

The Grange School, Daventry

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121897
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314139
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Helen Barter

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	487
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Banks
Headteacher	Gaynor Yates
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2003
School address	Staverton Road Daventry NN11 4HW
Telephone number	01327 705785
Fax number	01327 709729

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school came into being in April 2005 after the amalgamation of an infant and junior school. The headteacher previously led the junior school.

Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a smaller than average proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school has a Designated Special Provision (DSP) for children with speech and language difficulties in the Foundation Stage and a second DSP for pupils with autism in all key stages. Eleven pupils currently have a statement of special educational need.

The school provides extended care provision in Acorns – a breakfast, after-school and holiday club.

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 an effective school that provides a good all-round education. The positive atmosphere is striking as one walks through the door: colourful displays, the pupils' excellent artwork and high quality dance performance playing on a screen, along with welcoming and cheerful staff and pupils. It is no wonder that parents are so pleased, typically saying, 'I cannot praise staff enough for the caring environment they have created' and 'The Grange School offers excellent opportunities for pupils'. Good leadership and management have securely established the amalgamated school. The leadership and educational vision of the headteacher and deputy headteacher are excellent. They have built a strong staff team that shares aspirations for pupils' achievement. Together they have good capacity to improve further. Initiatives, such as improving the teaching of mathematics, are already having an impact. The guidance given to pupils to help them know the next steps for improving their work is developing well in some classes but is not yet embedded across the school.

Pupils' achieve well from their starting points to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils' good progress in Years 3 to 6 has resulted in rising standards in the last three years, most markedly in science. The Foundation Stage gives children a good start, particularly helping them to improve their personal, social and emotional skills. While pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress and still have some ground to make up to reach higher standards, effective intervention strategies and good support for pupils' individual learning needs are starting to have a positive impact. Senior leaders have devised a meticulous system for assessing pupils' progress. They know that all teachers now need to make consistent use of assessments to match work more precisely to pupils' needs and accelerate their progress further, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are supported well and are fully included in school life.

The key to pupils' achievement is the good quality of teaching and learning and the commitment to provide pupils with good care, guidance and support. Pupils enjoy school because of the rich variety of activities supplementing the good curriculum, including partnership activities with other schools, excellent opportunities for art and drama, and a multitude of extra-curricular activities. In the faculty teams, staff work purposefully together to make the curriculum even more interesting, linking subjects and themes together to bring learning alive for pupils. The school recognises it needs to build the monitoring and evaluation skills of subject leaders within these teams to ensure that pupils make equally good progress across the curriculum. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, owing much to the high quality pastoral care provided. They behave well and have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy life and to keep themselves safe. They greatly enjoy undertaking responsibilities in their excellent class and school councils. With good personal attributes and sound basic skills, they are well prepared for the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Nursery or Reception classes with skills that are lower than other children of their age. The care and attention paid to their welfare help them to develop confidence, behave well and enjoy learning. Children relish opportunities to work together, such as treating animals in the 'vets' and feeling the effect of wind when flying kites in the nursery garden. The well-managed environment and good teaching ensures children progress well. Those with

significant speech and language difficulties make good progress through the support of the DSP. While attainment on entry to Year 1 has been below average in recent years, more children this year are on track to meet their early learning goals and standards are generally in line with those expected for their age. Although a new emphasis on ensuring that children securely know their letters and sounds is improving their communication, language and literacy skills, their writing is still weaker than other aspects of their learning. Opportunities for children to write freely in role-play areas are developing satisfactorily but children are not guided enough to ensure they always form letters correctly. This restricts their fluency and progress in writing in subsequent years.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers use assessment information to match work accurately to pupils' needs in order to accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in Years 1 and 2.
- Spread the good practice seen in some classes in helping pupils to understand how well they are learning and what are their next steps for improvement.
- Develop the skills of subject leaders in evaluating pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Standards in Years 3 to 6 have risen steadily over five years and are broadly average. Mathematics standards, which were weaker than those in English and science in 2007, have improved through focused support to ensure pupils' basic skills are secure. Current assessments and work in books show that standards are average and improving with more pupils on track to reach their targets, particularly at the higher levels. Across the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those supported in the DSPs, make good progress towards their individual learning targets.

