

Great Waltham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115114
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326126
Inspection date	3 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Florence Olajide

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	146
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 Wayne Bishop
Headteacher	Mrs Diane Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	South Street Great Waltham CM3 1DF
Telephone number	01245360395
Fax number	01245362890

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: whether targets are sufficiently challenging; whether teaching enables all groups of pupils to make good progress and achieve equally well; how effective the school is in raising standards particularly in writing and science; whether leaders have sufficiently rigorous systems for accurately evaluating the effectiveness of the school's work in order to secure further improvement; and how good the quality of provision and standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage are.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with senior leaders, subject leaders, a governor representative and pupils. In addition, inspectors observed parts of lessons and a school assembly, and scrutinised a range of school information including details of the standards and progress achieved by pupils, the school's self-evaluation documentation and parent questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's assessments in those areas, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves the rural village of Great Waltham and the surrounding hamlets. The vast majority of pupils are from a White British heritage. A slightly lower than average proportion of pupils receive additional support for identified learning needs or disabilities. However, the proportion of these with a statement of educational needs is average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage from the age of four and pupils enter the school with abilities that are generally typical for their age. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. From broadly average starting points, pupils make satisfactory progress through the school and achieve standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 6. Small cohort sizes have led to variations in national test results from year to year. Although standards at the end of Year 6 were above average in 2007, on aggregate over the last three years they have been average. Since the last inspection, standards at the end of Year 2 have remained slightly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. While standards in reading and mathematics have improved, those in writing have declined. At the end of Year 6, standards have been generally higher in English than in mathematics or science. However, in 2008 standards in English dipped significantly, again due to low attainment in writing. The amount of progress pupils make in science has declined since the last inspection. Pupils who find learning difficult make good progress and achieve well because of the good support they receive but some of the more able pupils make slow progress.

A contributory factor to the average and fluctuating standards is the amount of teaching that is no better than satisfactory. While some of the teaching is good, it is not consistently so. Where the teaching is good, tasks are well matched to pupils' needs and abilities, and resources are used carefully to support learning. In these lessons, pupils derive much enjoyment from interesting and challenging activities and make good and sometimes exceptional progress. Where teaching is weaker, activities are mundane, lack challenge and do not enable pupils to learn at a fast enough rate. This contributes to the uneven progress that some pupils make from year to year, and in the past, pockets of underachievement have not always been detected early enough for remedial actions to have sufficient impact. Pupils are set annual targets which are sufficiently challenging for the majority. However, expectations of the more able pupils are not always high enough.

Leaders and staff are passionately committed to ensuring that pupils' become confident, mature and responsible individuals. Consequently, positive relationships and pastoral care are key strengths that reflect the school's Christian ethos. Pupils feel safe and emotionally secure and most parents are pleased with the care their children receive. Nevertheless, a few parents are concerned that their views are not always listened to. Staff know pupils well and liaise effectively with external agencies to provide those who are vulnerable and others who require additional support with the help they need. Welfare, health, safety and safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Pupils say that bullying or racism are rare and know that there is an adult they can turn to if they are in difficulty. Academic guidance is good and pupils know their learning targets. They receive ongoing oral feedback in lessons and have regular opportunities to discuss their progress with their teachers. Marking is positive but it does not always tell pupils precisely what it is they have to do to improve their work.

Overall pupils' personal development and well-being are good and some aspects, such as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Pupils are friendly, confident and happy young people who show a very strong awareness of the needs of others. They have a particularly good understanding of the diversity of cultures within British society and links with a school in Romania are developing their knowledge of the wider world. They are fully involved in the school community through the school forum, and in the wider community, through taking part in local events, parish council meetings, concerts and raising funds for local and national charities. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils enjoy their learning immensely, as

reflected in the above average attendance. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and keep safe, including internet and road safety. They have good opportunities to work cooperatively, which prepares them well for the next stage of their learning. However, average standards in basic skills means that this aspect of personal development is satisfactory overall.

The curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being. A cyclical and thematic approach to planning maintains pupils' interest by ensuring that those in mixed-age classes do not repeat topics. The school grounds, field trips, visitors and other local resources are used effectively to enliven the curriculum and promote enjoyment. Pupils also enjoy the French lessons taught in Key Stage 2 and the range of clubs on offer. Good use is made of information and communication technology to support learning such as the recent use of film making to promote literacy. The school works effectively with other schools and outside agencies to provide additional programmes which enhance learning in sports and music, and provide good support to pupils with learning difficulties and those who are gifted or talented. Effective steps have been taken to address the weaknesses in writing and recent assessments show that pupils are now making significantly faster progress. There are plans to address the weaknesses in science over the coming year.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Useful systems for tracking pupils' progress are well established. However, the review of assessment information is not analytical enough and it does not always take note of patterns of underachievement among groups. This has led to the school's rather overgenerous assessment of its overall effectiveness. Governors are very supportive of the school and have some useful systems for finding out how well the school is working. However, the weaknesses in data analysis mean that they do not have robust enough information with which to challenge the school more effectively. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Pupils learn about various forms of diversity through their visits to a home for older people and the links with international schools. Attendance at local council meetings enables pupil representatives to develop a strong sense of community spirit. The school coordinates the work with other small schools to pool resources for the benefit of pupils and their families.

Since the previous inspection, the school has made satisfactory progress in raising standards in mathematics in Key Stage 1. Leaders recently have begun to tackle the low attainment in writing and the underachievement among some pupils by improving the quality of teaching. The school's most recent assessments indicate that these steps have been effective and good or better progress is enabling those who fell behind to catch up. The impact of the school's recent work shows that it has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision is satisfactory and children make a sound start to their learning and development. Largely positive relationships are forged with parents and pre-school settings so that children settle quickly and enjoy school. Children are supported well and arrangements to ensure their safety and well-being are very thorough. Consequently, most parents are pleased with the provision. Children are enthusiastic and work confidently and happily, learning to cooperate with adults and each other. They understand expected routines, behave well and make satisfactory progress in their personal and social development.

Leadership is satisfactory. An adequate start has been made on implementing the new Early Years Foundation Stage framework. The teaching enables most children to make satisfactory progress in their learning. By the time they enter Year 1, most of them are close to the goals normally expected for their age and a few exceed these. Children are encouraged to make some choices in their learning. Even so, activities tend to be rather too structured so that opportunities for children to be creative and excited by learning are sometimes missed. Although staff check children's progress regularly, this information is not used effectively enough to plan suitably challenging activities, particularly for more able pupils who do not always make as much progress as they should. The well-equipped outdoor area promotes all aspects of learning. However, the indoor learning area is austere and does not provide young children with sufficient access to a range of stimulating materials that promote learning through all the senses.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision and standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage by providing children with a more stimulating learning environment and curriculum.
- Sharpen data analysis at whole-school level, so that underachievement is identified and tackled early
- Raise the expectations that staff have of the more able pupils to ensure that they make the progress of which they are capable.
- Ensure teaching is of a consistently good quality so that pupils make more even progress across the school.

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.

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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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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/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	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	2
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	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	3
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	3
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**

4 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Waltham Primary School, Great Waltham, CM3 1DF

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed listening to your views and as we promised, this letter is to tell you what we found out.

Your school helps you to make a sound start to your learning and most of you make satisfactory progress in your work. The school has helped you to develop some very good attitudes and habits. We were impressed by your confidence, the way you work well with each other and your behaviour to name a few. We also noticed that you make an excellent contribution to making your school and your local community very nice places to be. Your parents are pleased that the adults take good care of you. You told us you enjoy your lessons and the different clubs and activities. You also said your teachers regularly tell you how well you are doing.

Despite these good things, we noticed that some of you, particularly those of you who can cope with harder work, do not always do as well as you should. We also think that the youngest children in the Reception class would enjoy learning better if there were lots of things for them to touch, smell, feel and learn from. So to make your school even better we have asked the adults to try to make sure that:

- the Reception class is an exciting place where children can learn in more interesting ways
- they improve how information about how well you are doing is used to spot those of you who are falling behind, so they can help you to do better
- those of you who can work faster and harder are doing so
- the teaching helps you to make the right amount of progress each year.

We hope your parents will continue to support the school and that you will always do your best in your work. We wish you well for the future.

Florence Olajide

Lead inspector