

Ghyllgrove Community Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114914
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326092
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2009
Reporting inspector	John Mason

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr C Moloney
Headteacher	Mrs J Gibbon
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2006
School address	The Gore Basildon Essex SS14 2BG
Telephone number	01268 450067
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Ghyllgrove Junior School is of average size. Its pupils come from the local area. Many pupils experience aspects of social disadvantage. Most are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, but has grown in recent years. Few do not have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school runs a 12-place resource base for hearing impaired pupils aged 4 to 11. This contributes to the above average proportion of pupils with statements of educational needs, but a growing number of statemented pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The school holds Healthy Schools, Activemark and Basic Skills awards. Independently managed childcare for under-fives is accommodated on the school's premises and was inspected in April 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Ghyllgrove Community Junior School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is a warm and friendly school which meets pupils' often significant pastoral needs very well. The provision in the Hearing Impaired Resource Base is good and pupils, whatever their backgrounds and needs, are very well integrated into the active life of the school.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and appreciate the range of activities which is offered to them through both the good, motivating curriculum and the wide variety of challenging extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils' participation in sports and music is good and 'helps children to come out of themselves' as one parent wrote. Displays of their excellent art work enhance the learning environment and celebrate pupils' achievements. Pupils play well at break times, actively enjoying the good range of equipment provided and safe in the knowledge that they have trusted adults to whom they can address any concerns and through the support of older pupils who lead playtime activities. Because the structures in place for adults to care, guide and support the pupils are good, pupils' personal development and well-being is good and trends in attendance are improving.

Nonetheless, the standards pupils reach in English are below average and low in mathematics and science. The current Year 6 had very low levels of attainment when they entered the school. The school is now analysing pupils' performance with rigour and taking action to support identified groups to help them do better. As a result, progress and achievement for pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those for who English is not their first language, are satisfactory.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Staffing has become much more stable than at the time of the previous inspection and this committed, enthusiastic team with a good balance of specialist interests is working well to improve provision. Consistent methods and expectations are shared between all classes, helping pupils to behave appropriately in lessons, improve their own understanding of how to learn and evaluate the quality of the work they produce. In most lessons, tasks are tailored to the different abilities of pupils but the expectation of what individual pupils should achieve by the end of the lesson is often not clear enough. As a result, the more able pupils are not always adequately challenged and some lessons lack pace.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Parents recognise the dedication of the head and hold teachers in high regard. Together, staff show a good understanding of the academic and pastoral challenges of the school and are eager to take greater responsibility for raising standards. The system for tracking pupils' progress in English and mathematics is enabling teachers to plan for each individual to make better progress, but in science, although plans are in hand, tracking has not yet been fully introduced and embedded. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Academic guidance, attendance and pupils' awareness of cultural diversity have all improved. However, standards in mathematics and science have not yet been securely raised. The school has good links with parents and others, including a wide range of external agencies to support those with learning difficulties, to promote pupils' well-being. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and science by ensuring that all pupils make at least two full levels of progress during their time in school.

- Make clearer the expectations in outcomes of tasks set for pupils of different ability in order to raise the level of challenge for the more able and to improve the proportion of good or better teaching.
- Swiftly implement and embed plans that will rigorously track and accelerate pupils' progress in science.

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

Standards are below average in English. Despite the school's effective initiatives to motivate and promote better writing skills, standards in reading are still higher than in writing but the gap is closing. Standards in mathematics and science are low. As a result of careful analysis of pupils' results in tests in 2008, which showed a decline on 2007, the school has taken effective action to address the underachievement of identified groups, particularly those of middle ability in mathematics who did not reach their expected levels. Tracking and assessment information, confirmed by inspection evidence, shows that the current Year 6 are on track to meet realistic targets in English and mathematics. Pupils' achievement, including the achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and with English as an additional language, is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have a positive attitude to learning and enjoy school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with pupils learning to respect each other and work together effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. They know that there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. A number of parents expressed concerns over behaviour, but the inspection team found it to be good. Pupils are self-disciplined and know the consequences of making the wrong choices in their behaviour. The school council is active in arranging fun activities and are very proud of the money they raise for local and national charities. They particularly enjoyed raising money for Red Nose Day. Pupils from Year 6 encourage all pupils to join in with a wide variety of games during break times. Pupils identify well with the school and the whole school celebrates when a team wins a match or competition. Attendance is satisfactory and has improved over the recent years. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education with the school identifying the need to improve pupils' basic skills alongside their good personal qualities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers use consistent methods across all classes. As a result, pupils understand the purpose of lessons, respect expected codes of conduct and work in a focused way in groups, pairs or individually. Display enhances learning well, not only by celebrating pupils' work, but also by indicating points of reference against which pupils can evaluate for themselves how well they are doing. The recent 'habits of learning' initiative is being enthusiastically embraced by pupils

so that they know, for example, not just to check an answer, but to double check it too. Teaching assistants liaise well with teachers, as well as assisting pupils identified for support. However, some teaching assistants move on to other pupils before checking that the support they have been giving has been securely grasped. Appropriate tasks are set which suit the different abilities groups within the class, but teachers do not make specific enough what individual pupils are expected to achieve by the end of these tasks. This results in higher attaining pupils not always being challenged to fulfil their potential. Marking is regular and encouraging, but is not consistent enough in its indication of what next steps need to be taken.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Despite standards in mathematics and science remaining low, the school provides a broad curriculum that has a significant impact on pupils' personal and social development. The impact on pupils' academic development has not yet been as significant but is improving with shoots of success becoming increasingly evident.