Standards at the end of Year 2 were below average in 2007. Rigorous analysis by senior leaders has identified that past assessments of pupils' learning have been inaccurate and have led to weaknesses in teachers' planning. Much attention has been paid to improving the accuracy of assessments and to supporting teachers in planning work that is pitched at the right level for pupils of all abilities. The drive to identify pupils' difficulties earlier and support them more effectively in small groups, or through specialist expertise for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is paying dividends. While the current Year 2 still have some ground to make up, assessments show that progress is accelerating in Years 1 and 2 and standards are rising.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in improvements to a level of attendance that is now at the national average. They speak enthusiastically about art, numeracy and extra-curricular activities and are proud of their achievements in dance and sport. They develop their self-esteem very well as their contributions to class discussions and to school life in general are valued highly by their teachers and their peers. Pupils' cultural understanding is developed well through visits, celebrating festivals and taking part in activities after school. Pupils get along happily together. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe, confidently using the 'worry boxes' and their class and school councils as vehicles to express any concerns. They know that the school deals very well with the occasional bullying or racist incident. Pupils know how to lead healthy lives and use their class councils well to discuss how the school can help them to

improve further. Even the youngest children say, 'carrots are good for you because they have vitamins in them'. Pupils contribute well to the community by raising funds for charity, helping at lunchtime and caring for the environment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Dedicated, hard-working staff, who are willing to try out new ideas and approaches to learning, are key to pupils' good achievement. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils, a good variety of teaching methods and styles and pupils' positive attitudes all help pupils to learn well. Lessons are imaginative and have a clear purpose. Pupils are shown what they need to do and are provided with a logical structure for their work. Teachers know the pupils very well but do not always make the best use of information about their prior learning to pitch work precisely to their needs and ensure they always make the best possible progress. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support to pupils throughout their work. Additional teaching and support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for those in the DSPs, are particularly effective.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a rich curriculum where the creative arts are a key strength. They contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment of education, raise their self-esteem and effectively promote their personal development. Pupils' art is highly valued and displayed beautifully throughout the school. The curriculum is monitored carefully to ensure that it meets pupils' needs and their learning progresses year by year. Links are made between subjects to allow pupils to spend time following imaginative themes that gain their interest. Many themes include good enrichment activities, such as visits to museums, to provide a focus to the learning. The school knows that the development of pupils' writing, mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills through other subjects of the curriculum is not yet consistent. The extensive range of extra-curricular clubs is very popular with pupils and highly appreciated by their parents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils' good behaviour, happy demeanour and positive attitudes are testimony to the strong emphasis placed on their pastoral care. Parents praise the school's commitment to continuity of good quality care beyond the school day through its extended provision. Pupils say, "'Acorns" is brilliant'. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils, including effective strategies to encourage attendance, are secure. Systems to monitor pupils' progress help staff to identify and provide support where required, ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are included fully in school life. Detailed plans, drawn up in consultation with parents, effectively support the progress of pupils with placements in the DSPs. Academic guidance is satisfactory. In classes where constructive marking of pupils' work and targets are used well, pupils become closely involved in assessing their own progress and know what their 'steps for success' are. Senior leaders know that this is not yet applied consistently in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

A key strength of the school is the ability of senior leaders to motivate staff and engage them in innovative ideas. Through the faculty teams, staff explore enthusiastically how to achieve the most positive outcomes for pupils, both academically and personally. There is an excellent sense of teamwork with staff keen to lend their expertise and learn from each other. Senior leaders have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have introduced rigorous systems to monitor pupils' progress and evaluate how effective the teaching is, and know that the skills of subject leaders now need to be developed in the same way. Governors discharge their responsibilities well. As the school has established, they have become better informed about pupils' achievements and able to challenge the school about its performance. The significant carry forward of money from the acquisition of two school budgets is already earmarked for building works which will finally bring the whole school together under one roof.

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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	NA
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	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	2

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	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	3

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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Grange School, Daventry, NN11 4HW

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school recently. You were friendly and helpful when we talked with you about your school and the work that you do. We were so impressed with the presentation by the school council and the way that you run your class councils without very much help from adults. You told us that your school is good, and we agree with you.

These are some of the good things we found:

- Children get off to a good start in Nursery and Reception. They are happy, behave well and love playing together both inside and outside.
- From the time that you start school to when you leave, you achieve well. At the moment, you make the best progress in Years 3 to 6.
- You are growing up to be caring and responsible young people and this will really help you in later life.
- Your teachers provide you with many interesting activities which help you learn well. I really enjoyed my visit to your 'Aztec museum' in Year 5.
- You get many opportunities to learn things in lessons but also outside the school day. Your art is superb and your performance of Abba's 'Dancing Queen' which was playing on the screen when I arrived in school was fantastic!
- All the adults really care about you. They want you to be safe and happy and to do well. I know how much you love going to Acorns too.

The adults have worked very hard to bring your two schools together and know just what to do to make The Grange even better. To help them, I have asked them to:

- use information about your learning to always give you the right level of work so that you all progress as well as possible, especially those of you in Years 1 and 2
- make sure that everyone helps you to know how well you are learning and what you need to do to improve
- keep checking on how well you are learning in all of your subjects.

You can help by continuing to come to school regularly and always working hard.

With best wishes for the future

Mrs Helen Barter Lead inspector

14 March 2008

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Lead inspector