

Graveley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117395
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312600
Inspection dates	21–22 October 2008
Reporting inspector	David Manuel

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	104
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Hazel Barnham
Headteacher	Mrs Lisa Massey
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ashwell Common Graveley Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 7LJ
Telephone number	01438 351377
Fax number	01438 351377

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school is much smaller than most schools. It has four classes of mixed age groups, including one for children in the Early Year Foundation Stage (EYFS). Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a small proportion from minority ethnic groups. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The attainment of children on entry to the school is wide ranging and broadly in line with levels expected of this age. The school gained the Active Mark Award for high quality sports provision in 2008. The new headteacher has been in post since the beginning of the current term. The long awaited improvements in the accommodation, including replacing the hutted classrooms and the building of an extension to the small hall, are due to begin next term.

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. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding as are the care, guidance and support they receive. Behaviour and relationships are excellent and pupils thrive in a very positive learning environment. There is a real sense of community within the school. As one parent responded, 'Graveley is a fantastic little school. It combines learning with lots of fun experiences and has a great ethos.' Pupils are very friendly and support each other well, sharing ideas and tackling problems together. They participate in local events and make good contributions to the community. In the wider global community they raise money for charities such as 'Send a Cow to Africa' to help those less fortunate than themselves.

Pupils' safety is given top priority and the school maintains high levels of care. Pupils feel safe and know that teachers will help them if there is a problem. They also have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lives through balanced diets and they enjoy plenty of exercise. Pupils with learning difficulties, and physical and emotional problems are looked after very sensitively. The good support they receive enables them to make good progress in most areas of learning.

Pupils achieve well from their starting points. By Year 6, pupils attain standards which are above average in English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). Boys and girls achieve equally well, although within the very small numbers in each year group, there are sometimes a few variations in this. The school is sharpening its good assessment processes even further and its tracking of pupils' progress is generally effective; information from this is used well, especially to provide support for pupils who need extra help.

Teaching is good. Teachers plan and prepare lessons well and resources are used effectively to support learning. Teaching is often very imaginative as seen in an outstanding Year 2 lesson involving literacy skills and drama. In a very small number of lessons pace is a little slow at the start and on some occasions most pupils within the two year groups in a class are involved in tasks at the same level. As a result, staff miss the opportunity to challenge different groups of pupils, and particularly the higher attainers. The school has redesigned its curriculum since the previous inspection so that it not only meets all the requirements of the new Primary Strategy but also uses the best aspects of the International Primary Curriculum. This provides a good, broad and creative curriculum with a thematic approach in a two-year rolling programme. In addition to the proper emphasis on key academic subjects, music, drama, art and sport feature prominently. French is taught in every class and Years 3, 4 and 5 are taught to swim. The rich curriculum meets pupils' needs well and provides a well-rounded education.

Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher gives the school a very clear direction and her positive vision for the future is shared by a strongly committed team of staff. Some staff have taken on new roles and, therefore, a few of the new initiatives are just beginning to have an impact. Subject leaders recognise that they will need to monitor progress closely in their subjects to ensure that such initiatives are proving successful. The governing body has also undergone several changes recently. However, it remains effective in supporting the school's work and governors are now much more involved in monitoring the performance of the school than at the time of the previous inspection. The vast majority of the parents are very pleased with the education and support provided by the school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

In the EYFS, staff work together very well to provide a really thriving learning environment in which children settle quickly and enjoy their activities. The young children receive a warm welcome when they start in Reception. Provision for their personal and social development is outstanding and meets the needs of each child extremely well. The teacher and support staff help children to solve problems and make sensible choices and this enables them to make good progress in all areas of learning. A wide range of activities are provided for children both indoors and outdoors and they greatly enjoy making choices and using the good quality resources. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging their independence and self-confidence. Staff have high expectations of children and encourage discussions about what they are finding out. As a result, children develop as confident learners whose curiosity is stimulated well. By the end of Reception, nearly all children achieve the early learning goals for this stage and a few exceed them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Plan a wider range of challenges within lessons, particularly for the higher attainers to ensure that pupils of all capabilities achieve the highest possible levels.
- Ensure that strategic planning involves subject leaders in regularly monitoring progress to evaluate consistency in progress and standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All groups of pupils achieve well and make at least good progress in their learning. The latest test results show that by the end of Year 2 boys and girls achieve equally well from their starting points and reach above average levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Within the mixed-age year groups, variations in standards have occurred in the past, as for example, in a year group with 13 boys and only three girls. Progress made by pupils who find learning difficult is also good because they are well supported. By the end of Year 6, latest test results show that pupils continue to achieve well in English, mathematics and science. The quality of writing produced by the higher attaining pupils in the current Year 6 is excellent, as seen when writing about their favourite day from the past. In mathematics, pupils achieve well, particularly in data handling and problem solving. Achievement is good across all subjects as a result of the well planned links between them which make learning more meaningful. Standards in ICT, art and music are also above expected levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy school immensely. Their behaviour is excellent and pupils of all ages work very co-operatively together. In lessons, they listen attentively to each other and talk enthusiastically about what they learn. Attendance levels are well above the national average and reflect families' very positive attitudes to the school. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They say that bullying is very rare and know that teachers will deal with it effectively should it happen. Paired activities work especially well because pupils offer each other support in a very mature manner. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They greatly appreciate natural beauty and greatly enjoy the extension of their creative skills, as in music, drama and

art. Pupils are very aware of right from wrong. They are friendly, considerate and show great respect towards each other and to adults. Although most pupils are from White British backgrounds, they have a very good awareness of, and respect for, other cultures and religions.

