

# Greatstone Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118864
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	326915
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Helen Hutchings

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	381
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	27
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	86
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Black
<b>Headteacher</b>	Leigh Mortimer
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 February 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	25 September 2007
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Baldwin Road Greatstone New Romney TN28 8SY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01797 363916
<b>Fax number</b>	01797 363916

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Greatstone School is larger than most primary schools. Since the last inspection, the school's provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has been extended with the opening of a Nursery for pupils from the age of two. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, mostly associated with moderate learning or speech, language or communication difficulties, is below average. Mobility of pupils is above average and increasing, with a high proportion joining the school in Years 5 and 6. The school has been awarded Sport England Activemark and a Travel Plan Platinum Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Greatstone Primary School provides a good standard of education. Good leadership, management and governance are at the heart of the school's success. The improvement in standards over the last two years and the school's accurate self-evaluation are evidence of a good capacity for ongoing improvement. The headteacher works tenaciously to improve pupils' educational opportunities. He communicates his high expectations persuasively to staff, so that all have a shared sense of direction and feel part of a successful team. The school lives up to its motto, 'Together We Learn'. Pupils have constructive relationships with others, which help them to achieve well academically, and their personal development and well-being are good. Pupils get on well together, take a pride in their work and present it with care. As such, they are prepared well for their future education. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and recognise its strengths, for example in the comment, 'As a result of my child's experience at Greatstone, I would confidently recommend this school to any prospective parent.'

Standards are above average, and pupils make good progress as they move from the Nursery to Year 6 because they are well taught and experience a good, broad curriculum which engages them. Teaching is lively and captures pupils' interest. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons, and this helps them to achieve well. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and give them good guidance on how to improve their work. The school is trialling new approaches in some classes to help pupils understand the quality and level of their work better. However, not all pupils are clear about exactly what they have to do to move their work on to the next level.

Parents of pupils who joined the school partway through their primary education are particularly positive about all that the school offers and how well their children have settled and thrived, shown in the comment, 'The school could not have made more effort to help my children settle.' The good links with parents contribute effectively to the family ethos and reinforce a warm, caring environment. The care, guidance and support for pupils are good. The school is an integral part of the local community, and makes a good contribution to community cohesion. There is a strong awareness of local needs, for example, in opening the Nursery and running courses for adults in conjunction with other agencies. Pupils are strongly committed to providing support for a school in Malawi, helping them to develop respect for people from different backgrounds.

Staff develop their own practice well, sometimes through effective links with other local schools, and they evaluate initiatives carefully against the impact they have on pupils' attainment. Pupils' progress is closely tracked and alternative provision introduced where this is needed. The support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive in lessons means that they make good progress overall, but support is not always provided as early as it could be because these pupils' precise needs are not always identified early enough.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is good. Children start school with skills and abilities just below the levels expected for their age, with some children having weak speech and communication skills. They make good progress in all aspects of their development and most reach the expected levels by the time they enter Year 1, though few

exceed these. The relative weakness in children's early numeracy skills is being addressed well by staff, as part of a whole-school focus.

Staff provide well for all children, whatever their individual needs, and make good use of specialist support services where necessary. Adults continually monitor children's progress and keep parents informed about what their children are doing. Key workers use this information well to plan relevant individual activities so that the child maintains good progress. Resources are excellent and used well to encourage learning. Provision for outdoor learning has been successfully improved since the last inspection. The outside areas are used well. For example, children digging and gardening helps them to develop physical skills. Adults are encouraging free flow between the activities inside and those outside, particularly in the Nursery, to encourage children to be more inquisitive and make decisions about what they are learning. Children respect one another and behave well. They begin to work both independently and with other children in the Nursery. By the time they join the Reception classes, they have well-developed social skills and work cooperatively. This enables the oldest Reception children to work effectively alongside Year 1 pupils.

Leadership and management are good, with all staff fully involved in reviewing provision and taking account of parents' views from surveys. Parents confirm that their children enjoy school. Good procedures are in place to ensure children's safety and well-being. Children happily eat healthy foods at snack time and know to wash their hands before eating.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Set targets for all pupils so that they are clear about how to improve their work.
- Ensure that the precise needs of pupils with learning difficulties are identified at an earlier stage so that they can benefit sooner from focused support.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' attainment when they start Year 1 is broadly average, although some pupils' early literacy skills are less well developed than other aspects of their development. Pupils make good progress. Attainment in the Year 2 assessments is at least in line with and, in some years, significantly above national averages. Pupils continue to achieve well across a broad curriculum through the rest of the school. Standards in the Year 6 national tests are generally above national averages. Although standards fell in 2007, this decline has been reversed and standards are now back in line with previous levels. The standards attained in the 2008 tests represent good achievement. The pupils who join the school between Years 4 and 6 make good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well overall, although earlier identification of their specific needs would help to further accelerate their progress. Since the last inspection, standards in writing have improved significantly and the current focus on improving mathematics standards has helped to increase the number of pupils attaining higher levels. Pupils have good opportunities to use information and communication technology to support their learning. As a result, pupils of all ages use a range of software confidently, giving them the necessary skills to support their own future economic well-being.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

The school is a happy and harmonious community where pupils get on well together. Pupils feel valued and know that adults have their best interests at heart. They are keen to learn, enjoy school and their behaviour is exemplary. The attendance of most pupils is good, but the overall attendance rate is only average because local work patterns force a number of parents to take family holidays during term time.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils work together amicably, respect the feelings of others and have a well-developed sense of fair play. However, the school recognises that pupils do not have enough opportunities to broaden their awareness of the diversity of culture and beliefs in modern Britain. Pupils respond positively when given responsibility, for example, as members of the active school council, or as telephone receptionists or buddies for those who need extra support during lunchtimes.

