

Grass Royal Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123729
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314694
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Speer
Headteacher	Rachel Howchin
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2002
School address	Grass Royal Yeovil BA21 4JW
Telephone number	01935 423863
Fax number	01935 427099

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils in this medium-sized school have, in the main, previously attended one of two infant schools. The proportion receiving free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils of other than White British ethnicity, or who speak a language other than English at home, is below average. The school has recently admitted a significant number of pupils of Eastern European origin.

For most of the period since September 2006, the leadership of the school has been the responsibility of staff holding their posts in an acting capacity.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school in which pupils make steady progress. Strengths include the pupils' good achievement in science, the success of strategies to reduce bullying and the efforts made by staff to raise standards in English and mathematics. There are strengths in the teaching, including the effective use of homework and the good working relationships in classrooms. New developments, such as discussions between pupils, and the use of targets helps pupils to understand what they need to learn, and this is beginning to improve their progress in some lessons.

Pupils start school having attained standards at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics that are below average. When they leave at the end of Year 6, they attain standards that are a little below average in English and mathematics. In science they attain average standards, representing good progress in this subject. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how to keep healthy, although they do not always practise this as some eat unhealthy snacks, for instance, at playtime. This is because the good information that pupils are given is not always reinforced by careful monitoring. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Generally they get on well together and report that bullying has reduced considerably because of effective action by staff. Attendance is a little below average, although the school does all it can to improve it.

Leaders and managers have a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have worked hard over the last year to raise standards in English. They have now rightly extended these developments to mathematics. New approaches to teaching have been introduced. These are making lessons more interesting and are beginning to ensure that work is more challenging and motivating for pupils. Nevertheless, opportunities to extend their learning beyond the basic objective for the lesson are sometimes missed. The quality of marking varies considerably. Sometimes inappropriate praise is given for careless or incomplete work and pupils are not always shown how the work could be improved. Leaders have started to monitor some aspects of teaching and learning but have yet to extend this to systematic monitoring of pupils' day-to-day work. Assessment is now used to monitor pupils' progress in English carefully, and to plan work so that it meets their needs. There is good evidence that progress in this subject is beginning to improve as a result.

In 2006 leaders and managers were faced with major challenges to improve a wide range of the school's work. They have identified priorities correctly and are making good progress with improvements. Procedures to care for and protect children are up to date and meet all requirements. Action has been taken to improve pupils' welfare, for instance, the toilets are about to be refurbished. However, some of the actions required of governors, such as a programme for the regular monitoring and review of policies, are not yet in place. Recently the rate of improvement has been good, although this has been achieved with considerable external help. However, the current uncertainty over the future of the senior leadership of the school, means that the school's prospects for future improvement are satisfactory overall.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning through regular monitoring and feedback to teachers.
- Improve the quality of marking to ensure that all pupils know how to improve their work in order to achieve their targets.
- Ensure that all work is planned to provide pupils with challenging, exciting tasks.

- Ensure that all required policies are regularly monitored and reviewed by the governing body.

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

The school's assessments and other data show that pupils make steady progress in their work. In English, data have been used well to identify areas of slow progress and action has been taken to rectify this. More-able pupils in Year 6 are, for instance, starting to produce accurate and perceptive pieces of writing. Skills of speaking and listening are also improving, although some pupils still lack the confidence to speak at length. Careful monitoring of reading is leading to improvements in standards. This work is less well developed in mathematics and although fundamental skills are developing well, some pupils have difficulty in using these to solve problems. Pupils make good progress in some other subjects, including science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. They work and play well together. In lessons, they are sometimes disinterested but never disruptive. Their satisfactory understanding of the range of cultures present in British society is improving as the range of backgrounds of the pupils becomes more varied. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for instance, when using the Internet. They say they enjoy school but many have difficulty explaining why this is. They make a satisfactory contribution to the community by taking on responsibility such as school council membership, or by organising collections for charity. They are developing the skills they will need in later life, such as those of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), in a satisfactory manner.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In almost all lessons pupils are clear about what they are learning and hence work is purposeful. Teachers explain the work well and make effective use of teaching aids such as ICT. Homework is used well to extend what is learned in the classroom, and pupils recognise its value. Because they are making better use of assessment, especially in English, teachers are beginning to plan lessons so that each pupil's needs are more precisely met and as a result they are making better progress. Teaching assistants enhance the learning of many pupils, including those with learning difficulties or those who are at an early stage of learning English.