Pupils are very aware of healthy diets and a good number participate keenly in the after-school sporting activities. Pupils of all ages feel very pleased when given special responsibilities. The school council represents the views of their respective classes well. Year 6 pupils act as 'playleaders' at lunch-times organising the safe use of a range of equipment. Pupils consider themselves very much part of the local community, including singing carols at a local care home. Pupils are very happy and have a genuine willingness to do their best, to help others and develop their own independence. These values, together with good standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT, means they are being well prepared for the next stages of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most lessons are well planned and creatively taught. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan interesting lessons. Teachers involve pupils in discussions to capture their imagination and good questioning results in pupils thinking hard to explain their ideas. Pupils respond well to this and relationships within classes are excellent. A good range of resources bring learning to life and include the regular use of interactive whiteboards and laptop computers. Most lessons are well paced, but in a very small number of lessons, the pace is a little slow at the start, not allowing pupils to get on with practical activities soon enough. Good use is made of the assessment systems in tracking pupils' progress. On some occasions, most pupils within the two year groups in a class are involved at the same level and there is insufficient challenge for the higher attaining pupils. Teachers' marking is regular and very helpful, identifying successes and how improvements can be made. Pupils are aware of their learning targets and evaluate them regularly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Since the previous inspection, the school has introduced a new programme and strategies for learning. This is all quite new but is now beginning to be embedded. It has resulted in creative ways for teachers to plan interesting and relevant lessons to link pupils' learning across different subjects. Such creativity begins in the EYFS and continues throughout the school. Opportunities for enrichment, through the many extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors to school, are very good as for example, in music, drama and physical education. Pupils in all classes also learn French. The school proudly displays attractive examples of pupils' written, art and ICT work, including their cultural knowledge of other countries. Music plays a key part in the school's life with individual music tuition and performances in and out of school. Themed days give the pupils excellent opportunities to extend their creative skills as in their celebration of Harvest Festival, seen during the inspection. Throughout the school, staff continually promote key skills preparing pupils well for the later stages in education. Teachers and teaching assistants go out of their way to ensure that pupils who find learning difficult do not miss out on any of the exciting curriculum. Links with other schools are good and support learning well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding levels of care, guidance and support for pupils and helps all pupils to thrive in a positive learning environment. All requirements for safeguarding their welfare are met in full. The excellent personal, social and health education provision contributes strongly to pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils who need specific help with learning, medical or social and emotional problems are supported well. Well-qualified and effective teaching assistants provide very good support in the classrooms. The school's good tracking systems are used effectively to identify any pupils who are underachieving to provide flexible and focussed support for them. As a result, pupils make good progress. Pupils are involved in evaluating their own work related to their targets. Written guidance and oral advice in lessons is very effective and helps pupils to evaluate their progress within the task in hand.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The new headteacher, the assistant headteacher and all staff share a vision and a passion for ensuring that the school provides well for each pupil. Some subject leaders are relatively new to their roles but are producing good action plans with the focus on improving the quality of provision and raising standards still further. The effect of their efforts is still to have a major impact but everyone is working together well to achieve the agreed priorities. Leaders recognise the need to closely monitor progress in subjects under the new strategies and improvements. Several of the governing body are new and all are active, challenging and supportive of the school, an improvement since the previous inspection. New committees are being formed so that they can monitor the work of the school even more closely than before. A high priority is placed on encouraging pupils to become valuable members of the school and the local community, and enjoy their learning. The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school. As one parent commented, 'My children are always talking about their learning.' The school has good capacity to improve further.

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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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

How good are 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	1
The extent to which 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	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 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?	1

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

23 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Graveley Primary School, Graveley, SG4 7LJ.

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school. I really did enjoy seeing you work and play together so well. What a lovely school you have and what fantastic assemblies I saw; from the class that took us round the world in 18 minutes on Tuesday, and your whole school Harvest Festival celebration on Wednesday.

I can see that you get a good start in your education and there are many good things happening. You enjoy school so much and are keen to learn all the time. Your behaviour is excellent and you are very sensible and help each other a lot. You are making good progress in English, mathematics, science and ICT particularly, but also doing well in art, music, drama and sport. Well done to all of you. You keep yourselves very fit with healthy diets and plenty of exercise and know how to look after yourselves and others. You also enjoy finding out about other countries and religions.

Your teachers and helpers give you a lot of support and make lessons really exciting at times. All the grown-ups try very hard to help you feel happy and learn successfully and your parents really appreciate this. Your very good levels of attendance also show how much you love school. Mrs Massey, all the staff and the governors are very keen to make your school even more enjoyable.

There are two main things that I have asked the school to do to make your school even better. Firstly, that teachers should ensure that they always take the opportunity to plan different work for you and also stretch the most able. Secondly, I have asked your teachers who lead subjects to regularly check how well you are progressing in subjects which they lead, to make sure you are making good progress in your learning all the time.

I know that you want to keep working hard and do your best and I wish you every success in the future.

David Manuel

Lead inspector