

Grove Road Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117341
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326582
Inspection date	22 January 2009
Reporting inspector	David Speakman

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	423
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 John Manning
Headteacher	Mr John Grubb
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Grove Road Tring Hertfordshire HP23 5PD
Telephone number	01442822056
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Age group	3–11
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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: the factors that are responsible for varying standards at the end of Year 2, the achievement of pupils at different stages of the school, opportunities for pupils' to take on responsibility and the impact on pupils' achievement of target setting and tracking of their progress. Inspectors gathered evidence from observations of lessons and pupils' work, parental questionnaires, school self-evaluation documents and discussions with the headteacher, staff with responsibility, governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report

Description of the school

This is a large school. Children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in the Nursery under new flexible arrangements, through which parents can select five sessions and buy further sessions if space is available. This change is part of the Hertfordshire Flexi Pathfinder trial. Attainment on entry is above that normally expected of children of this age. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is less than in other schools, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. The main identified needs include autism, specific and moderate learning difficulties, speech and language and behavioural difficulties. The number of pupils coming from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than in most schools and a few are at an early stage of learning English. The school has Healthy School status and has secured the Activemark in recognition of the quality of its provision for physical education.

There is an after-school club, run independently of the school and therefore not reported on here.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, in which pupils' achieve well. Starting school with attainment above that generally found for children of this age, they achieve standards at end Year 6 that are consistently well above average year after year. This is due to good teaching overall and to pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning. Pupils are prepared well for the next stages of their education. Despite good overall achievement, the progress pupils make at different stages of the school varies. They achieve well in the EYFS and at Key Stage 2, but satisfactorily at Key Stage 1. The most recent Year 6 group achieved exceptionally well at Key Stage 2. They entered Year 3 with below average attainment and achieved standards that were well above average in English and mathematics. Standards at the end of Year 2 have varied from year to year. Since 2005, a pattern has emerged where they have been significantly above average one year and broadly average the next. Over the last two years, standards have stabilised but achievement at this stage is still only satisfactory. The achievement of pupils who find learning difficult and those who are at any early stage of learning English is good.

Achievement that is weaker at Key Stage 1 than in other stages links directly with the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching is good overall; good in the EYFS and Key Stage 2 and satisfactory at Key Stage 1. There is also variation within some year groups. Teachers maintain excellent behaviour in lessons through effective management. They provide pupils with good opportunities to work collaboratively. Work is mostly matched well to pupils' individual needs and working groups, but sometimes it focuses on what pupils will do in a lesson rather than what they will learn. Consequently, pupils in different groups within the same year sometimes make different progress in a lesson; lower attaining pupils occasionally outperform those in the higher set. Expectations of what pupils can do vary; they are very high in many Key Stage 2 lessons and for younger children. The EYFS leader sets challenging targets for pupils' at the end of Years 1 and 2, based on their performance in the Nursery and Reception. However, there was little evidence that they are used effectively to ensure good achievement at Key Stage 1. Otherwise, challenging targets are used effectively to move pupils on in their learning. When pupils achieve at their best, expectations are high and planned tasks are challenging, teachers ask well-directed questions to challenge pupils at different levels of attainment.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding and contributes directly to their overall good achievement. There is a calm and productive learning environment in school, which means teachers can concentrate on teaching and pupils focus on learning. Pupils are mature, sensible and speak with clarity and confidence. The school council has a significant impact on aspects of life in school, for example on playground rules and the extent to which pupils engage in healthy eating. Some pupils have good ideas about how they could extend their already good contribution to the school community. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. They say they enjoy school a great deal. Their well above average attendance and results of the parents' questionnaires support this view.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Outstanding moral and social development shows in the way pupils approach their life in school. They have an extraordinary spiritual understanding of some of the world's major issues and human experience. They produce some high quality poetry that expresses anger and fear in a mature and adult way, showing a deep understanding of emotions. They are able to understand and appreciate important messages such as those contained in the inaugural speech of the new President of the United States of America. Community cohesion is promoted to an outstanding level with

the pupils in assemblies, in lessons and in a range of other school activities. Pupils develop a strong understanding of the world community and the importance of global issues and events. However, the school has not fully succeeded in establishing a strong and trusting relationship with some parents. Their main concerns are to do with the information they receive about their children's progress and their views not being sought or taken into account when making important decisions, for example, recent changes to the organisation of the Nursery. For this reason, the overall level to which the school promotes community cohesion is good.