Pupils are extremely safety conscious and are concerned for the welfare of others. They enjoy a wide range of physical activities and have an exceptionally well-developed understanding of the need for healthy eating. Pupils grow their own vegetables and appreciate the quality of the food they produce. They have a strong social and community awareness, and are keen fundraisers for charities.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teachers know exactly what they expect pupils to learn and their explanations are clear so that pupils are confident about tackling their work. Because teachers have secure subject knowledge, know pupils well and plan effectively, they are able to pinpoint areas for improvement and target them accurately in lessons. Often, teachers use questions skilfully to improve pupils' understanding and to help to develop their ideas. Teaching assistants have good expertise, work in close partnership with teachers, and provide pupils with valuable help. In the most effective lessons, teachers know just when to intervene with well-judged advice and when to stand back and let pupils work things out for themselves. Good use is made of time in most lessons, although occasionally teachers' introductions are a little too long and this limits opportunities for pupils to get on with their tasks. In addition, in a few lessons, teachers do not expect pupils to tackle their work quickly enough.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is successful in promoting pupils' personal development and academic achievement. Whilst it gives an appropriate emphasis to literacy and numeracy, the curriculum gives pupils rich experiences across a broad range of subjects, including visits, which bring learning alive. Teachers make many effective links between subjects, such as using the topic of Victorians as the basis for a study in music. The use of group work in Year 6 mathematics is improving pupils' attainment. The school has successfully improved pupils' science standards by taking a stronger practical approach but it has yet to implement plans to extend a similar practical approach to learning in other subjects. There are good opportunities for pupils to

participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport, contributing to their excellent awareness of how to stay healthy.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Parents appreciate that their children feel safe and are well cared for in school. Pupils have good support for their personal development, based on warm and respectful relationships. Incidents of bullying are rare, and pupils say that such events, usually of name calling, are dealt with quickly. Systems for safeguarding pupils' health, safety and well-being fully meet legal requirements. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Academic guidance is good. Pupils' progress is monitored regularly against challenging targets and extra support provided where needed. Marking gives pupils good advice on how to improve their work, but teachers do not always give pupils enough opportunities to consolidate their understanding in follow-up work. Pupils have some good opportunities for self-assessment, for example, in science. However, their understanding of what they have to do to reach their targets in English and mathematics is variable, and this restricts some pupils' capacity to evaluate their own progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

As a result of penetrating and effective self-evaluation, the school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. Effective action has been taken to raise standards, particularly in writing and mathematics, and to accelerate the progress of the most capable pupils. The headteacher checks the school's performance rigorously. He is quick to recognise and praise the good work of staff and pupils, and is alert to situations where people need advice and guidance. Because teachers benefit from helpful feedback, a climate has been created where everyone is trying hard to make the school even better. Teamwork is strong and staff morale is high. Some responsibilities are delegated wisely, and members of the senior management team play valuable roles in monitoring the school's work. However, responsibility for whole-school strategic planning has not been sufficiently delegated. Too much rests solely on the shoulders of the headteacher. Governance is good. The governors ask astute and challenging questions to hold the school to account.

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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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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

<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
The attendance of learners	3
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

6 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Greatstone Primary School, New Romney TN28 8SY

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming to us during the inspection. It was good to talk to you and to see how much you enjoy school. You gave us a very good idea about what you thought of your school. We agree with you that Greatstone is a good school. These are the main things we found out about your school:

- You take the importance of eating healthily and taking exercise very seriously, and many of you are beginning to enjoy growing vegetables in the gardens.
- You achieve well, particularly in your writing, and your progress is improving all the time.
- You enjoy learning because your teachers give you interesting things to do.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you treat each other and adults very well so that everyone gets on well together.
- Many of you take on responsibilities and carry them out very well.
- Adults take good care of you and the school is very safe.
- Your headteacher and other staff work hard to make your school an interesting place for you and organise lots of clubs for you to attend.

We agree with your teachers about the most important things to do next to help you to do even better:

- Help you to know what your targets are and what you need to do to reach them.
- Make sure that those of you who find learning difficult are given support as soon as there is something you are not able to do well.

You can help too by letting your teacher know if there is something you do not understand and making sure that you ask if you do not know how to reach your next target. Remember that learning will help you in the future.

Please thank your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires. It was helpful to hear what they had to say about the school. We wish everyone at Greatstone well in the future. Keep up the good work.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector