

Giffard Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110381
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	325141
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Olson Davis

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)	242
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	Mrs Janice Farnes
Headteacher	Mr Glenn Booth
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Broadway Avenue Giffard Park Milton Keynes MK14 5PY
Telephone number	01908 617868
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school changed status from a combined school with a Year 7 to a primary school in September 2006, a year after the last inspection. The proportion of pupils who find learning difficult is well above average. The school contains a department for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Consequently, the number of pupils with statements of special educational needs is well above average. More pupils than usual join or leave the school at other than the usual times. Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children in the Reception class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Under the purposeful leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, adults work closely as a team to include every child. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning and personal development. A very large majority of parents are pleased with the school's work. As one parent wrote, 'My children love the school. As a parent, I find it very welcoming and the staff approachable. I love the way the school brings in new initiatives, especially the minibooks [laptop computers].' Good care, guidance and support for pupils and positive features within the teaching and curriculum contribute to pupils' good personal development. Pupils enjoy their school and they feel safe. As a result, their attendance is good, they behave well and they are keen to do well in their work. They happily take on responsibilities, such as being Year 5 play leaders and school council members, which they carry out diligently. The strong partnerships with outside agencies and with the nearby community centre provide many benefits to pupils' learning and well-being.

Children make a good start in the Reception class, some from quite low starting points. As they get older, pupils continue to achieve well and they attain average standards by the end of Year 6. This is the result of good teaching, good provision for those who need extra support with their learning and a good curriculum. Fundamental to the pupils' good progress is teachers' effective use of regular assessments to plan work in lessons that is usually well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. However, standards in writing, although broadly average, are not as high as in reading, mathematics and science. Fewer than the expected number of pupils reach the highest levels at Year 2 and Year 6 because teachers sometimes miss opportunities to add challenge to pupils' work in writing. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their writing skills other than in literacy lessons. Nonetheless, pupils have sound levels of basic skills in literacy and numeracy and good information and communication technology (ICT) skills. These, along with good personal and social skills, prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Pupils' good progress in their academic and personal development owes much to good leadership and management at all levels. However, the school has rightly recognised that some subject leaders lack sufficient oversight of standards and achievement, and this limits their influence on the quality of teaching and learning within their areas of responsibility. Several initiatives, such as strengthening the procedures for tracking pupils' progress, improving provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and providing more opportunities for pupils to use their skills in real contexts have resulted in accelerating pupils' progress in reading, mathematics and science. This demonstrates that the school has a good capacity to continue improving.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Starting points on entry to the Reception class vary from year to year and range from well below expected levels to broadly in line with expected levels. Good-quality induction arrangements and good relationships with adults help the children to settle quickly and to make good progress in their personal and social development. Children make good progress in their learning because they are taught well. Children are taught in a newly built, bright and spacious learning environment with easy access to a secure outdoor learning area. Teachers make effective use of assessment information to plan interesting activities so that children are often enthralled, excited and absorbed by their tasks. Consequently, when children enter Year

