

The Gateway Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132107
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	315922
Inspection dates	6–7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Levson
Headteacher	Heather Overton
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2003
School address	Milestone Road Dartford DA2 6DW
Telephone number	01322 220090
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Children's attainment on entry to Reception is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has grown rapidly since it first opened eight years ago and substantial building work has occurred throughout this period. In recent years, there have been significant staffing changes often because senior staff have left for promotion. Several key leaders have assumed their new responsibilities this year. The school has won Healthy Schools and Active Mark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education and has some good features. Pupils benefit from an attractive and calm learning environment where they are well cared for and kept safe. Close attention is paid to their personal development and this leads to pupils behaving well and enjoying school. Good links with other schools, parents and the community enrich pupils' experiences. The headteacher provides good leadership and sets a clear direction. She has created a good team ethos and all staff are committed to improving provision for pupils. Parents are usually pleased with the education their children are receiving. One summed up their views with the comment that, 'My children enjoy the school and all the curriculum subjects they are offered.'

Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory but there is some variability in how well they do in different year groups. Children are given an excellent start in Reception. As a result, by the time they begin Year 1 they reach at least the standards expected for their age and a significant proportion exceeds them. Good progress in Key Stage 1 ensures that Year 2 pupils reach well above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Strong teaching in Reception and Key Stage 1 ensures good progress through these year groups. Standards have improved in Year 2 in recent years and pupils are now given a good start to their junior education.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2 and standards are average in English, mathematics and science by Year 6. However, pupils' progress has not always been quick enough in the past and older pupils are often in the process of 'catching-up'. The school's strategies for addressing this are largely successful but there is still a legacy of underachievement for more capable pupils. This is resulting in too few pupils reaching the higher levels in mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given good support and make good progress.

Teaching, learning and the curriculum are satisfactory overall. Teachers manage classes well but do not always make full use of assessment information when planning lessons and this causes a lack of challenge for more capable pupils in Key Stage 2. Throughout the school, strong provision for information and communication technology (ICT), art, music and sport and the wide range of activities outside normal school hours really enrich pupils' learning. Care, support and guidance are satisfactory. There are considerable strengths in pastoral care but pupils' learning targets are too general and this prevents them knowing precisely what they need to do to improve.

The school's self-evaluation procedures are satisfactory. However, although pupils' progress is tracked, their progress is not evaluated rigorously enough. This limits the school's knowledge of how well groups and individuals perform and the setting of sharp targets for improvement. Targets for pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Year 6 are appropriate in terms of the proportion who should reach average levels but too modest for more capable pupils. Many subject leaders are new and still receiving training for their roles and do not yet take a full part in monitoring their subjects and raising achievement. Governors are very supportive and increasingly developing their ability to challenge the school. The rate of recent improvement in tackling past underachievement shows the school has a sound capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children arrive with skills that generally match expectations for their age, although a minority have limited speaking skills. All make excellent progress and, by the time they leave, nearly all have reached the standards expected and a significant number exceed these. Children are given a very secure start in reading, writing and numeracy. The curriculum is very well planned and ensures good links across different areas of learning. Teaching is outstanding. Assessment is strong and robust checks are made on children's progress. Assessment information is used extremely well to ensure that work builds on children's previous learning. The development of children's speaking, thinking and personal skills is given top priority and underpins all other learning. There is an excellent balance between purposeful play and adult led sessions. The excellent role-play areas are used most effectively to support the development of language, literacy and numeracy. High standards of care and safety help children to feel happy and secure. Strong and sustained leadership is a major reason for the successful provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in Key Stage 2 by making sure that consistent progress is maintained through Years 3 to 6, especially for the more capable pupils in mathematics and science.
- Improve teaching by making better use of assessments to ensure that work is closely matched to pupils' capabilities so all of them make good progress.
- Evaluate pupils' progress more rigorously to determine the impact of teaching on achievement and to set more challenging targets.
- Develop subject leaders' roles so they play a full part in raising achievement.

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

Pupils make satisfactory but uneven progress across the school. The school is working hard to raise achievement and this is having a positive impact in Reception and Key Stage 1. Pupils now reach well above average standards by Year 2 as a result of good progress through Reception and Key Stage 1.

Standards are average in English, mathematics and science by Year 6. Achievement in Key Stage 2 is now satisfactory after a sharp decline last year. Effective identification and support programmes are enabling most pupils to make up lost ground. Initiatives for improving writing, including spelling, are beginning to have a positive impact. In mathematics and science, catch up programmes and teaching are effective for lower and average attaining pupils. However, assessment information is not used well enough to identify how well more capable pupils are achieving and what should be done to challenge them further.