The quality and range of learning opportunities is good. They promote pupils' enjoyment in learning well and are supported by a good range of extra-curricular activities. The senior leadership team has some good ideas about how they intend to extend and develop the curriculum further so that it adds even more meaning and purpose to learning. Pupils are cared for well. Links with other schools within the area and further afield add an extra dimension to pupils' education and community awareness. The school has effective links with external agencies that help support pupils who have specific learning or personal needs. Academic guidance is good. Pupils are guided well in assessing their own performance. Older pupils especially do this well, identifying areas where they are not confident and being able to justify their judgements.

Leadership and management of the school are good. A small minority of parents expressed concern in their questionnaire about the leadership and management of the school. There are effective structures in place to ensure that teachers with responsibility for leading the school, for leading subjects or for leading important areas of the school's work such as assessment and specific groups of pupils, are fully involved and aware of the school's performance. There is a good range of staff with the capability, knowledge and understanding in their own areas of responsibility who the senior leadership team can call on for leadership in different areas of school improvement. There is a clear vision for improvement. School self-evaluation is accurate in identifying these areas. The work of the governors is good. They organise their work effectively and work in close collaboration with the school, and have a good knowledge of how well the school is doing. They provide effective levels of support and challenge, holding key personnel accountable for improvement. They use their good knowledge and understanding of the school's performance to support their involvement in strategic planning for and the monitoring of development and improvement. Bearing in mind the clarity of vision for school improvement and the fact that high standards and good overall achievement have been maintained continuously since the previous inspection, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the EYFS is good and children make good progress. Many achieve the goals nationally expected at the end of the EYFS before the end of Reception and are already working in the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum when they transfer into Year 1. Leadership of the EYFS is good. The leader is enthusiastic, has a real sense of purpose and a love for children. She has fostered a great team spirit, ensuring that everyone who works in the EYFS has the same approach to children. There is an atmosphere of energy, excitement and purpose about the work in this stage of the school. Parents of children in the EYFS made many positive comments with their inspection questionnaire responses. These comments are consistent with inspection findings.

The range of learning activities is good. However, there are more limited opportunities for children to choose their own activities and to learn outdoors, particularly in the morning sessions.

There are planned opportunities for children to work outside but as there is an inadequate covered area, learning out of doors is largely dependent on the weather. Opportunities for using role-play to develop basic skills, such as language extension work are more limited in Reception. The EYFS leader monitors provision in the Reception classes, and agrees with inspectors that there is still insufficient cohesion between the Nursery and Reception.

Staff keep good assessment records and the process to track children's progress is effective in providing adults with a clear understanding of children's attainment. They use this information well to plan the next steps of learning for each individual. Achievement is good because expectations are high and lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. Because lessons cover many areas of learning, children find them interesting. Children's personal development, including their behaviour is excellent. Children are happy, cooperate well with each other and treat everyone with courtesy and respect.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that the quality of teaching is at least good in each class to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school.
- Extend provision for children in the EYFS to choose their own activities and to learn out of doors, making better use of these opportunities to extend their language skills even further.

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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?	1
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	1
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?	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	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?	2
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**

23 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grove Road Primary School, Tring, HP23 5PD

Thank you all for making us welcome when we visited your school recently. We would like to thank you all for helping us find out about your school, especially those of you who gave up some of your time to talk to us. We enjoyed meeting you and your teachers and visiting lessons to watch you work. It was interesting to speak to you to find out what you think about the school and how you contribute to making it a pleasant place to be.

You go to a good school and those of you we spoke to, speak highly of your time there. All the staff work well together to provide you with a good quality education. Teaching, the curriculum and the quality of care shown for you are good. Most of you make good progress in lessons and reach well above average standards by the end of Year 6.

You help a great deal by behaving exceptionally well and trying hard to do your best. We were impressed by how well you respond to your teachers and are willing to try hard. We liked the sensible way in which you make friends with others and care about each other. You help to make others feel safe in school. Those of you we spoke to said how much you enjoy school and find it interesting. You are well prepared for the next stages of your education.

To make things even better, we are asking the staff and governors to:

- Make sure that the quality of teaching is at least good in each class to ensure that you all make good progress as you move through the school.
- Improve opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage to choose their own activities and to learn outside, and make better use of these occasions to extend language skills even further.

I hope you will all help make the school become even better by continuing to cooperate with your teachers.

I wish you all the best in the future.

David Speakman

Lead inspector