

Gloucester Road Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115585
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	317213
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	111
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Cooper
Headteacher	Amanda Palmer
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2005
School address	Gloucester Road Cheltenham GL51 8PB
Telephone number	01242 512792
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school. Just under 10% of pupils come from minority ethnic groups, which is lower than average. Children enter the school with abilities that are below those typical for their age, particularly in their language and social skills. Just over a third of the pupils have learning difficulties, which is higher than in most schools. A small, but growing proportion of pupils join the school with English as an additional language. In its previous inspection, the school was identified as needing special measures to help it improve. It has been part of a national Intensifying Support Programme to foster skills in English and mathematics. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with Section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Gloucester Road provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. It has made a marked improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in the way the school is led and managed and in the way pupils enjoy their learning. A parent, who visited, accurately noted being 'very impressed with the atmosphere'. As a result of the improvements, pupils are steadily reaching higher standards in their work.

There is an increasingly good atmosphere in the school as most pupils now behave well, both within classrooms and in the playground, where they are active and play together well. Pupils excitedly tell visitors about their class activities. The sound care and guidance the school provides is helping ensure that pupils' personal qualities and general well-being develop more quickly. As a result, pupils, including those with learning difficulties or who are at the early stages of learning English, really enjoy school and feel safe. A number of parents find it hard to ensure their children attend regularly, causing the school's level of attendance to be inadequate.

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties, achieve satisfactorily. Those learning English as an additional language achieve in line with classmates because they get good support. Pupils have a secure start to school in the Reception class and make steady progress. In Years 1 to 6 their progress, whilst generally satisfactory, is more uneven. This is due partly to some variations in the quality of teaching, particularly for those who are more able, and weaknesses in curriculum planning. The pupils reach broadly average standards by the time they leave, but relatively few reach the higher levels. Pupils' science skills have declined recently and are below average, partly because the school has focused hard on improving other key skills such as writing. A suitable range of other curriculum activities, combined with a more creative approach to teaching history and geography based work, is just beginning to take off and excite pupils. Pupils are responding very well to the different approach. As one remarked during an activity, 'Come and look at the bits we got from inside a real fish...Yuk.' There is a good range of activities after the school day to enhance classwork.

The headteacher, supported by staff and governors, has successfully tackled areas of weakness, such as pupils' writing skills and links with parents, but systems to ensure consistency of teaching and boosting attendance are comparatively new and have not had time to have an impact. Secure links with others in the local community and involvement with the local 'children's university' help broaden pupils' awareness and involvement with local events. Effective use is made of professionals beyond the school to support pupils' well-being. The governors visit the school regularly and are increasingly challenging senior leaders over standards and provision.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision has improved since the previous inspection. Due to improved teaching of skills, clear planning and good indoor resources, children make satisfactory progress, and there are signs that some make good progress. Increasingly, children move into Year 1 with standards that are nearer to the expectations for their age, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. Improved outside resources are helping promote pupils' independent learning, but the range of resources to promote their physical skills is too limited and hampers their

development. There is a good variety of class based activities to foster children's basic skills as well as their creative and social development. Visits beyond school, such as to a local shop, help pupils' learning to be fun.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching and curriculum planning in Years 1 to 6, particularly in science, to raise pupils' attainment.
- Ensure the pupils in the Reception class have better opportunities to extend their physical abilities and development.
- Develop better systems for monitoring pupils' attendance to help identify those who need extra support to attend regularly.

A small proportion of 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 achieve satisfactorily in relation to their starting points. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. They make steady progress in the Reception class. They increasingly reach the expected levels by the end of the year, but the limited range of outside facilities hampers their physical development and experiences. Progress is satisfactory in Years 1 to 6, but few pupils reach the higher levels in their work. Pupils make expected progress overall, but it is uneven between certain year groups and subjects. By the time they leave, pupils reach broadly average standards, but in science, and for the most able, attainment is not as high as it could be. The Intensifying Support Programme, combined with more interesting activities to fire pupils' enthusiasm, has helped raise pupils' standards of writing and number work throughout the school. Pupils with learning difficulties make progress in line with their classmates, as do those with English as an additional language, due to good support from teaching assistants. The school's own checks on current work confirm that pupils' progress varies, but the proportion of those making quicker progress is increasing as the school is keeping a closer eye on those needing extra help or challenge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils behave well in lessons and in the playground. They really enjoy school as lessons are more motivating. Their high levels of enthusiasm and good attitudes to learning are reflected in the happy and safe way in which they play. This is a marked improvement since the previous inspection. Those pupils on the recently formed school council enjoy their roles. They are rising to the challenge as partners in helping the school improve, but this is at an early stage. They are very effective in involving all other pupils, who know they can voice their concerns. Whilst the vast majority of pupils attend regularly, the below average attendance of a small minority means that attendance is inadequate overall. Pupils are active in school with plenty of space to run about at playtimes and in their regular games lessons. They know about the benefits of healthy eating but admit that they find making good choices at lunchtime and in their lunchboxes more difficult to adopt. The pupils have a good sense of right and wrong. They work and play well together due to the good guidance they receive from staff and visitors, such as the community police officer. They have opportunities for prayer and reflection in assemblies but