1, many have reached the goals expected for children of that age. However, children's skills in literacy and mathematics are often at a lower level, reflecting their lower starting points in these areas. Therefore, adults place strong emphasis on these skills, such as linking letters with sounds and writing. The curriculum is well planned around good-quality children's literature. During the inspection, children were using, 'We're going on a bear hunt', as a starting point for their play both inside and outdoors. They were making collages and exploring natural materials as they constructed 'bear caves'. The activities covered different areas of learning and contributed greatly to the children's enjoyment and good progress. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by providing more challenge for able pupils and more opportunities for pupils to write purposefully in other subjects and not only during literacy lessons.
- Develop the role of some subject leaders so that they can play their full part in raising standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. National assessment results at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 fluctuate between above average and average with the changing nature of each cohort. The proportion of pupils who find learning difficult in some classes has a considerable impact on standards overall. Results in the 2008 national assessments for Year 6 were broadly average. This represented good progress, as nearly half of the group had learning difficulties. However, results in English were lower than in mathematics and science because few pupils reached the higher Level 5 in writing. Similarly, a smaller proportion of pupils reached the higher Level 3 in writing at the end of Year 2. This is because pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop more advanced writing skills in different kinds of writing or to write purposefully in other subjects. School tracking data show that different groups of pupils are making good progress from Year 1 to Year 6. The pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with statements of special educational needs receive a high level of well-targeted support and, as a result, make good progress in meeting their targets. Pupils in the moderate learning difficulties department benefit from good teaching and support, both in the department and in their mainstream classes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They take on well the moral and social values of the school community, which are reinforced by successful assemblies. Pupils acquire a good understanding of diversity in society, for example in religious education and geography lessons, and through visits to a synagogue and other places of worship. Classrooms are characterised by well-motivated, attentive and well-behaved pupils enjoying their learning. Pupils feel safe because occasional instances of unkind behaviour are dealt with promptly and effectively. Those pupils who occasionally display challenging behaviour are supported well in their efforts to improve. Pupils work responsibly together and express their views confidently through the school council. In addition, they show a growing sense of social responsibility by raising money for charity. Pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise, and many participate in sporting activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers generally plan work that is closely matched to pupils' individual abilities and, consequently, pupils make good progress during lessons. However, opportunities to extend more able writers are not always sufficiently well planned. Pupils enjoy their learning and feel involved because they are given a clear idea of what they are expected to learn and achieve by the end of the lesson. Teachers place strong emphasis on encouraging pupils to share their ideas with a partner and in groups. This develops pupils' speaking and listening skills and encourages them to put their thoughts into words before writing them down. Sometimes, teachers' introductions to lessons are too long, with the result that pupils do not have enough time to carry out their tasks. Support staff make a strong contribution to the good progress of pupils who find learning difficult.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is considerable emphasis upon phonics, spelling and handwriting to raise standards in writing. Opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills by writing for different purposes are becoming increasingly effective in English lessons but are not well planned enough in other subjects. Specialist teaching in ICT helps pupils to acquire skills quickly and to be aware of the safety issues, particularly when using the internet. Pupils use computer technology confidently to support their learning in other subjects, particularly in Years 3 and 4, where pupils are provided with personal laptops which they can use at home. Pupils' personal development benefits from a well-planned programme in personal, social and health education, and specialist teaching in physical education lessons. Pupils greatly value the wide range of additional activities that enrich their experiences and increase their enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Adults have excellent relationships with their pupils and are committed to their enjoyment of learning. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure in this well-maintained and inviting learning environment. Strong links with parents, the community and external agencies ensure that pupils are given the most appropriate support and guidance. Pupils who find learning difficult benefit well from the additional support given by staff, including those in the moderate learning difficulties department. Academic guidance is good. Pupils say that the teachers' marking helps them to improve their work. Systems to track pupils' progress were recently revised and are used well to set challenging targets for pupils. Most pupils are aware of their targets for writing but this process is not sharp enough to ensure that all pupils make the same good progress in writing as they do in other areas of learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

School self-evaluation is good. School leaders know what the school is good at and where it needs to improve, and use this knowledge well to pinpoint actions which have led to

improvements. Teaching is good in all year groups because school leaders rigorously monitor its quality and set targets for improvement. There is greater rigour in the use of assessment information. School tracking information is used well to check that individual pupils are making the expected progress, and swift action is taken to remedy dips in performance. As a result, attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is rising. Good monitoring of the curriculum has helped to ensure that ICT is being used well across the curriculum. However, some subject leaders do not make full enough use of assessment and monitoring information and this lessens their impact on improving standards. Governors' knowledge of the school is advanced through regular reports from school leaders and their own effective monitoring. This allows them to ask searching questions and to hold the school more fully to account for its performance. Promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Although the school itself is a very cohesive community and reaches out well to the local community, senior leaders have not analysed in sufficient depth what the school needs to do to foster cohesion within the wider community.

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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	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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	2
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	2

The quality of provision

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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

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

20 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Giffard Park Primary School, Milton Keynes, MK14 5PY

My fellow inspector and I visited your school recently to check how well you were getting on. Thank you for being so friendly and making us feel so welcome. We found that your school provides you with a good education that prepares you well for the next stage of your schooling.

Here are some of the good things about your school.

- The staff look after you well, so your attendance is good and you feel safe.
- The children in the Reception class do well because they are given interesting activities.
- You enjoy your learning and the other activities in school.
- You behave well and want to do your best in lessons.
- The school listens to you when you suggest how things could be better and you value being given responsibilities.
- You are making good progress in your learning.
- The headteacher, staff and governors have clear plans on how to improve the school.

To improve further, we have asked the school to:

- help you to do better in your writing by teaching you more advanced writing skills and giving you more opportunities to practise your writing skills in different subjects
- help teachers who have particular responsibilities use the information they have about how well you are doing to help you to do even better.

We hope that you will continue to enjoy your school. We also hope that you will help your teachers as they work hard to make your school even better for you. You can help by always trying your hardest and doing your best work.

Yours faithfully

Olson Davis

Lead Inspector