majority of children make progress that far exceeds expected norms in their time in the school. Children also achieve highly in art and music and have regular opportunities to perform to their parents and public audiences.

The teaching and learning are outstanding as is reflected in the excellent outcomes for children. Wherever possible, learning tasks are practical. When children are required to record their work, the written tasks are appropriately matched to their needs and abilities. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Questioning is used skilfully to assess children's knowledge and deepen their understanding of concepts. The teaching helps children to make useful links in their learning across and within subjects. Teaching and learning resources, including information and communication technology, are used very effectively to consolidate children's knowledge. Teaching assistants are very well deployed and provide children with good support.

The school provides children with outstanding care, guidance and support. The extremely positive school ethos creates a strong sense of community and well-being. As one child explained, the school is a 'comforting' place to be. Parents overwhelmingly agree that their children enjoy school and thrive in the caring and supportive environment provided by the staff. They appreciate that the school 'goes out of its way to make parents feel included in their children's education'.

Safeguarding, procedures and risk assessments are appropriate and all adults who work or support in the school are carefully vetted. The school works successfully with outside agencies to ensure that the needs of children with learning difficulties or disabilities are met. The concise and simple marking procedures provide children with very clear feedback on their progress. As a result, they know their targets and recognise when they have achieved them. As one child explained, 'The OBJ sign means I have met the learning objective'. The school meets the challenging targets it sets for most of the children. However, it recognises that targets for the most able children may not be high enough as the school meets these too easily.

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. It meets the needs of all children and makes a strong contribution to their personal development. The children appreciate the wide range of activities in and out of classrooms and the learning resources, which make lessons practical and enjoyable. The school makes excellent use of its links with outside agencies to enrich the curriculum and support children's achievement. Links with a local secondary school with specialist status in mathematics have been used to improve provision for the more able children in this subject. The school's partnership with a local agricultural research centre provides the children with opportunities for practical environmental studies. The school's relationship

with parents is also extremely positive with over 40 volunteers who regularly support the school. The children's cultural development is good. They learn about cultures in other countries through geography and religious education and show a good appreciation of the differences in cultures. Nonetheless, the curriculum does not yet provide them with a strong enough awareness of modern Britain as a multicultural society.

The impact of the excellent care, guidance and support, and the good curriculum, is that children's personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral and social development are outstanding. Children are very confident, articulate and friendly. They behave very well and are extremely responsive to learning, focusing on tasks with vigour. They work well independently and in groups. In a Year 1 class for example, when using a 'story sack', children shared out roles and props democratically, and supported one another. They then used their initiative to consult the storybook when they forgot the sequence of the story they were retelling.

The children have a very strong knowledge and understanding of how to stay healthy. Their knowledge of how to stay safe is good. They enjoy the 'tasty' school dinners, which they say help them to stay healthy. As one little boy explained, 'We get two vegetables and one fruit at dinnertime and some fruit at snack time; that makes four out of the five portions of fruit and vegetable that we need to eat each day'. The children make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community through a range of roles and activities. The children's forum, for example, influenced a change in school uniform to make boys more comfortable in the summer months. Children have good opportunities to develop enterprise skills through the many fundraising activities for charities. Their excellent basic skills prepare them well for the next stage in their learning. The school has worked very hard to improve attendance, which is now above average. Nonetheless, a small minority of children continue to take holidays during term time.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Parents recognise that the leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of the staff are exceptional. All leaders take responsibility for standards, and they monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's work within their areas of responsibility. Consequently, they have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, another improvement since the last inspection. Any areas identified for development are tackled rigorously to bring about positive change. For example, additional intervention support for children in mathematics has raised standards again after they fell a few years ago. The children's progress is tracked carefully and their achievement is linked to staff performance management and professional development. Governors have useful systems to enable them to evaluate the school's effectiveness. They work in strong partnership with staff, and as a result, are extremely knowledgeable about the school's work. This enables them to hold the school to account whilst providing very good support.

The school provides excellent value for money. It has successfully tackled the issues raised in the previous inspection and demonstrates excellent capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards and provision in the Foundation Stage are good with some outstanding features. The learning environment, which is attractive and welcoming, supports good development in all aspects of the children's learning. By the end of the Foundation Stage, children achieve above the expectations for 5-year-olds. Children are encouraged to be independent and to

make good choices. They confidently work and play well together. Parents value the very effective arrangements, which support children's transition into the Nursery class and from the Nursery into the Reception class. The school has begun to measure children's attainment from entry in order to gain a clearer view of the progress children make in this phase. There are imminent plans to improve the outdoor provision for the Reception class.

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

- Improve the curriculum by ensuring that it promotes among children a stronger awareness of Britain as multicultural society.
- Ensure that targets for children of higher ability are sufficiently challenging.

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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?	1
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	1

### Achievement and standards

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

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

<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.



## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

11 October 2007

Dear Children,

Inspection of The Grove Infant and Nursery School, Harpenden AL5 1QD

Thank you very much for talking to me when I visited your school. I really enjoyed the harvest assembly, and your beautiful singing. I also enjoyed listening to what you had to say. As I promised, this letter is to tell you what I found out about your school.

I agree with your parents that your school is excellent.

These are the best things about your school.

- You enjoy school and all the practical activities that the teachers provide very much.
- The excellent teaching helps you to achieve extremely well, not just in English and mathematics but also in music and art.
- The staff take very good care of you and you all look after each other.
- You are very confident and hard-working young people.
- You really know how to stay healthy and safe, and you behave very well.
- You all know your targets and can tell when you have achieved them because your teachers give you very clear feedback.
- Your headteacher is excellent; the staff, governors and your parents give her very good support in leading the school.

To make your school even better, I have asked the staff to look at two things.

- To help you learn more about the people from different cultures and backgrounds who live in this country.
- To set higher targets for those of you who are able to work a little harder and faster.

I am sure your parents and teachers are proud of you. I hope you will always do your best and that your parents will continue to support the school by making sure that your attendance is excellent.

Yours sincerely

Florence Olajide (Lead inspector)