

Godmanchester Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110677
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325196
Inspection date	30 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Newell

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)	368
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 Clara Lee
Headteacher	Mr Philip Ellington
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Park Lane Godmanchester Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 2AG
Telephone number	01480 375115
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: attainment in writing and mathematics, the quality and consistency of teaching and how leaders at all levels monitor the work of the school. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, sampling of pupils' work, scrutiny of school documentation, assessment, tracking and target setting information and discussions with the headteacher, pupils, key staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate within the report.

Description of the school

Godmanchester Primary is a larger than average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of pupils, who need extra help with their learning, including pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is in line with that found nationally. Although most pupils are from White British backgrounds, a small number of pupils are from ethnic minority origins and, for some, English is not their first language. There is Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision for children in the Reception classes. The school has gained Health Promoting School Award, ICT Mark, Activemark and the Basic Skills Quality Mark. Childcare provision, on site and run by a private provider, is available before and after school and during holidays.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Godmanchester is an outstanding school and rightly deserves the reputation it holds within the local community and beyond. It provides excellent value for money. Parents speak very highly of the school with a large number writing positive comments. Typical of many, a parent wrote, 'Fantastic school that brings out the best in all children.' This is a school that never stands still. It is always looking to improve through innovative and creative initiatives that make a significant difference to pupils' academic achievement and personal development. The school's excellent track record of improvement since the last inspection is a clear marker that the continued development is in extremely safe hands.

There is a very strong sense of team spirit and community that envelops the school and includes staff, pupils and governors. However, it does not stop there. The school goes out of its way to extend its boundaries into the local community, so that it operates at the hub of town life before, during and after the school day. The school is highly effective at ensuring that pupils are given a genuine voice and they even carry out work sampling alongside teachers to help improve teaching and learning! The school works hard at broadening pupils' horizons beyond Godmanchester and does much to promote multi-cultural awareness. All these factors combine to provide a blueprint for success in reinforcing the concept that pupils exist in a community outside of their immediate one.

It is against this backdrop that pupils of all ages achieve exceptionally well. Attainment when children start the school is generally in line with national expectations, although there are children at both ends of the academic spectrum. The excellent teaching that pupils benefit from means that, by the time that pupils leave school, standards have been considerably above the national average for a number of years. The school's accurate priority for improvement is to continue closing the gap between boys' writing standards and those of girls, and this remains work in progress. The school is rigorous in setting challenging targets across all key subjects and teachers are held accountable for the progress of pupils in their class. The role pupils play in their own learning is excellent because they have an excellent grasp of the targets and levels they are working towards and, importantly, know what is needed to reach the next level. This is further enhanced by the quality of teachers' marking which often makes very clear what pupils need to do to improve and pupils readily respond to suggestions. These strengths in academic guidance, together with the excellent pastoral care, make a winning combination where pupils thrive. They feel safe, valued and respected. The individuality of all pupils is recognised and celebrated and enables them to leave school as exceptionally well rounded young people who are more than ready to take on the next challenges in their lives.

The high quality of teaching and the vibrant curriculum go hand in hand in ensuring that pupils make rapid progress and enjoy being at school so much. Their love of school being clearly reflected in the very high attendance rates. Teachers go the extra mile to make learning fun. They provide many opportunities for pupils to investigate, to experiment and to find things out for themselves. Lessons are challenging and move along at a cracking pace. Questioning is sharp and incisive and pupils are encouraged to think things through for themselves. Relationships are excellent and classrooms are a hub of motivation and enthusiasm- from pupils, teachers and teaching assistants alike. Just occasionally, work set could ask more of the most able, but this is the exception rather than the norm. A great strength of the school is its readiness to embrace new initiatives and nowhere is this more evident than in the curriculum. The innovative use of laptop computers, cross-curricular writing strategies, accelerated reading and

mathematics systems, with on-line testing, monitoring, home access and progress information for parents are just some examples of initiatives that have made a significant impact to pupils' achievement. The school teaches modern foreign languages, provides excellent music tuition, has a swimming pool on site and a rich and varied array of after-school clubs - from salsa to judo and from kung fu to pottery. Add to this many visits, visitors and residential trips and the recipe for an outstanding curriculum is complete.