All subjects are covered and pupils particularly enjoy learning French and key words from the language of the month. This gives them a basic understanding of other languages and, in return, pupils are keen to learn about other cultures. Art is a particular strength of the school. Many extra activities enrich learning. Football Writers, for example, is a particularly innovative initiative that encourages reluctant writers to become authors. Recently focusing on the missing writing trophy, pupils worked with the police and scientists to investigate all the clues to find the lost trophy. Visits into the local and wider community foster a sense of wonder, and the choir, which goes from strength to strength, has been particularly active in singing at a national arena and to local people. The residential trip to France for Year 6 and the visit to the war graves provide lasting cultural and spiritual experiences. Planned sessions that enable pupils to discuss personal issues help them to articulate their worries effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Every step is taken to ensure that all requirements are met with regard to recruiting staff and making sure that all risks are assessed before making a trip out of school. Child protection procedures are robust, with staff and governors trained in the process. Pupils with particular and additional needs are very well supported. Those in the Hearing Impaired Resource Base receive very good specialist support so that they can access learning. In the afternoons they are integrated into mainstream classes so that they are fully included in the life of the school. Pupils who sometimes find it difficult to behave in an acceptable manner have a dedicated team who are on hand to offer support and guidance when needed.

One pupil reported that he used to have difficulty behaving, but now he knows how to behave and what to do if he gets angry or cross. Pupils know their individual targets well and these are referred to in lessons. They enjoy evaluating their own work to help reach higher standards but guidance through marking is inconsistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

All staff share the clear common agenda for improving the quality of provision and improving standards. The school has a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses. The recently introduced tracking system, linked to pupil progress reviews, is proving effective at promptly addressing any individual underachievement in English or mathematics. However, there is no tracking embedded in science and, while a greater focus on investigative work is providing a more balanced curriculum, more specific planning to raise standards has yet to be fully introduced. As a result, the school's evaluation of its provision is satisfactory. Targets set are realistic with a recognition by the school that they need to be set at aspirational levels to impact more significantly on accelerating progress. Equal opportunities are well promoted by the full integration of hearing impaired pupils into the life of the school. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. While governors do not formally audit the provision to identify areas which would benefit from greater focus, such as awareness of a multi-faith society, the focus on building links within the local community and support for the very needy, for example through adult learning initiatives, is highly effective. The committed team of governors has a good range of expertise and provides effective support for the school, even if it is currently too reliant on information from senior managers to hold the school to account in pursuit of raising standards.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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	3

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?	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?	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

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

15 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ghyllgrove Junior School, Basildon

Thank you for giving Mrs Harris and me such a warm welcome when we came to visit your school last week. We enjoyed meeting you and discovering what you like about school. Your parents and carers also made a very helpful contribution by completing the questionnaires. Please pass on our thanks to them too.

We agreed with the school that the education you get at Ghyllgrove Junior is satisfactory. Some aspects of it are good and teachers are keen to make it consistently good. You make good progress in developing your understanding of how to work together with others and see things positively. Many of you enjoy school very much. What a treat it was to see you celebrating victory in the Quick Cricket tournament or to see how you all engaged with the visiting author when the trophy for Football Writing was presented! You show a good sense of community not only when exciting events happen, but also in the way you respect the needs of the disabled or less fortunate members in your community. You also recognise the role your teachers play in this. You feel safe and secure because adults care for you and support you well. We were impressed by the way pupils with hearing impairment are so well integrated into the life of the school.

You have a good range of subjects and other activities. The displays of your art really bring the school to life and your singing in assembly was lovely. But the progress you make in those very important subjects for your future education, English, mathematics and science, is only satisfactory. In fact, you still have a long way to go by the end of Year 6 before standards in these subjects are as high as we would see in most schools. This is the main reason that we are saying Ghyllgrove is satisfactory, not better. We have therefore asked Mrs Gibbon and her staff to do three key things to help you achieve better and help make Ghyllgrove good in all aspects. These are:

- Raise the standards of your work in mathematics and science.
- Make it quite clear, especially to those of you who find work easy, exactly what you could achieve in tasks set in class, so that you reach those high standards of which you are capable.
- Check more carefully and more regularly on how you are progressing in science and then plan better ways for you to overcome your weaknesses.

You can play your part in this by continuing to develop those good 'habits of learning' which you find so helpful. We wish Year 6 every success in their new school next year.

Yours sincerely

John Mason

Lead inspector