

Great Linford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110366
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	325137
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Judith Dawson

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	294
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	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jim Parsler
Headteacher	Mrs Claire Dunstan
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St Leger Drive Great Linford Milton Keynes MK14 5BL
Telephone number	01908 605027
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school serves an increasingly mobile population and some families are housed in temporary local authority accommodation. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is slightly above average but very few are in the early stages of English language acquisition. A higher than average number of pupils have learning, communication or physical difficulties and a statement of special educational need. There is a very small percentage of looked after pupils. There is a privately run after school club on the school premises. The majority of children join the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), having attended local early years settings, with skills normally expected of their age. The school holds the Bronze Healthy Schools award and was awarded the Activemark last year. It has received additional support from the Local Authority since March 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with Section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement and standards.

The school has been through turbulent times since the last inspection. A proposed amalgamation with a local school adversely affected staff morale. The quality of teaching and learning deteriorated and pupils made inadequate progress. Standards in the 2007 and 2008 national tests for Year 6 pupils were low. However, leaders and managers identified these inadequacies and requested an audit to pinpoint the school's weaknesses. Since then, effective support from the local authority, changes in staffing, very clear plans to address the weaknesses and improvements in teaching and learning have begun to have a positive impact. Improvements in lessons and in the pupils' written work show that progress has accelerated throughout the school. The school's accurate tracking shows that standards are beginning to rise, but there remains much to do and pupils' achievement remains inadequate. However, the improvements secured so far show that the school has the capacity to improve further.

Pupils are happy in school and behave well. They generally work hard and are becoming increasingly skilful at discussing their work with their peers. They feel safe and have confidence in adults to address any anxieties because the school takes good care of their pastoral needs. Although they are gaining an understanding of citizenship, many lack the linguistic and mathematical skills expected of their age to prepare them adequately for their futures.

A few months ago, monitoring of lessons by school staff and external advisers found that much of the teaching was not good enough. The school is addressing this well. Improved systems for assessing pupils' progress have helped to identify individual pupils' learning needs. Lesson planning accommodates the range of pupils' abilities. Clear guidance on effective marking has helped to involve pupils in improving their learning, although this is not yet fully embedded throughout the school. Teachers set targets to help pupils improve. Although teaching is now satisfactory, it is not yet good enough overall to enable the school to meet its challenging targets. There is a satisfactory curriculum that is beginning to be adjusted to meet the needs of different ability groups, especially in mathematics. Additional provision for sport and music and the good personal, social and health education contribute well to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The school's leaders had allowed the difficult situations in school to distract them from concentrating on pupils' learning. However, they have faced the situation squarely and taken appropriate action to resolve the issues making good use of external advice to improve their skills. Governors are increasingly involved in monitoring the school's performance. Core subject leaders track pupils' progress and identify gaps in learning, although they have not yet monitored teaching and learning in lessons to help teachers meet pupils' needs in their subjects more closely. Nevertheless, senior leaders know their school well. Above all, the headteacher has been successful in re-establishing a united workforce that is committed to school improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the EYFS because teachers and assistants have a good understanding of their needs. Most children come with preschool or nursery experience and have skills that are in line with those typical for their age in all areas of learning, but less so in communication, language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world. Children settle quickly, learn to work and play together in this safe, supportive and lively learning environment. One parent comments, 'The staff are so caring and have made sure my son is happy and secure.' Children's progress is checked regularly and provides a clear picture of what they need to learn next. This enables teachers to plan activities to help children achieve their next steps in learning. By the start of Year 1 almost all children meet age-related expectations and some exceed them. Writing skills remain the weakest area. Children, including those with specific needs and those not fluent in English, make good progress in the EYFS. This is because teaching is good, providing encouragement and challenge when children work with adults or independently with their peers. The EYFS is managed well and there are strong relationships between staff and parents, ensuring that adults respond effectively to any issues affecting individual children, both at home and in school. Good links are developing with Year 1 to help children's learning to continue smoothly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate improvements in teaching and learning to raise standards and ensure pupils make at least satisfactory progress.
- Ensure subject leaders monitor teaching and learning in their subjects, especially the quality of advice given to pupils of each age group, to make sure pupils can take responsibility for improving their learning.
- Help pupils to develop adequate skills in literacy and numeracy to secure their future economic well-being.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Apart from 2005 when writing results were above average, standards in the national tests and assessments for seven-year-olds were below average between 2004 and 2007. In 2008, standards in reading, writing and mathematics declined further. Changes in staffing have helped to halt this decline and pupils in Year 2 are making better progress in their work.