Another significant strength is undoubtedly the contribution that the pupils themselves make. Their excellent behaviour, infectious enthusiasm and fervent desire to do well make them great ambassadors for the school. They have an excellent understanding of what is needed to keep fit and healthy and show a very mature understanding of how to manage risks in their lives. Pupils show great respect for others and genuinely look out for one another. They add significantly to the community ethos of the school. Pupils relish the opportunities to take on responsibilities through ventures such as the play leaders scheme, the 'buddying' of Reception children and through their excellent participation in the highly effective school council. Pupils initiate fund raising activities for causes such as a local baby unit, injured firefighters and children in Africa, and are regularly seen participating in community events and happenings.

Outstanding leadership lies at the core of the school's many successes. The drive forward is relentless but fun and is centred around rigorous systems for monitoring teaching, analysing data and setting challenging targets. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. He is never content to let the school rest on its laurels but instead strives for constant improvement. His modest but undoubted highly effective leadership has brought staff, pupils, governors and parents with him. The school's strengths and weaknesses are eloquently and accurately articulated in the school's self-evaluation. The headteacher is supported by an excellent senior leadership team, where the individual skills of staff are honed and combined to bring about continuous development. The readiness to try out new ideas is always tempered by the necessity to gauge and measure their impact - another winning combination. The leadership of the school is completed by high calibre governance, which supports, questions and challenges the work of the school, but knows that it governs a school that provides a high quality of education for the children of Godmanchester and surrounding areas.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

All children in the EYFS make excellent progress because high quality of teaching and a stimulating and vibrant curriculum capture children's imagination and interest. All adults work together very well to provide a learning environment where children can explore and investigate and where they can simply have fun. Teaching strikes an excellent balance between child-initiated and adult led learning activities and staff are adept at encouraging children to become confident and independent learners from an early age. Assessment and the tracking of children's progress are very good. On occasions, some free play activities do not have a demanding enough learning focus to provide the necessary challenge. Children behave extremely well because adults make their expectations clear. Children show good levels of concentration and perseverance. They are already gaining an excellent grasp of the importance of eating healthily and keep physically active through regular play in the well-utilised outdoor area. Within this extremely caring learning environment, children thrive and, by the end of the Reception year, standards are already a little above national expectations. Leadership of EYFS is another major strength, as are the excellent links with parents, other schools and support agencies that start in the EYFS and are maintained throughout the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that strategies aimed at closing the gap between boys' and girls' writing standards continue to be implemented and their impact evaluated.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

1 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Godmanchester Primary School, Huntingdon, PE29 2AG

You will probably remember that Mrs Pentlow and I visited your school not too long ago and I am now writing to let you know what I found out. Before I do, I would first like to say thank you for making us feel so welcome. I have told your teachers how wonderfully polite and helpful you were and that you were terrific ambassadors for the school. Through our discussions, it was good to hear how much you love school and all the different activities you take part in, both during and after school. It was good to hear about how very safe you feel in school, that bullying is not an issue and that there is always someone to talk to if you are worried.

We found so many good things about Godmanchester School that I have to say it is an outstanding school and a terrifically fun place to learn! Teachers and other staff make learning so exciting and they help you to make excellent progress and achieve extremely well. The curriculum, with its visits, visitors and the great variety of after school clubs, adds much to your obvious enjoyment. The school is excellent at helping you to keep safe and healthy and goes the extra-mile in making sure you are outstandingly well supported. Mr Ellington is a brilliant headteacher and the teachers, staff and governors form a very strong team. They are determined to provide you with a high quality of education - and they do!

There is another major strength of the school that I have not mentioned yet. That is you, the children! Your attendance is very high, you are extremely enthusiastic, your behaviour is excellent and the way you contribute to the school and local community is something to be proud of. You know so much about keeping healthy and safe and the way you all get on together is exemplary. Well done!

Even outstanding schools like yours can get better, so I have asked Mr Ellington and the teachers to help boys become even better writers. I know that the staff and governors want the school to continue being as successful, and I know you will play your part by continuing to work hard and behaving well. I wish you every success in your future. It was a pleasure and privilege to meet you.

Martin Newell

Lead inspector