

Great Bardfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114835
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338459
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Glynn Storer

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Dyson
Headteacher	Anne Barney
Date of previous school inspection	23 April 2007
School address	Braintree Road Great Bardfield Braintree
Telephone number	01371 810252
Fax number	01371 810583
Email address	admin@greatbardfield.essex.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and, in doing so, observed the work of all of the school's regular teachers who were on duty during the inspection. The inspectors also held meetings with the headteacher, members of staff at all levels, pupils and governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at policy documents, pupil performance data, planning and safeguarding information. The inspectors also took account of the views of parents and carers in the 55 questionnaires that were returned.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the steps taken to bring standards in reading in Key Stage 1 and English in Key Stage 2 into line with those in other key subjects
- teachers' use of assessment in planning lessons that closely meet the needs of individuals and groups of pupils
- the extent to which the curriculum promotes pupils' social and cultural development and brings a strong global perspective to their learning
- the degree to which outcomes for children in Early Years Foundation Stage have improved in line with the school's views of the quality and effectiveness of the setting
- the extent to which leaders, managers and governors monitor aspects of the school's work rigorously in order to sustain and further improve standards and quality.

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average rural school serves the village of Great Bardfield and outlying settlements, although about a third of pupils come from further afield. Most pupils are White British and, of the small number from minority ethnic backgrounds, none is at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is close to the average for a school of this size, although the number with a statement of special educational need is below average. There has been a high turnover of staff since the school's previous inspection. The school has gained the following awards: Activemark; Healthy Schools; School Achievement Award; Investor in People.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Great Bardfield Primary School provides a good education for its pupils. The school is emerging from an unsettled period when a high turnover of staff slowed the pace of some aspects of school development and had a negative impact on pupils' achievements. However, the headteacher and her senior leadership team have been effective in stabilising staffing and fostering a shared commitment to school improvement on the part of all staff. The impact of recent initiatives is clearly evident in improved provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage, more consistently good teaching and in improved standards by the end of Key Stage 2.

Results in the end of Key Stage tests rose substantially in 2009 and were significantly above the national average in most key subjects. Standards in English, and especially in writing, are somewhat lower than standards in other key subjects. The school's thorough and accurate self-evaluation has already identified this trend and measures are in hand to maintain the focus on raising standards further in writing.

Personal development outcomes are generally good, although some are outstanding. Pupils' contribution to the school as a community and to the community beyond the school gates is excellent. Pupils' secure skills, positive attitudes and habitual and exemplary punctuality and attendance are an extremely secure foundation for future life and learning. Pupils have a good understanding of issues that affect their personal safety and that of others. They say that they feel safe and cared for well.

Pupils learn effectively because a high proportion of the teaching is good. The most successful lessons are characterised by teachers' high expectations of what pupils should achieve, challenging but highly enjoyable tasks and the highly effective use of new technology to bring clarity to teaching and to support pupils' learning. Teachers have steadily improved their use of assessment for tracking pupils' progress and in planning for pupils with differing abilities. However, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to give additional guidance and to reinforce expectations during lessons. The advice that comes via teachers' marking is generally good, although teachers do not always ensure that pupils act on the advice they receive. As a result, pupils are not always clear about the next steps in their learning and do not always benefit fully from the advice they are given.

Rigorous monitoring by senior staff and governors ensure that there is accountability at all levels and that self-evaluation is accurate. As a result, whole-school targets are challenging but realistic. Because of the recent high turnover of staff, the roles of middle-ranking leaders are not sufficiently developed, for example, in collecting first-hand evidence about whole-school and individual pupils' performance.