In 2007, national test results for 11-year-olds were well below average in English, mathematics and science. Unvalidated results for 2008 show that standards in English and mathematics remained very low although there was an improvement in science. Very few pupils attained the higher levels in any subject. Provision has improved in recent months and pupils are making better progress. Tests taken this November show that over half the pupils in Year 6 are now working at the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics, and have already made significant progress from the end of Year 5. However, as there has not been time for the school to reverse the legacy of inadequate achievement, standards in Year 6, while improving, remain well below what these pupils should be attaining.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are able to empathise well and are tolerant and considerate of the views of others. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and ably express their views in support of or against a range of issues. They know how to maintain healthy lifestyles. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 provided a comprehensive list of the benefits of exercise when designing posters to promote exercise at playtimes. Pupils are well aware of which food is good for them and the benefits of drinking water regularly. They know how to keep safe when using the internet. Pupils clearly enjoy their education and have a positive attitude to school and their teachers. Attendance is satisfactory and improving. Pupils make a positive contribution to both the local and wider community and support a wide range of charitable and community causes. The school council is fully involved in improving the school and its environment, from developing playground equipment to working in the school garden, opposing local vandalism and supporting litter picking initiatives. This helps pupils' develop an understanding of citizenship. However, the recent poor progress in literacy and numeracy has prevented them from developing sufficient skills for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and sometimes good. This is the result of some staff changes, good internal and external support and teachers' determination to do the best for the pupils in their care. Teachers now track pupils' progress satisfactorily, identifying those in need of additional support. They make sure pupils know what they are about to learn. Teachers and teaching assistants question pupils effectively and give them good advice in lessons. Some lessons progress at a good pace and pupils contribute well to class discussion. In an outstanding lesson, pupils demonstrated excellent listening, talking and debating skills. The teacher took full advantage of this by allowing the lesson to evolve in response to the discussion. This ensured that learning was rapid. Occasionally teachers spend too long talking to the class; the pace then slows and pupils lose concentration. Although all teachers plan activities for the different abilities within the class, some do not use their planning effectively to address pupils' needs. Less able pupils are supported well. Now pupils of all abilities have targets for their learning and they are becoming more involved in taking responsibility for improving their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced, meeting all statutory requirements. Physical activities are a strength of the school, especially so for those with disabilities. Staff ensure that all pupils can participate fully and this demonstrates good inclusive practice. Music is also a strength and additional external provision is being extended to include whole year groups. The wide range of extra-curricular activities is well-attended. Pupils enjoy their educational visits, such as the recent visit to Banbury museum, and the many visitors to school. They learn several modern foreign languages, often taught by European students. There are some links between subjects and information and communication technology is used effectively across the curriculum. However, planning for English, mathematics and science is not sufficiently adapted to challenge

all pupils to ensure that each child reaches his or her full potential. The more able pupils are taught separately for mathematics in Key Stage 2, but this has not yet had sufficient time to show any impact on pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There are good systems for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their safety and well-being. Any inappropriate behaviour, bullying or racist incidents are dealt with consistently and effectively. As a result, such occurrences have been reduced in recent months and pupils behave well. Effective systems for promoting good attendance and punctuality have also had a positive impact. The good programme for personal, social and health education ensures that pupils know how to take care of themselves and helps them to respect the views and feelings of others. Pupils with specific learning, behaviour or physical challenges are catered for well. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Improvements in the information given to pupils and the targets they are set are beginning to involve them in evaluating and improving their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and the challenges it faces. They realised that their focus on the quality of learning had slipped during the period of turbulence. The outcomes of their audit prompted a rapid response and leaders have made effective use of the support from the local authority and other consultants to improve matters. Issues relating to individual performance have been dealt with effectively. Many governors are new and have rapidly developed their skills, providing the headteacher with effective support. They are beginning to assess aspects relating to the school's self-evaluation.

New systems for tracking pupils' progress are starting to meet their needs more effectively. The headteacher and the local authority have monitored the quality of teaching rigorously and teachers have worked hard to improve their practice. Subject leaders have useful plans for improvement. They are beginning to use their analyses of pupils' performance to adapt the curriculum and to plug gaps in learning. Suitable plans exist for them to monitor teaching and learning in their subjects. Leaders have set challenging targets for the school and are well aware of the need to rapidly embed the recent improvements. They have not lost sight of pupils' wider education. Community cohesion is promoted appropriately through foreign language teaching and visitors from different faiths, encouraging pupils to respond to national and worldwide issues.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

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?	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
The extent to which 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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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?	Yes

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

16 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Linford Primary School, Milton Keynes, MK14 5BL

Thank you all very much for your welcome and support when we visited your school. A special thanks to those of you who shared your views with one of the inspectors.

Your school has been through some difficult times when you did not always get the help that you needed. This meant you did not make enough progress or reach high enough standards in your work. Things have become better recently, and we can see that you are making faster progress now. However, the improvements have not been in place long enough to help you learn as well as you should. So, because we want you to develop good English and maths skills to help you when you get older, we have asked the adults to make sure that all of your lessons are good enough to ensure that each one of you learns as quickly as you can. We have also asked them to make sure that children in every class know what to do to make their work better.

You behave well and we know you feel safe and happy in school because staff look after you properly. You and your teachers get on well together. Teachers are working very hard to make things better for you. All the lessons we saw were helping you learn and some were good, so that you made good progress. Those of you in the Reception classes learn quickly because the adults are good at teaching you new things and planning activities to help you learn for yourselves. Teachers now give the rest of you good advice in lessons and most do the same when marking your work. We want all teachers to do this. Please make sure that you take their advice.

The adults in charge of your school knew that things were not good enough. Wisely, they got help from other teachers and advisers. Things are already changing for the better and everyone in school wants to make sure that you have all you need to achieve well.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Judith Dawson

Lead Inspector