However, not all opportunities are taken to ensure good progress. For instance, in learning how to calculate the perimeter of a shape, Year 6 pupils were not given opportunities to develop their understanding of the use of decimals, or of units of length. Pupils are given important opportunities to discuss their work with each other, but these are often very brief and are too tightly controlled by the teacher.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has a number of strengths. Pupils study a wide range of subjects, including some that are new to them such as a modern foreign language. The school has very good resources for teaching some subjects such as ICT and physical education, where a full-size gymnasium enhances the curriculum. There is a good range of additional activities, including sport and educational excursions. Appropriate arrangements are made for teaching those with learning difficulties and those who are at an early stage of learning English, so they make satisfactory progress. The weakness lies in the fact that the curriculum does not always enable all pupils to make the best possible progress as some tasks limit their opportunities to take their learning further, hence some pupils report that they find the work easy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils receive good care and all requirements for child protection are in place. Most parents believe their children are cared for well but some have concerns, such as about the fairness of the otherwise effective reward systems. Governors are improving other aspects of the provision for pupils' welfare, including the toilets and carpeting. Pupils receive satisfactory academic guidance. Effective targets which most pupils understand and find motivating have been introduced for English and, more recently, for mathematics. However, the quality of marking is too variable and does not always show them how to improve. Links with other schools are improving, for example, in ensuring that younger pupils are taught to read through a consistent approach.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

A number of the leaders and managers of the school have limited experience, but in spite of this they have correctly identified the school's strengths and weaknesses and have a realistic understanding of how it compares with others. With the support of the local authority, action has been taken to raise standards and improve teaching. This is having a beneficial impact on pupils' progress in English and is now being extended to mathematics. Monitoring is not yet sufficiently precise to ensure consistency throughout the school. For instance, although all teachers are using targets with their pupils, the style, language used and degree of monitoring vary from class to class. Targets for the attainment of Year 6 pupils in mathematics and English are challenging and are set with precision. These are not always achieved, but the reasons are analysed and acted on.

Until recently the effectiveness of the governing body was hampered because there were a number of vacancies and governors were not supplied with information of a suitable quality on which to base their decisions. This has now been rectified and governors have rightly acted quickly to rectify weaknesses in areas such as child protection, health and safety and the management of teachers' performance. However, there is at present no regular programme of policy review.

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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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

29 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Grass Royal Junior School, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 4JW

We very much enjoyed talking and listening to you and seeing your work when we visited your school recently. We want to thank you for spending time with us. We found you all very friendly and welcoming.

Yours is a satisfactory school. The most important things about it are:

- You make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics, and good progress in some other subjects such as science.
- Results in the Year 6 tests are about average.
- Your behaviour is satisfactory and you say you enjoy school. You also say there is less bullying because ideas like the anti-bullying box work well.
- You understand the importance of a healthy diet and exercise, although some of you eat unhealthy snacks at playtime. You make good use of the opportunities to play sport.
- Teaching is satisfactory and has a number of good points, such as the way teachers explain things and use ICT to help you learn. There have been recent improvements, such as in the way you are taught English by using targets to help you.
- Teaching assistants are good at helping you when you are stuck.
- The staff look after you in a satisfactory way and are looking to improve things such as the state of the toilets.
- The school is led and managed in a satisfactory way.

There are ways in which the school can be improved further. We have asked the staff to look at the way you learn and are taught to see what works best in order to improve everyone's progress. We have asked them to mark your work in a way that always shows you how to improve it, and to plan lessons that are interesting and not too easy. The governors need to make sure that their policies and other paperwork are up to date.

You can help by telling the teacher if you find the work too easy, or if you don't know how to improve it.

Yours sincerely

Paul Sadler Lead Inspector

29 November 2007

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Lead Inspector