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Nevertheless, the school's record of improvement in recent years is good, especially in embedding consistently good teaching, accelerating pupils' progress and raising standards. This record is evidence of a good capacity for sustained improvement in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teachers' use of assessment to support learning by:
 - ensuring that teachers give more explicit guidance during lessons that is securely based on their understanding of pupils' recent performance
 - giving pupils more opportunities to act on the advice that comes through teachers' marking of work
 - Improve the management of teaching and learning by strengthening the role of middle-ranking leaders in the school's processes for assessing its effectiveness.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The 2009 national assessments marked a pronounced up-turn in academic outcomes. Overall standards were significantly above average in both key stages and pupils' progress and achievement by the end of Year 6 were good. Standards do vary from year to year because, in small year groups, statistical outcomes are affected by the performance of just one or two pupils. Inspection evidence indicates that current standards are somewhat lower, but remain above average overall. Despite this slight dip, most pupils in both key stages, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making good progress in relation to their starting points. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) is thoroughly embedded throughout the curriculum and results in high standards in this subject. Similarly, pupils' work in art is firmly based on the development and application of skills and standards exceed national expectations.

Most pupils behave well and enjoy their work. They know what is expected of them and respond well in lessons, though a small number need regular reminders. Their willingness to meet challenging targets and their ability to work independently and/or collaboratively, for example on the 'gnome home' project, contribute to successful learning. Their healthy, energetic play reflects a keen awareness of the safety of others. Pupils' outstanding contribution to the school community is shown in strong relationships at all levels and in their roles as school councillors, play leaders and by their keen participation in fundraising and school events. They have an excellent understanding of the needs and interests of the local community. Their participation in events such as the Essex Village of the Year presentation, conservation and community improvement initiatives and in local festivals and celebrations make the pupils a strong force for good locally. High rates of attendance, good basic skills, along with high levels of competence in ICT and positive attitudes to learning, prepare them exceptionally well for the future. The school is rightly seeking ways to strengthen pupils' understanding of the diversity of

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modern society and of how to be a good citizen.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

All teachers establish good patterns of behaviour and response. As a result, pupils learn effectively. In the best lessons, pupils rise to the challenge of stimulating cross-curricular projects that make significant demands in their ability to take responsibility for their own work or to contribute positively to group activities. This was seen to particularly good effect in a mixed Year 5/6 class, in which pupils used history, geography, ICT and design and technology skills to solve practical and theoretical problems. All teachers make good use of modern technology to enhance both teaching and learning. Teachers now make satisfactory use of assessment information to plan work to match the needs of pupils with differing abilities. However, they are still not making best use of what they know about pupils to give on-going guidance on how to improve, nor do they always ensure that pupils act on such advice as they are given, for example through marking of work. These inconsistencies reduce the impact of teachers' use of assessment to support learning.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The curriculum is effective in promoting academic and personal development. It meets the needs of pupils across the age and ability range and ensures that all, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who are gifted or talented make good progress. ICT and art and design feature prominently and are strengths in current arrangements. A range of worthwhile, often memorable, experiences promote good levels of motivation and enjoyment.

The school makes good provision for pupils' care and well-being. Staff are particularly good at ensuring the welfare of pupils with medical needs. Exclusion rates are low and the rare racist incident is dealt with effectively. Parents and carers, and pupils mention occasional incidents of bullying. The school responds to this by teaching pupils anti-bullying strategies and appropriately counselling those involved in the incidents. The school works well with outside agencies and professionals to provide pupils with good support. Effective intervention programmes are used to support those who are falling behind in their learning, those with special educational needs and disabilities or those in local authority care. As a result, a large majority of these pupils make expected progress or better. There are good arrangements to support the transition of pupils into school and on to secondary school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and her senior leaders have been successful in driving school improvement, despite a high staff turnover in recent years. Senior leaders share and promote the headteacher's ambitions for the school so that all staff, including those who are recently appointed, are working towards common goals. The sound management of teaching and learning rests on effective systems for tracking pupils' progress. Senior leaders use performance data strategically to identify and address potential weaknesses. Monitoring by senior staff is rigorous and results in accurate self-evaluation and clearly defined targets for school improvement. The leadership roles of other staff have begun to develop. However, some subject leaders have not held their responsibilities for long enough to be fully involved in matters of school evaluation and improvement. The governing body strike a good balance between support and challenge and use their professional and community experience effectively to support the school and oversee its performance. It is conscientious in overseeing and ensuring best practice in all aspects of safeguarding.