Last year the school did not achieve the high targets it had set. Targets for the current Year 6 are realistic for most pupils but not high enough for more capable pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school, as is evident in comments such as, 'It's fun here!' The school is a happy and harmonious community where relationships between pupils and adults are good. Pupils work well together and respect each other. They respond very positively to the good opportunities for them to take responsibility, for example, as members of the school council. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They know right from wrong and learn a lot about different cultures. They have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and participate enthusiastically in a wide range of sporting activities. Pupils have a strong sense of community and are keen fund raisers for many good causes. They participate keenly in a good range of sporting, musical and artistic activities with the local community. Their cultural education is also enhanced through a musical link with Mbawula in South Africa. Attendance is satisfactory and improving. Activities involving teamwork help prepare pupils for the world of work, and satisfactory basic skills ensure sound preparation for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers create a good supportive climate and a calm learning environment. Another good feature is their regular use of ICT, including interactive whiteboards, to make learning interesting and relevant. Wall displays are used productively to bring learning alive and encourage pupils to be proud of what they have learned. Teaching assistants are used effectively, particularly for supporting those who find learning difficult.

In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, lessons are characterised by high expectations and challenging activities that move pupils' learning forward at a fast rate. While teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 2 insufficient use is made of assessment information to ensure that work is properly matched to the needs of the more capable pupils. On occasions, during lesson introductions, time is not used effectively when pupils sit for too long listening without contributing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and interesting and supports pupils' personal development well. Art and design is of a high quality throughout the school and used to enliven pupils' learning in other subjects. There are some particularly good curriculum links between history and art. ICT is a strong feature in every class. Curriculum visits and a wide range of activities outside normal school hours greatly enrich learning opportunities, with many sporting and musical activities. Pupils say that they enjoy these and participation, for example in the choir, is high. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage makes learning meaningful and brings it alive. Overall provision for English, mathematics and science is satisfactory. The school has good procedures for ensuring the curriculum meets the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but there is not enough challenge for more capable pupils in Key Stage 2.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Child protection procedures and arrangements for safeguarding are rigorous and well understood by staff. The school works closely with outside agencies to support pupils with learning difficulties and to secure better attendance for the very few who do not attend regularly enough. Links with other schools, the local community and parents are good and enhance pupils' well-being.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school has satisfactory systems for tracking pupils' progress. Pupils' targets are based on close analysis of test results in English and mathematics but these are sometimes too general and not reviewed frequently enough. This lack of precision prevents pupils being clear about what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and governors have successfully created a school with a strong caring ethos where there is a clear and well understood vision. The good leadership of the headteacher has ensured the school has come through a difficult period and is settling down. The school is benefiting from a new and stable senior management team and a full complement of staff. Senior staff have accurately identified the school's main strengths and weaknesses. There is a clear cycle of monitoring, including lesson observations, but this is mainly done by the headteacher. It does not yet involve subject leaders because they are often new to their roles and still receiving training. Staff changes have hampered the development of robust management systems. Systems are in place to track pupils' progress but the school recognises they are insufficiently developed to rigorously evaluate the progress of different groups such as potential higher attainers and to check how well teaching is meeting their needs.

The school improvement plan clearly maps out the right priorities for improvement and shows when initiatives will be monitored and by whom. However, there is not always enough focus on how the impact of initiatives for raising pupils' achievement will be measured. The new chair of governors is knowledgeable and governors are beginning to hold the school to account, having undergone recent training.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
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	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?	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

7 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of The Gateway Primary School, Dartford DA2 6DW

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited. You certainly seem to enjoy school and it was good to hear about all the extra activities in which you are involved. We have judged that your school is providing you with a satisfactory education.

These are the good things about your school.

- Those of you in Reception and Key Stage 1 are doing really well.
- You behave well and get on together very well; this makes your school a happy one.
- You have some good opportunities for learning ICT, art, music and sport and for taking part in clubs at lunchtime and after school.
- You are very helpful, make a good contribution to school life, and raise money for charities to improve the lives of others.
- Teachers take good care of you and make sure you are kept very safe.

This is what we are asking the school to do now.

- Help those of you in Key Stage 2 to make better progress, especially in mathematics and science.
- Make sure that the work that you are given in each lesson builds on what you already know and can do.
- Ensure school leaders, teachers and governors keep a close check on how well you are doing and give you better targets.
- Help teachers in charge of subjects to be more involved in raising standards.

I hope you will continue to enjoy school and work hard at using your targets so your work gets better and better.

Best wishes

Eileen Chadwick Lead inspector