class discussion times do not focus often enough on discussing feelings or anxieties. Pupils are aware of beliefs that differ, but do not readily have a clear awareness or knowledge about other cultures or religions. Although pupils tackle writing and number work with enthusiasm, some are still not confident in basic skills and this hampers their preparation for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although teaching is typically satisfactory, there is an increasing number of well taught lessons which is helping improve pupils' progress. Developing good relationships and providing interesting hands on activities are now stronger features of lessons. These activities often stimulate pupils' imagination, particularly for the oldest pupils. This helps increase pupils' rate of work and enjoyment of learning. The teaching of writing and number skills has improved since the previous inspection, but some aspects of science are not taught consistently well, particularly in stretching the most able. All teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and this too has helped to increase pupils' work rate. Group work encourages good levels of cooperation. The quality of teachers' marking varies from class to class, so not all pupils have a clear idea about how to improve their work. Assessment of pupils' progress is regular and those falling behind are pinpointed quickly and helped. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, and help to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and those at the early stages of learning English, make the same progress as their classmates.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A newly designed framework for planning activities is beginning to ensure that pupils learn new skills and knowledge more thoroughly in every subject. A strong feature of the new plans is the linking of subjects together in creative ways. For example, pupils were completely absorbed in a lesson which combined English, science and history skills in their project on Egypt. However, the use of these new plans is still at an early stage and their effectiveness varies between classes. The Intensifying Support Programme has ensured a systematic approach to the teaching of mathematics and English. A similar approach in science is now starting, with a particular focus on the development of pupils' vocabulary and their experimental skills. The addition of French language teaching helps broaden pupils' skills and there is a good range of after school activities to broaden pupils' experience and extend their activity levels further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for and supervision levels are good. All adults ensure pupils' health and safety is given top priority. Arrangements to safeguard pupils' welfare are robust and they are regularly reviewed. Parents are pleased with levels of support to help pupils become 'well rounded'. Good behaviour is rewarded fairly and this has led to the improvement seen in behaviour. Effective systems are in place to deal with pupils whose behaviour does not come up to scratch and pupils say they feel that the school takes any concerns about others' behaviour seriously. Despite new incentives and systems to tackle absence, some parents still find it difficult to ensure their children attend regularly. Parents report however that they like the

increased opportunities to work with the school to improve pupils' achievement. These are slowly aiding efforts to raise pupils' expectations. Support for those pupils at the early stages of learning English is well targeted. Records of pupils' achievements are good and are beginning to be used to identify when pupils may need extra support or challenge. Pupils know about targets set for them, but are unclear about how they can guide their efforts to improve more quickly. Arrangements to support pupils when they transfer to their next school are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has fostered a better environment for pupils' learning and a good team ethos. This ensures that staff, pupils and, increasingly, parents feel valued and supported. This combination has helped move the school forward, but there is still more to do, such as promoting pupils' attendance with some parents. Priorities for development are clear and based on accurate self-evaluation, but sometimes lack the sharp focus on what are the most pressing issues to take the school to the next level. Monitoring of the school's work is regular. It is beginning to highlight some inconsistencies in teaching and pupils' progress, but these are taking time to remedy. Governors give the school satisfactory support. They provide a good sounding board for ideas and concerns. They are increasingly challenging the school to develop a longer term vision. They are keen to seek improvement but are slightly hampered in their effort as several are new to their role. The school's success in raising pupils' attainment nearer to those levels expected, improving pupils' standard of behaviour, and improvements in communication with parents indicate its good capacity to improve further.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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	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

8 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gloucester Road, Cheltenham GL51 8PB

Thank you for making us feel welcome at your school when we visited it recently. Yours is a satisfactory school which is trying to be even better. It has some good things about it. The only thing we didn't enjoy was smelling your 'embalmed' fish in Years 5 and 6!

- Here are some of the things we found out.
- Children in the Reception class settle in quickly and feel at home.
- You said you feel safe and all the staff make sure that you do. You said you like the caring atmosphere and we noticed it too.
- Teachers take time to explain your work and some topics they teach are increasingly exciting.
- You now make satisfactory progress in your work and reach close to average standards, but your science work could be better.
- The activities you do in school, like your history topics on Greece and Egypt, are fun and interesting.
- You know about keeping fit and active, but some of you find it hard to eat healthily.
- Most of you behave well. The school helps you become sensible.
- The school council is beginning to help you have a greater say in the things you would like improved.

- We have asked the school to do three things.
- Plan and teach science topics which will really get you thinking to help you reach higher levels in your work.
- Give the Reception children more outside equipment that will stretch their physical skills and activity levels.
- We want the school to keep a closer eye on those children who find it hard to come to school regularly.

You can help by seriously thinking about what you can do to help your school get even better and then doing it. Make sure too that you don't miss out by not being in school when you should be.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge Lead inspector