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Checks on the suitability of all adults who work with pupils meet government requirements. Practice relating to child protection is rigorous and staff training in such matters is up to date. Supervision and the ways in which staff deal with and record minor day-to-day incidents or accidents are thorough.

The good quality provision and outcomes indicate that the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination effectively. Positive engagement with parents and carers and constructive partnerships both within and beyond the world of education permeate the school's work. They are particularly influential in providing good learning opportunities and in underpinning arrangements for care, guidance and support. The school's promotion of community cohesion is effective. The school has undertaken an enquiry into the nature of the immediate and wider community which has provided a good platform from which to build provision across the curriculum and to launch community-based initiatives. Pupils' recent presentation to the judging panel of the Essex Village of the Year competition exemplifies pupils' excellent engagement with the local community. The school is actively seeking to broaden pupils horizons by developing links with a socially and ethnically different community and by strengthening the global dimension of pupils' learning.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Pupils enjoy very positive relationships with the adults and therefore feel safe and secure. The indoor learning environment is well resourced, stimulating and supports pupils' learning effectively. The outdoor area is extensive and is used well to develop all aspects of learning but, in particular, children's creative and physical development and

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their knowledge and understanding of the world. There is a good balance between activities directed by the teacher and the ones children choose for themselves. This enables children to make choices without compromising on what the teacher knows they need to learn next. Staff encourage children to reflect on their work and identify what they have done well for example in their handwriting practice. Through simple but effective systems, children are encouraged to be independent and make choices in their learning. At the start of each day, they register their presence and indicate whether they will be eating a packed lunch, hot or cold dinner. They do this confidently and sustain concentration well. They behave well, cooperate with each other on tasks and play well together. There are suitable arrangements to ensure that children make a smooth transition into the school and into the Year 1 class. Staff cater well for those who are vulnerable and those with medical or other needs. Staff keep good records of children's learning and development. These are used well to plan learning activities that move children on to the next stage of their learning. As a result, children make good progress from broadly average starting points.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers responding to the questionnaire expressed approval of, and confidence in, almost all aspects of the school's work. A small minority raised concerns about how the school deals with bullying or unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors saw no evidence of poor behaviour and saw staff dealing effectively with any minor incidents. Most pupils have confidence in staff to support them and to deal with issues of bullying although, occasionally, incidents go unreported. The school agrees it will do more to ensure all pupils are willing to talk to a member of staff if they feel they are being bullied.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Great Bardfield Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 55 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 151 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	56	21	38	3	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	49	22	40	4	7	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	31	34	62	3	5	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	46	23	44	1	2	3	6
The teaching is good at this school	21	40	26	49	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	42	27	49	3	5	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	42	30	55	2	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	21	38	31	56	2	4	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	38	28	51	4	7	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	22	30	55	6	11	6	11
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	27	29	53	7	13	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	24	44	22	40	2	4	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	47	21	38	5	9	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



Thursday 15 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Bardfield Primary School, Braintree, CM7 4RN

Thank you for making my colleague and I so welcome and for taking time to talk to us when we visited your school. I particularly enjoyed seeing Year 6 working on their 'gnome homes'. Your thinking and problem solving were impressive. My colleague enjoyed her visits to Reception because it is such a happy place. This is what we found out about your school:

- children get a good start to their school lives in Reception
- you are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics
- most of you behave well and respond well in lessons

ICT plays a strong part in school life and many of you take advantage of the excellent opportunities that this provides

- you make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community
- staff always help you if you have problems and take particularly good care of anybody who is having a hard time
- the headteacher, staff and governors are successfully improving the school.

We have made some suggestions that should help your school to improve further. This is what I would like everyone to do:

- ensure that, in lessons, teachers let you know exactly how to improve your work and they make sure that you act on the good advice that they give when they mark your work
- give subject leaders more opportunities to see how well everybody is doing, so that they can help the headteacher to find the things that still need to be improved.

You can all help by doing your very best to follow your teachers' advice in every lesson.

Yours sincerely

Glynn Storer

Lead inspector

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